

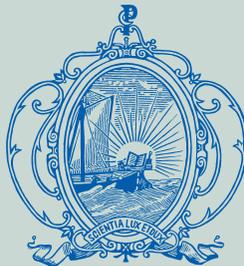
STUDIA PATRISTICA

VOL. XCVII

Papers presented at the Seventeenth International Conference
on Patristic Studies held
in Oxford 2015

Edited by
MARKUS VINZENT

Volume 23:
From the Fourth Century Onwards (Latin Writers)
Nachleben



PEETERS

LEUVEN – PARIS – BRISTOL, CT

2017

STUDIA PATRISTICA

VOL. XCVII

STUDIA PATRISTICA

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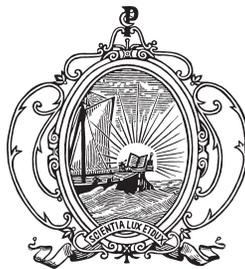
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Table of Contents

FROM THE FOURTH CENTURY ONWARDS (LATIN WRITERS)

Anthony P. COLEMAN	
Comparing Institutes: Lactantius' <i>Divinae Institutiones</i> in Calvin's <i>Institutio christianae religionis</i> 1.1-5	3
Jessica VAN 'T WESTEINDE	
Jerome and the <i>Christianus Perfectus</i> , a Transformed Roman Noble Man?	17
Silvia GEORGIEVA	
Domina, Filia, Conserva, Germana: The Identity of the Correspondent in Saint Jerome's Letters	37
Roberta FRANCHI	
<i>Muliercularum socii</i> (Hier., <i>Ep.</i> 133,4): donne ed eresia nell' <i>Epistolario</i> di Gerolamo.....	51
Richard SEAGRAVES	
Prudentius: <i>Contra orationem Symmachi</i> , Bk. I	63
Klazina STAAT	
'Let him thus be a Hippolytus' (<i>Perist.</i> 11.87): Horror and Rhetoric in Prudentius' <i>Peristephanon</i> 11	79
Diane Shane FRUCHTMAN	
Witness and Imitation in the Writings of Paulinus of Nola.....	87
Lorenzo SCIAJNO	
Salvation behind the Web (Paul. Nol., <i>Carm.</i> XVI 93-148): Connections and Echoes of a Fairy-tale Theme in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages between West and East	97
Ewa DUSIK-KRUPA	
Politician, Theologian, Tutor. Luciferi Calaritanis' Use of Holy Scripture	103
Vincenzo MESSANA	
Massimino ariano e la Sicilia: il dibattito storiografico negli ultimi decenni su una <i>vexata quaestio</i>	115

Salvatore COSTANZA	
Il variegato panorama di accezioni dei termini <i>Romanus e barbarus, Christianus e paganus</i> negli scritti di Salviano	129
Matthew J. PEREIRA	
The Intertextual Tradition of Prosper's <i>De vocatione omnium gentium</i>	143
Raúl VILLEGAS MARÍN	
Abjuring Manichaeism in Ostrogothic Rome and Provence: The <i>Commonitorium quomodo sit agendum cum Manichaeis</i> and the <i>Prosperi anathematismi</i>	159
Mantè LENKAITYTĖ OSTERMANN	
John Cassian Read by Eucherius of Lyon: Affinities and Divergences	169
Daniel G. OPPERWALL	
Obedience and Communal Authority in John Cassian	183
Gerben F. WARTENA	
Epic Emotions: Narratorial Involvement in Sedulius' <i>Carmen Paschale</i>	193
Tim DENECKER	
Evaluations of Multilingual Competence in Cassiodorus' <i>Variae</i> and <i>Institutiones</i>	203
Hector SCERRI	
On Menstruation, Marital Intercourse and 'Wet Dreams' in a Letter by Gregory the Great	211
Jerzy SZAFRANOWSKI	
To See with Body and to See with Mind: Corporeal and Spiritual Cognition in the 'Dialogues' of Gregory the Great.....	219
Pere MAYMÓ I CAPDEVILA	
Chants, Icons, and Relics in the Evangelization Doctrine of Gregory the Great: The Case of Kent.....	225
Stephen BLACKWOOD	
Scriptural Allusions and the Wholeness of Wisdom in Boethius' <i>Consolation of Philosophy</i>	237
Juan Antonio JIMÉNEZ SÁNCHEZ	
A Brief Catalogue of Superstitions in Chapter 16 of Martin of Braga's <i>De correctione rusticorum</i>	245

Alberto FERREIRO ' <i>Sufficit septem diebus</i> ': Seven Days Mourning the Dead in the <i>Letters</i> of St. Braulio of Zaragoza.....	255
Susan CREMIN Bede's Interpretative Practice in his Homilies on the Gospels.....	265
<i>NACHLEBEN</i>	
Bronwen NEIL Reception of Late-Antique Popes in the Medieval Byzantine Tradition	283
Ken PARRY Providence, Resurrection, and Restoration in Byzantine Thought, Eighth to Ninth Centuries	295
Eiji HISAMATSU Spätbyzantinische Übernahme der Vorstellung von der Lichtvision des Euagrius Pontikos, erörtert am Beispiel des Gregorios Sinaites ..	305
Catherine KAVANAGH Eriugena's Trinity: A Framework for Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue.....	311
Tobias GEORGES The <i>Apophthegmata Patrum</i> in the Context of the Occidental Reformation of Monastic Life during the 11 th and 12 th Centuries. The Case of Peter Abelard.....	323
Christopher M. Wojtulewicz Augustine and the Dissolution of Polarity. Some Thoughts on Augustinian Reception in the Late 13 th and Early 14 th Centuries According to Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart.....	329
Marie-Anne VANNIER Origen, a Source of Meister Eckhart's Thinking	345
Lavinia CERIONI The Patristic Sources of Eriugena's Exegesis of the Parable of the Bridesmaids	355
Thomas F. HEYNE A Polemicist rather than a Patrologist: Calvin's Attitude to and Use of the Early Church Fathers	367

Abbreviations

AA.SS	see ASS.
AAWG.PH	Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen Philologisch-historische Klasse, Göttingen.
AB	Analecta Bollandiana, Brussels.
AC	Antike und Christentum, ed. F.J. Dölger, Münster.
ACL	Antiquité classique, Louvain.
ACO	Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum, ed. E. Schwartz, Berlin.
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers, ed. J. Quasten and J.C. Plumpe, Westminster (Md.)/London.
AHDLMA	Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge, Paris.
AJAH	American Journal of Ancient History, Cambridge, Mass.
AJP	American Journal of Philology, Baltimore.
AKK	Archiv für katholisches Kirchenrecht, Mainz.
AKPAW	Abhandlungen der königlichen Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin.
ALMA	Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi (Bulletin du Cange), Paris/Brussels.
ALW	Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft, Regensburg.
AnalBoll	Analecta Bollandiana, Brussels.
ANCL	Ante-Nicene Christian Library, Edinburgh.
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers, Buffalo/New York.
ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt, ed H. Temporini <i>et al.</i> , Berlin.
AnSt	Anatolian Studies, London.
AnThA	Année théologique augustinienne, Paris.
APOT	Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English, ed. R.E. Charles, Oxford.
AR	Archivum Romanicum, Florence.
ARW	Archiv für Religionswissenschaft, Berlin/Leipzig.
ASS	Acta Sanctorum, ed. the Bollandists, Brussels.
AThANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments, Zürich.
Aug	Augustinianum, Rome.
AugSt	Augustinian Studies, Villanova (USA).
AW	Athanasius Werke, ed. H.-G. Opitz <i>et al.</i> , Berlin.
AZ	Archäologische Zeitung, Berlin.
BA	Bibliothèque augustinienne, Paris.
BAC	Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid.
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, New Haven, Conn.
BDAG	A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 3rd edn F.W. Danker, Chicago.
BEHE	Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Paris.
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, Louvain.
BGL	Benedictinisches Geistesleben, St. Ottilien.
BHG	Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca, Brussels.
BHL	Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina Antiquae et Mediae Aetatis, Brussels.

BHO	Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis, Brussels.
BHTh	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie, Tübingen.
BJ	Bursians Jahresbericht über die Fortschritte der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft, Leipzig.
BJRULM	Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Manchester.
BKV	Bibliothek der Kirchenväter, ed. F.X. Reithmayr and V. Thalhofer, Kempten.
BKV2	Bibliothek der Kirchenväter, ed. O. Bardenhewer, Th. Schermann, and C. Weyman, Kempten/Munich.
BKV3	Bibliothek der Kirchenväter. Zweite Reihe, ed. O. Bardenhewer, J. Zellingner, and J. Martin, Munich.
BLE	Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique, Toulouse.
BoJ	Bonner Jahrbücher, Bonn.
BS	Bibliotheca sacra, London.
BSL	Bolletino di studi latini, Naples.
BWAT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten Testament, Leipzig/Stuttgart.
Byz	Byzantion, Leuven.
BZ	Byzantinische Zeitschrift, Leipzig.
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, Berlin.
CAR	Cahiers Archéologique, Paris.
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Washington.
CChr.CM	Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, Turnhout/Paris.
CChr.SA	Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum, Turnhout/Paris.
CChr.SG	Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca, Turnhout/Paris.
CChr.SL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, Turnhout/Paris.
CH	Church History, Chicago.
CIL	Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, Berlin.
CP(h)	Classical Philology, Chicago.
CPG	Clavis Patrum Graecorum, ed. M. Geerard, vols. I-VI, Turnhout.
CPL	Clavis Patrum Latinorum (SE 3), ed. E. Dekkers and A. Gaar, Turnhout.
CQ	Classical Quarterly, London/Oxford.
CR	The Classical Review, London/Oxford.
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Louvain. Aeth = Scriptorum Aethiopicum Ar = Scriptorum Arabicum Arm = Scriptorum Armeniacum Copt = Scriptorum Copticum Iber = Scriptorum Ibericum Syr = Scriptorum Syriacum Subs = Subsidia
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, Vienna.
CSHB	Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae, Bonn.
CTh	Collectanea Theologica, Lvov.
CUF	Collection des Universités de France publiée sous le patronage de l'Association Guillaume Budé, Paris.
CW	Catholic World, New York.
DAC	Dictionary of the Apostolic Church, ed. J. Hastings, Edinburgh.

DACL	see DAL
DAL	Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie, ed. F. Cabrol, H. Leclercq, Paris.
DB	Dictionnaire de la Bible, Paris.
DBS	Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément, Paris.
DCB	Dictionary of Christian Biography, Literature, Sects, and Doctrines, ed. W. Smith and H. Wace, 4 vols, London.
DHGE	Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastique, ed. A. Baudrillart, Paris.
Did	Didaskalia, Lisbon.
DOP	Dumbarton Oaks Papers, Cambridge, Mass., subsequently Washington, D.C.
DOS	Dumbarton Oaks Studies, Cambridge, Mass., subsequently Washington, D.C.
DR	Downside Review, Stratton on the Fosse, Bath.
DS	H.J. Denzinger and A. Schönmetzer, ed., <i>Enchiridion Symbolorum</i> , Barcelona/Freiburg i.B./Rome.
DSp	Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, ed. M. Viller, S.J., and others, Paris.
DTC	Dictionnaire de théologie catholique, ed. A. Vacant, E. Mangenot, and E. Amann, Paris.
EA	Études augustinienes, Paris.
ECatt	Enciclopedia Cattolica, Rome.
ECQ	Eastern Churches Quarterly, Ramsgate.
EE	Estudios eclesiasticos, Madrid.
EECh	Encyclopedia of the Early Church, ed. A. Di Berardino, Cambridge.
EKK	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, Neukirchen.
EH	Enchiridion Fontium Historiae Ecclesiasticae Antiquae, ed. Ueding-Kirch, 6th ed., Barcelona.
EO	Échos d'Orient, Paris.
EtByz	Études Byzantines, Paris.
ETL	Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses, Louvain.
EWNT	Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum NT, ed. H.R. Balz <i>et al.</i> , Stuttgart.
ExpT	The Expository Times, Edinburgh.
FC	The Fathers of the Church, New York.
FGH	Fragmente der griechischen Historiker, Berlin.
FKDG	Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte, Göttingen.
FRL	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments, Göttingen.
FS	Festschrift.
FThSt	Freiburger theologische Studien, Freiburg i.B.
FTS	Frankfurter theologische Studien, Frankfurt a.M.
FZThPh	Freiburger Zeitschrift für Theologie und Philosophie, Freiburg/Switzerland.
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller, Leipzig/Berlin.
GDV	Geschichtsschreiber der deutschen Vorzeit, Stuttgart.
GLNT	Grande Lessico del Nuovo Testamento, Genoa.
GNO	Gregorii Nysseni Opera, Leiden.

GRBS	Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies, Cambridge, Mass.
GWV	Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht, Offenburg.
HbNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament. Tübingen.
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion, Missoula.
HJG	Historisches Jahrbuch der Görresgesellschaft, successively Munich, Cologne and Munich/Freiburg i.B.
HKG	Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte, Tübingen.
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, Tübingen.
HO	Handbuch der Orientalistik, Leiden.
HSCP	Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, Cambridge, Mass.
HTR	Harvard Theological Review, Cambridge, Mass.
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies, Cambridge, Mass.
HZ	Historische Zeitschrift, Munich/Berlin.
ICC	The International Critical Commentary of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, Edinburgh.
ILCV	Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres, ed. E. Diehl, Berlin.
ILS	Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae, ed. H. Dessau, Berlin.
J(b)AC	Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Münster.
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature, Philadelphia, Pa., then various places.
JdI	Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Berlin.
JECS	Journal of Early Christian Studies, Baltimore.
JEH	The Journal of Ecclesiastical History, London.
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies, London.
JLH	Jahrbuch für Liturgik und Hymnologie, Kassel.
JPTh	Jahrbücher für protestantische Theologie, Leipzig/Freiburg i.B.
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review, Philadelphia.
JRS	Journal of Roman Studies, London.
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period, Leiden.
JSOR	Journal of the Society of Oriental Research, Chicago.
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies, Oxford.
KAV	Kommentar zu den apostolischen Vätern, Göttingen.
KēTh	Kerk en Theologie, 's Gravenhage.
KJ(b)	Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, Gütersloh.
LCL	The Loeb Classical Library, London/Cambridge, Mass.
LNPF	A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, ed. P. Schaff and H. Wace, Buffalo/New York.
L(O)F	Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church, Oxford.
LSJ	H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, new (9th) edn H.S. Jones, Oxford.
LThK	Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche, Freiburg i.B.
MA	Moyen-Âge, Brussels.
MAMA	Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua, London.
Mansi	J.D. Mansi, Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio, Florence, 1759-1798. Reprint and continuation: Paris/Leipzig, 1901-1927.
MBTh	Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie, Münster.

MCom	Miscelanea Comillas, Comillas/Santander.
MGH	Monumenta germaniae historica. Hanover/Berlin.
ML	Mediaevalia Lovaniensia, Louvain.
MPG	See PG.
MSR	Mélanges de science religieuse, Lille.
MThZ	Münchener theologische Zeitschrift, Munich.
Mus	Le Muséon, Louvain.
NGWG	Nachrichten der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen.
NH(M)S	Nag Hammadi (and Manichaean) Studies, Leiden.
NovTest	Novum Testamentum, Leiden.
NPNF	See LNPF.
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version.
NRTh	Nouvelle Revue Théologique, Tournai/Louvain/Paris.
NTA	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen, Münster.
NT.S	Novum Testamentum Supplements, Leiden.
NTS	New Testament Studies, Cambridge/Washington.
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis, Freiburg, Switz.
OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta, Rome.
OCP	Orientalia Christiana Periodica, Rome.
OECS	Oxford Early Christian Studies, Oxford.
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, Louvain.
OLP	Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica, Louvain.
Or	Orientalia. Commentarii editi a Pontificio Instituto Biblico, Rome.
OrChr	Oriens Christianus, Leipzig, then Wiesbaden.
OrSy	L'Orient Syrien, Paris.
PG	Migne, Patrologia, series graeca.
PGL	A Patristic Greek Lexicon, ed. G.L. Lampe, Oxford.
PL	Migne, Patrologia, series latina.
PLRE	The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire, ed. A.H.M. Jones <i>et al.</i> , Cambridge.
PLS	Migne, Patrologia, series latina. Supplementum ed. A. Hamman.
PO	Patrologia Orientalis, Paris.
PRE	Paulys Realenzyklopädie der classischen Alterthumswissenschaft, Stuttgart.
PS	Patrologia Syriaca, Paris.
PTA	Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen, Bonn.
PTHr	Princeton Theological Review, Princeton.
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien, Berlin.
PW	Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft, ed. G. Wissowa, Stuttgart.
QLP	Questions liturgiques et paroissiales, Louvain.
QuLi	Questions liturgiques, Louvain
RAC	Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana, Rome.
RACH	Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum, Stuttgart.
RAM	Revue d'ascétique et de mystique, Paris.
RAug	Recherches Augustiniennes, Paris.
RBen	Revue Bénédictine, Maredsous.
RB(ibl)	Revue biblique, Paris.

RE	Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche, founded by J.J. Herzog, 3e ed. A. Hauck, Leipzig.
REA(ug)	Revue des études Augustiniennes, Paris.
REB	Revue des études byzantines, Paris.
RED	Rerum ecclesiasticarum documenta, Rome.
RÉL	Revue des études latines, Paris.
REG	Revue des études grecques, Paris.
RevSR	Revue des sciences religieuses, Strasbourg.
RevThom	Revue thomiste, Toulouse.
RFIC	Rivista di filologia e d'istruzione classica, Turin.
RGG	Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, ed. Gunkel-Zscharnack, Tübingen
RHE	Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique, Louvain.
RhMus	Rheinisches Museum für Philologie, Bonn.
RHR	Revue de l'histoire des religions, Paris.
RHT	Revue d'Histoire des Textes, Paris.
RMAL	Revue du Moyen-Âge Latin, Paris.
ROC	Revue de l'Orient chrétien, Paris.
RPh	Revue de philologie, Paris.
RQ	Römische Quartalschrift, Freiburg i.B.
RQH	Revue des questions historiques, Paris.
RSLR	Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa, Florence.
RSPT, RSPH	Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques, Paris.
RSR	Recherches de science religieuse, Paris.
RTAM	Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale, Louvain.
RthL	Revue théologique de Louvain, Louvain.
RTM	Rivista di teologia morale, Bologna.
Sal	Salesianum, Roma.
SBA	Schweizerische Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft, Basel.
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien, Stuttgart.
ScEc	Sciences ecclésiastiques, Bruges.
SCh, SC	Sources chrétiennes, Paris.
SD	Studies and Documents, ed. K. Lake and S. Lake. London/Philadelphia.
SE	Sacris Erudiri, Bruges.
SDHI	Studia et documenta historiae et iuris, Roma.
SH	Subsidia Hagiographica, Brussels.
SHA	Scriptores Historiae Augustae.
SJMS	Speculum. Journal of Mediaeval Studies, Cambridge, Mass.
SM	Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktinerordens und seiner Zweige, Munich.
SO	Symbolae Osloenses, Oslo.
SP	Studia Patristica, successively Berlin, Kalamazoo, Leuven.
SPM	Stromata Patristica et Mediaevalia, ed. C. Mohrman and J. Quasten, Utrecht.
SQ	Sammlung ausgewählter Quellenschriften zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte, Tübingen.
SQAW	Schriften und Quellen der Alten Welt, Berlin.
SSL	Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, Louvain.

StudMed	Studi Medievali, Turin.
SVigChr	Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, Leiden.
SVF	Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta, ed. J. von Arnim, Leipzig.
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Grand Rapids, Mich.
TE	Teologia espiritual, Valencia.
ThGl	Theologie und Glaube, Paderborn.
ThJ	Theologische Jahrbücher, Leipzig.
ThLZ	Theologische Literaturzeitung, Leipzig.
ThPh	Theologie und Philosophie, Freiburg i.B.
ThQ	Theologische Quartalschrift, Tübingen.
ThR	Theologische Rundschau, Tübingen.
ThWAT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament, Stuttgart.
ThWNT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, Stuttgart.
ThZ	Theologische Zeitschrift, Basel.
TLG	Thesaurus Linguae Graecae.
TP	Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association, Lancaster, Pa.
TRE	Theologische Realenzyklopädie, Berlin.
TS	Theological Studies, New York and various places; now Washington, D.C.
TThZ	Trierer theologische Zeitschrift, Trier.
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen, Leipzig/Berlin.
USQR	Union Seminary Quarterly Review, New York.
VC	Vigiliae Christianae, Amsterdam.
VetChr	Vetera Christianorum, Bari (Italy).
VT	Vetus Testamentum, Leiden.
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary, Waco.
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, Tübingen.
WZKM	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, Vienna.
YUP	Yale University Press, New Haven.
ZAC	Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum, Berlin.
ZAM	Zeitschrift für Ascese und Mystik, Innsbruck, then Würzburg.
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, Giessen, then Berlin.
ZDPV	Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins, Leipzig.
ZKG	Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte, Gotha, then Stuttgart.
ZKTh	Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie, Vienna.
ZNW	Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche, Giessen, then Berlin.
ZRG	Zeitschrift für Rechtsgeschichte, Weimar.
ZThK	Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, Tübingen.

**FROM THE FOURTH CENTURY ONWARDS
(LATIN WRITERS)**

Comparing Institutes: Lactantius' *Divinae Institutiones* in Calvin's *Institutio christianae religionis* 1.1-5

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ABSTRACT

Though a number of studies have appeared over the years concerning the influence of Cicero upon Calvin's *Institutio*, very little has been written on the possible influence of the 'Christian Cicero', Lactantius. This article examines the congruities and commonalities between Calvin's *Institutio* 1.1-5 and the works of Lactantius, in particular his *Divinae Institutiones*. First, it exposit Calvin's *Institutio* 1.1-5, emphasizing those portions of the text which resonate with the thought of Lactantius. Second, this article provides an integrated account of Lactantius' thought following the topical order provided by Calvin's text. This study ends with a summary of the points and features which they share. Finally, this paper asserts that, given the preponderance of material held in common by these two authors, Lactantius significantly influenced Calvin. More specifically, Lactantius ought to be viewed as a thinker who mediated Calvin's treatment and assessment of classical authors.

Introduction¹

A number of studies have appeared over the years concerning the influence of Cicero upon Calvin's *Institutio*, particularly in regard to the opening chapters of Book 1.² Yet very little has been written examining the possible influence

¹ Latin editions of the texts used in this paper are: *Corpus Reformatorum: Johannis Calvini Opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. by Guilielmus Baum *et al.*, Vol. 30 (Brunsviga, 1864) (= CR 30); *Lactance, La colère de Dieu*, ed. Christiane Ingremeau, SC 289 (Paris, 1982) (= SC 289); *Lactance, L'ouvrage du dieu créateur*, ed. Michel Perrin, SC 213 (Paris, 1974) (= SC 213); *Lactanti Epitome Divinarum Institutionum*, ed. by E. Heck and A. Wlosok, Bibliotheca Teubneriana (Leipzig, 1994) (= BT 1994); *Lactantius Divinarum Institutionum*, ed. by E. Heck and A. Wlosok, Bibliotheca Teubneriana, 4 vols. (Munich/Berlin, 2005-2011) (= BT); *M. Tulli Ciceronis De natura deorum*, ed. by Arthur S. Pease, 2 vols. (New York, 1979) (= Pease). Latin quotations given in this paper have been slightly altered from the original text for the benefit of readability (*e.g.*, 'v' = 'u', 'j' = 'i'). English quotations have been taken from: John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols. (Louisville, 1960). All other translations are the author's own.

² See Egil Grislis, 'Calvin's Use of Cicero in the *Institutes* I:1-5: A Case Study in Theological Method', *ARG* 62 (1971), 5-37; Peter J. Leithart, 'That Eminent Pagan: Calvin's Use of Cicero in *Institutes* 1.1-5', *WTJ* 52 (1990), 1-12; Victor L. Nuovo, *Calvin's Theology: A Study*

of the ‘Christian Cicero’,³ Lactantius, upon this portion of Calvin’s text.⁴ It is the aim of this article, therefore, to illuminate those areas of congruity and commonality which Lactantius and Calvin share.⁵ In doing so, this article seeks to demonstrate that Lactantius’ influence on Calvin in *Institutio* 1.1-5 is significant, and suggests that Lactantius’ impact primarily concerns the manner in which Calvin employs his classical sources. This article confines itself, largely, to a treatment of Calvin’s *Institutio* 1.1-5 due to constraints of time and space. Following an exposition of the *Institutio*, this article will then address Lactantius’ positions on the areas touched upon in Calvin’s text. Since the first five chapters of Calvin’s *Institutio* provide the *locus* for this study, the treatment of Lactantius will follow Calvin’s text topically and integrate material from Lactantius’ entire *corpus*, but draw principally from his *Institutiones*.

Calvin’s *Institutio* 1.1-5

At the start of the *Institutio*, Calvin introduces the notion of a ‘twofold knowledge’ (*duplex cognitio*) of God, *i.e.*, knowledge of God as Creator and knowledge of God as Redeemer (*Inst.* 1.2.1). The former, about which the first book of the *Institutio* is concerned, is ‘the primal and simple knowledge to which the very order of nature would have led us if Adam had remained upright’.⁶ In short, knowledge of God as Creator refers to ‘natural theology’, the evidence of which resides in the human person and in the created order. For this natural theology to be true knowledge of God, however, it must meet the demands of piety. ‘Indeed, we shall not say that, properly speaking, God is known where there is no religion or piety’.⁷

of Its Sources in Classical Antiquity, Dissertation (New York, 1964); Charles Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy* (Louisville, 1977); David C. Steinmetz, ‘Calvin as Biblical Interpreter Among the Ancient Philosophers’, *Interpretation* 63 (2009), 142-53; B.J. van der Walt, ‘Philosophical and theological influences in John Calvin’s thought: reviewing some research results’, *In die Skriflig* 44 (2010), 105-27.

³ Pico della Mirandola, *De studio divinae atque humanae philosophiae* 1.7.

⁴ See, for example, Lactantius’ omission or passing reference in: Anthony N.S. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Grand Rapids, 1999), 59, 246; Johannes van Oort, ‘John Calvin and the Church Fathers’, in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, ed. Irena Backus (New York, 1997), 661-700.

⁵ It is quite certain that Calvin possessed firsthand knowledge of Lactantius’ texts. Lactantius is mentioned by name in his works, although sparingly, in several places (see *Inst.* 1.4.3, 11.6; *Comm. in Rom.* 10.2; *Comm. in Gen.* 6.3; *Comm. in 2 Thess.* 2.1). Further, a number of editions of Lactantius’ complete works were in circulation in the 16th century; including a copy of *De opificio Dei* edited by Erasmus (Paris, 1529).

⁶ *Inst.* 1.2.1 (CR 30, 34): (*notitia*) *prima illa et simplici (...), ad quam nos deduceret genuinus naturae ordo si integer stetisset Adam.*

⁷ *Inst.* 1.2.1 (CR 30, 34): *Neque enim Deum, proprie loquendo, cognosci dicemus ubi nulla est religio nec pietas.*

The demands of piety require that, in order to be true knowledge of God, it is not sufficient to discern God's oneness, but also to apprehend the all-encompassing nature of his providence.

This I take to mean that not only does he sustain this universe (as he once founded it) by his boundless might, regulate it by his wisdom, preserve it by his goodness, and especially rule mankind by his righteousness and judgement, bear with it in his mercy, watch over it by his protection; but also that no drop will be found either of wisdom and light, or of righteousness or power or rectitude, or of genuine truth, which does not flow from him, and which he is not the cause.⁸

Calvin excludes the possibility, therefore, that the natural knowledge of God at which many of the classical philosophers arrived constitutes true knowledge since it falls short of the standard established by piety. Though they may have apprehended many divine attributes, such as God's oneness and providence in the general sense, they lack an understanding of the totality of God's providence. Cicero, for example, affirmed that God's providence extends to overseeing the course of human history, but only in a general sense. '[The gods] care for great things', says the character Balbus in *De natura deorum*, 'they neglect little things'.⁹ This understanding of God's providence is insufficient to constitute piety for Calvin. Rather, piety demands knowledge of God's providence that is sufficient to produce love and fear in the believer. 'I call "piety" that reverence joined with love of God which the knowledge of his benefits induces'.¹⁰ Elaborating on this definition of piety, Calvin states that true knowledge of God 'should serve first to teach us fear and reverence'.¹¹ Second, if fear and reverence are genuine, from them will 'arise the desire to cleave to [God] and trust in him'.¹² Piety, then, is to be found in fearing God as 'lord' and loving him as 'father' (*dominum ac patrem*).¹³ 'Here indeed is pure and real religion: faith so joined with an earnest fear of God that this fear also embraces willing reverence'.¹⁴

⁸ *Inst.* 1.2.1 (CR 30, 34): *Hoc ita accipio, non solum quod mundum hunc, ut semel condidit, sic immensa potentia sustineat, sapientia moderetur, bonitate conservat, humanum genus praesertim Justitia judicioque regat, misericordia tolerat, praesidia tueatur, sed quia nusquam, vel sapientiae ac lucis, vel justitiae, vel potentiae, vel rectitudinis, vel sinceræ veritatis gutta reperietur quae non ab ipso fluat, et cujus ipse non sit causa.*

⁹ *Nat. D.* 2.167 (Pease, 973): *Magna di curant, parva neglegunt.*

¹⁰ *Inst.* 1.2.1 (CR 30, 34): *Pietantem voco conjunctam cum amore Dei reverentiam quam beneficiorum ejus notitia conciliat.*

¹¹ *Inst.* 1.2.1 (CR 30, 35): *valere debet (...) primum ut ad timorem ac reverentiam nos instituat.*

¹² *Inst.* 1.2.1 (CR 30, 35): *desiderium illi adhaerendi, et fiducia in ipsum nasceretur.*

¹³ Calvin uses this terminology on two occasions in *Inst.* 1.2.1 (CR 30, 35).

¹⁴ *Inst.* 1.2.1 (CR 30, 35): *En quid sit pura germanaque religio, nempe fides cum serio Dei timore conjuncta; ut timor et voluntarium reverentiam in se contineat.*

According to Calvin, very few people truly possess piety, yet all have ‘a vague general veneration for God’.¹⁵ The reformer confirms that God has implanted in every human person ‘a natural instinct, a divine sense’.¹⁶ The existence of the world’s religions demonstrates that this spiritual sense exists in the human person (*Inst.* 1.3.1; see Cic., *Nat. D.* 1.43). Further, it is the perfection of this capacity – *i.e.*, true worship of God – which separates human beings from the remainder of creation (*Inst.* 1.3.3). ‘It is worship of God alone that renders men higher than the brutes, and through it alone they aspire to immortality’.¹⁷ Elsewhere in the *Institutio*, Calvin offers the *status rectus* of the human person as proof of this claim. “[W]hile all other living things being bent over look earthward, man has been given a face uplifted, bidden to gaze heavenward and to raise his countenance to the stars”.¹⁸

This ‘seed of religion’ (*religionis semen*), however, remains sterile in most human beings according to Calvin (*Inst.* 1.4.1). Some willfully repel ‘all remembrance of God, although this is freely suggested to them inwardly from the feeling of nature’.¹⁹ While not explicitly denying God’s existence, in denying that he providentially created, sustains, and directs all that exists, these individuals make God an irrelevant hypothesis; thereby denying his existence implicitly.²⁰ In others the spiritual sense is misdirected towards superstition. In either case, when God is worshipped contrary to his wishes, what is in fact being worshipped is an idol of human invention. With Lactantius, Calvin affirms that ‘no religion is genuine unless it be joined with truth’.²¹ Misguided

¹⁵ *Inst.* 1.2.1 (CR 30, 34-5): *promiscue venerantur Deum*.

¹⁶ *Inst.* 1.3.1 (CR 30, 36): *naturali instinctu, divinitatis sensum*. For a summary of the scholarly opinion regarding the distinction and relationship between the *semen religionis* and the *sensus divinitatis* see P. Leithart, ‘That Eminent Pagan’ (1990), 7-8 n. 28. Despite any differences which may exist between these two terms as Calvin understands them, what is clear is that the *semen religionis* and/or *sensus divinitatis* are not simply passive receptors of information; although they are that as well. The reformer unambiguously adds the external data provided by creation to the *semen religionis* as a source of knowledge about God (*Inst.* 1.5.1). The *sensus divinitatis* allows us to apprehend the data which reveals God’s presence (either natural or supernatural), but it – and/or the *semen religionis* – is also a source of knowledge about God. There may be a congruence here between Calvin and the Epicurean doctrine of prolepsis or *anticipatio*. See Cic., *Nat. D.* 1.43-4. The Stoic position, on the other hand, would see the *sensus divinitatis* as a capacity to know God by the light of reason and through his effects. It would not be a source of knowing God *per se* without external data. See *Nat. D.* 2.4.

¹⁷ *Inst.* 1.3.3 (CR 30, 38): *Unum ergo esse Dei cultum, qui superiores ipsos reddat, per quem solum ad immortalitatem aspiratur*. See Cic., *Leg.* 1.24.

¹⁸ *Inst.* 1.15.3 (CR 30, 136): *quod quum prona spectent animalia caetera terram, os homini sublime datum est, coelumque videre jussus, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus*. Quot. Ov., *Met.* 1.84-6; see Cic., *Nat. D.* 2.140; *DI* 2.1.15.

¹⁹ *Inst.* 1.4.2 (CR 30, 39): *omnem Dei memoriam quae tamen illis sponte a naturae sensu intus suggeritur*.

²⁰ See Cic., *Nat. D.* 1.54, 85, 123.

²¹ *Inst.* 1.4.3 (CR 30, 40): *nullam esse legitimam religionem nisi cum veritate conjunctam*. See *Comm. in Rom.* 10.2. This is a paraphrase of, rather a quotation from, Lactantius. See *DI* 4.28.11.

expressions of spiritual desire gone awry, however, only confirm Calvin in his belief that 'a sense of divinity is by nature engraven on human hearts'.²² Yet, 'this seed is so corrupted that by itself it produces only the worst fruit'.²³

In addition to the *semen religionis*, 'the whole workmanship of the universe' (*toto mundi opificio*) reveals the existence of God (*Inst.* 1.5.1). Though God is incomprehensible in his essence, the created order is the 'sign' (*insignem*) of his glory. '[W]herever you cast your eyes, there is no spot in the universe wherein you cannot discern at least some sparks of his glory. You cannot in one glance survey this most vast and beautiful system of the universe, in its wide expanse, without being completely overwhelmed by the boundless force of its brightness'.²⁴ While the providential workings of the universe can lead the learned to knowledge of God more effectively than the unlettered, God's glory is everywhere apparent in his creation 'even to the most untutored and ignorant persons [...]. It is, accordingly, clear that there is no one to whom the Lord does not abundantly show his wisdom'.²⁵ A particularly striking piece of evidence in this regard is the human body. In 'its articulation, symmetry, beauty, and use, [...] the human body shows itself to be a composition so ingenious that its Artificer is rightly judged a wonder-worker'.²⁶

Yet, despite the clear and ubiquitous evidence found in creation, human beings conceal these 'signs of divinity' (*divinitatis signa*) though they are 'compelled' (*coguntur*) to witness them (*Inst.* 1.5.4; see 1.5.1, 5.2). Ignoring this proof, some have substituted nature for God; though the natural world everywhere bears signs of being guided by a provident intellect (*Inst.* 1.5.4; see 1.5.5; *Lucr.* 1.54-79; *Cic., Nat. D.* 2.4). While Calvin would agree that 'nature is God', in order to avoid a pantheistic interpretation of this adage he states more precisely that 'nature is rather the order prescribed by God'.²⁷ Calvin's point in digressing to reject certain erroneous positions here is to demonstrate

²² *Inst.* 1.4.4 (CR 30, 41): *naturaliter insculptum esse deitatis sensum humanis cordibus.*

²³ *Inst.* 1.4.4 (CR 30, 41): *ipsum (semen) adeo corruptum, ut non nisi pessimos ex se fructus producat.*

²⁴ *Inst.* 1.5.1 (CR 30, 42): *quaquaversum oculos conjicias, nulla est mundi particula in qua non scintillae saltem aliquae gloriae ipsius emicare cernantur. Amplissimam vero hanc et pulcherrimam machinam, quam late patet, uno intuitu lustrare nequeas quin vi immensa fulgoris totus undique obruaris.* See *Cic., Nat. D.* 2.4. For Calvin's more detailed treatment of providence, see *Inst.* 1.16-8.

²⁵ *Inst.* 1.5.2 (CR 30, 42): *sed quae rudissimi cujusque idiotae (...) constat neminem esse cui non abunde sapientiam suam Dominus patefaciat.*

²⁶ *Inst.* 1.5.2 (CR 30, 42-3): *structura connexionem, symmetriam, pulchritudinem, usum, (...) prae se fert corpus humanum tam ingeniosam compositionem, ut ob eam merito admirabilis opifex judicetur.* See *Cic., Nat. D.* 2.133-50.

²⁷ *Inst.* 1.5.5 (CR 30, 45): *naturam esse Deum (...) potius natura sit ordo a Deo praescriptus.* For Calvin, nature is God but God is not nature. In other words, creation manifests God's glory but God is not confined by the natural world. One editor has noted that the sympathy shown here to the Stoic position may be derived from Lactantius' appreciation of Seneca. See J. Calvin, *Institutes* (1960), 58-9 n. 22; *DI* 2.8.23.

that the workings of providence are available for all to ponder, by ‘strangers and natives’ to God’s homeland alike (*exteris et domesticis*) (*Inst.* 1.5.6). In short, those who have erred in their judgment cannot blame the data.

Calvin’s final judgment, then, is that while human beings have the ‘seed of religion’ within them, and the workings of divine providence in the universe outside of them, these ‘can of themselves in no way lead us into the right path. [...] [W]e have not the eyes to see this unless they be illuminated by the inner revelation of God through faith’.²⁸ Because this evidence exists, however, human beings cannot plead ignorance. ‘[A]ll excuse is cut off because the fault of dullness is within us’.²⁹ Human beings have blinded themselves to the promptings of nature and, thus, the culpability is ‘imputed to them’ (*hominum vito imputandum sit*) (*Inst.* 1.5.15). ‘Therefore we are justly denied every excuse when we stray off as wanderers and vagrants even though everything points out the right way’.³⁰

Lactantius

Following upon the topical order established by Calvin’s *Institutio*, the first issue which deserves address is that of the natural knowledge of God. Like Calvin, Lactantius uses the classical philosophers as examples of the limits of natural theology. The apologist maintains that the classical philosophers are not suitable guides for the pursuit of true wisdom because none have succeeded in attaining it. The philosophers’ efforts resulted in failure because true wisdom is not something which human beings can attain by their own efforts (*DI* 1.1.19-20; 2.3.21). The possession of true wisdom is the province of God and God alone. If human beings were able to attain true wisdom without God’s revelation then there would be no distinction between God and humankind (*DI* 1.1.5). Though human beings possess a natural capacity to know God, true wisdom always remains hidden unless revealed by God. Lactantius establishes parameters by which to evaluate knowledge of God. The apologist acknowledges that some philosophers have grasped certain truths concerning the divine nature, but none can be said to have possessed true wisdom (*DI* 1.5.28; 3.27.1).

²⁸ *Inst.* 1.5.14 (CR 30, 51, 52): *in rectam viam per se nequaquam possint perducere. (...) perspicendam non esse nobis oculos, nisi interiore Dei revelatione per fidem illuminentur.*

²⁹ *Inst.* 1.5.15 (CR 30, 52): *quia tamen hebetudinis vitium intra nos est, praecisa est omnis tergiversatio.* Later, Calvin is more explicit that the human person’s inability to recognize God in the created universe by his natural capacities is the result of sin (*Inst.* 1.15.4; see 1.2.1; 2.2.12).

³⁰ *Inst.* 1.5.15 (CR 30, 52): *Quare omni prorsus excusatione merito excludimur, quod vagi et palantes aberramus, quum omnia rectam viam demonstrent.* Calvin’s thesis and agenda in *Inst.* 1.5 are Pauline (*Rom.* 1:19-32). Though human beings are everywhere compelled to see God, they deliberately blind themselves to or distort the image of God. Thus, they are without a justifiable excuse for their ignorance. See P. Leithart, ‘That Eminent Pagan’ (1990), 6.

True wisdom can be said to exist only where it is united to true religion (*DI* 1.1.25; 4.3.2). '[B]ecause philosophy does not possess religion, that is, ultimate piety, it is not true wisdom'.³¹ Conversely, because the cult of the pantheon fails to seek wisdom and virtue, it is not true religion (*DI* 4.3.1-2; 5.19.27-34). These two qualities are inextricably united and, together, form a standard to which true knowledge of God must conform. 'Neither can religion be separated from wisdom nor wisdom severed from religion; because it is the same God whom we should both understand, which is wisdom, and honor, which is religion'.³²

According to Lactantius, knowledge of God may be considered true wisdom if it acknowledges God's oneness and providence. 'Wisdom is perfect in the person if s/he knows that God is one, and that all things were made by him'.³³ Despite the simplicity of this quotation, Lactantius is elsewhere more detailed concerning the content of true wisdom.

Now let us seal the whole argument briefly in outline. The reason why the world was made was so that we might be born. We were born so that we might acknowledge the world's maker and our God. We acknowledge and worship him so that we might receive immortality as a reward for our labors – the worship of God contains the greatest labors. We are granted immortality as a reward so that we might serve the supreme father and lord forever, becoming like the angels, and be God's eternal kingdom. This is the sum of it all: the secret of God, the mystery of the world.³⁴

Individual statements contained in the above quotation, what one might call Lactantius' *kerygma*, were apprehended by several philosophers (*DI* 7.7.14); and Lactantius even intimates that had any philosopher understood the whole then s/he would have grasped the entire truth (*DI* 7.7.1; see 7.5.2). But true wisdom is a unified, integrated and indivisible whole. One must possess the 'entire truth' (*totam veritatem*) (*DI* 7.7.14) in order to possess it at all. The

³¹ *DI* 4.3.2 (BT, 316): *philosophia quia religionem id est summam pietatem non habet, non est vera sapientia*. See *DI* 3.28.1.

³² *DI* 4.4.2 (BT, 320): *Non potest igitur nec religio a sapientia separari nec sapientia a religion secerni, quia idem deus est qui et intellegi debet, quod est sapientia, et honorari, quod est religionis*. See *DI* 4.3.6; 6.25.7; *Epi.* 36.5.

³³ *DI* 2.8.71 (BT, 163): *Perfecta est in homine sapientia, si et deum esse unum et ab ipso facta esse universa cognoscat*. See Arthur L. Fisher, 'Lactantius' Ideas Relating Christian Truth and Christian Society', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 43/3 (1982), 359.

³⁴ *DI* 7.6.1 (BT, 668): *Nunc totam rationem brevi circumscriptione signemus. Idcirco mundus factus est, ut nascamur; ideo nascimur, ut agnoscamus factorem mundi ac nostri deum; ideo agnoscimus, ut colamus; ideo colimus, ut immortalitatem pro laborum mercede capiamus, quoniam maximis laboris cultus dei constat; ideo praemio immortalitatis adficimur, ut similes angelis effecti summo patri ac domino in perpetuum serviamus et simus aeternum deo regnum*. (2) *Haec summa rerum est, hoc arcanum dei, hoc mysterium mundi*. See *Epi.* 64.1. Notice the adverbs *idcirco* and *ideo*, and the corresponding use of *ut* clauses which stress the providentially-designed end for which the human person was created. See Tadeusz Maslowski, 'The Opponents of Lactantius (*Inst.* VII. 7, 7-13)', *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 7 (1975), 190.

philosophers ‘could perceive neither the causes, nor the reasons, nor the results of this divine work and counsel, so as to consummate the entire secret of the truth and bring it likewise to some final conclusion’.³⁵ In this sense, while acknowledging fragments of the truth scattered among them, Lactantius can affirm that the philosophers were ignorant of the ‘wisdom of heaven’ (*caelesti sapientia*) (*DI* 3.15.4; see 3.1.14) and far removed from the truth (*DI* 3.30.1; see *Epi.* 25.2).

Further, since true wisdom is inseparably united to true religion, the former can only be found where the latter resides. True religion is the acknowledgement – in both thought (wisdom) and deed (worship) – of God as both ‘lord’ (*dominus*) and ‘father’ (*pater*).³⁶ ‘God is one since he sustains the role of both father and lord. We ought to love him because we are his children, and fear him because we are his servants’.³⁷ Thus, true wisdom cannot be found where God is not loved and feared, for these are the demands of piety or true worship (*DI* 4.3.1-3). The human person, by virtue of being the only portion of God’s creation endowed with the gift of reason, has the potential to apprehend God’s unity and providence and, by doing so, to acknowledge that he is the one Father and Lord of all that exists (*Epi.* 36.3). It is in this knowledge that wisdom resides (*DI* 2.8.71; 3.30.3). In addition, to understand God’s paternity and dominion over the universe is to recognize one’s relationship to God within this dynamic existence. In other words, if God is the father and lord of the cosmos, then human beings – his only creatures capable of apprehending this wisdom – are ‘bound’ (*religare*) to him (see *DI* 4.28.3-12). Human beings are obliged to offer God the veneration and worship which is due to him as the one father and lord of creation. ‘Worship must therefore be given to the One who can truly be called father. The same One must also be lord because he can forgive and, thus, also punish’.³⁸ Though individuals such as Plato or Cicero may have grasped

³⁵ *Epi.* 62.8 (BT 1994, 102): *hujus tamen divini operis atque consilii nec causas nec rationes nec exitus perspexerunt, ut omne veritatis arcanum consummarent atque aliquo veluti fine concluderent.* See *DI* 3.28.18-9.

³⁶ The pairing of these titles to describe how the pious individual relates to God is an integral part of Lactantius’ view of religion and a major contribution of the apologist to Christian thought. The theme of God as *dominus et pater* appears in Tertullian (*Apol.* 34), as does the concept of *vera religio* (*Apol.* 24), but these ideas are developed extensively by Lactantius. The description of God as *pater et dominus* appears throughout Lactantius’ works in his discussions of God’s unity (*DI* 1.6.4, 7.3; *Epi.* 2.2), religion (*DI* 4.3.13, 4.2, 6, 11, 28.12; *Epi.* 36.3; *ID* 24.2), justice (*DI* 5.18.14; *Epi.* 51.1, 54.4), repentance (*DI* 6.24.4), and providence (*DI* 2.27.5; *ID* 19.6). See Elizabeth DePalma Digeser, ‘Lactantius and Constantine’s Letter to Arles: Dating the *Divine Institutes*’, *J ECS* 2 (1994), 36-7; Antonie Wlosok, *Laktanz und die philosophische Gnosis* (Heidelberg, 1960), 232-46.

³⁷ *DI* 4.4.2 (BT, 320): *Deus autem, qui unus est, quoniam utramque personam sustinent et patris et domini, et amare eum debemus, quia filii sumus, et timere, quia servi.*

³⁸ *DI* 4.3.14 (BT, 318): *Unus igitur colendus est, qui potest vere pater nominari; idem etiam dominus sit necesse est, quia sicut potest indulgere, ita etiam coercere.*

God's oneness or a portion of his providence, no philosopher could be said to offer God the affection and devotion, *i.e.*, the worship, which true religion requires (*DI* 4.4.6).

Lactantius believes that the fulfillment of humankind's highest capacity resides in the exercise of true religion. Religion alone, *i.e.*, knowing and worshipping God, is the singular virtue which separates humankind from all living creatures and, hence, must be the natural end of humanity's highest capacity. 'Therefore, as Cicero says, "there is no animal except the human being who possesses any knowledge of God". For it has been instructed in wisdom, so that it alone understands religion. This is the extraordinary or only difference between human beings and the dumb animals'.³⁹ Confirmation that humankind's greatest end is to be found in religion exists in the very stature of the human person.⁴⁰

When our one and only Parent formed the human person, he made an intelligent animal capable of reason. Raising him from the ground, God lifted him to the contemplation of his creator. This was very well put by a gifted poet: 'while other animals bend forward and look at the earth, [god] gave a sublime countenance to the human person and granted him to see the heavens, and to lift up his face straight to the stars'.⁴¹

This *status rectus* motif appears throughout Lactantius' *corpus* as proof that the human person's greatest end is to be found in knowing and worshipping God, *i.e.*, in true religion.⁴²

Though Lactantius seems not to have offered the idea of a *semen religionis* or *sensus divinitatis* in the human person as evidence of a natural knowledge

³⁹ *ID* 7.6 (SC 289, 112): *Propterea «nullum est animal, ut ait Cicero, praeter hominem quod habeat notitiam aliquam dei». Solus enim sapientia instructus est ut religionem solus intellegat, et haec est hominis atque mutorum vel praecipua vel sola distantia.* Quot. Cic., *Leg.* 1.24; see *DI* 3.10.1-7; 7.9.10.

⁴⁰ This is a standard philosophical *tropos* which was readily adopted by Christian apologists. See esp. Cic., *Nat. D.* 2.37, 140; *Leg.* 1.26; Justin, *1 Apol.* 1.55; Min. Fel., 17.2; Ire., *AH* 1.24.1; Cypr., *Ad Dem.* 16. For an exhaustive list of citations see Pease, 914-5. Lactantius cites two sources for this idea, Ovid (*DI* 2.1.15; quot. *Met.* 1.84-6) and Hermes (*DI* 7.9.11; see *Corp. Herm.*, vol. 4, fr. 14), who refers to this capacity as, 'godsight'. For secondary literature on the subject see especially Vincenzo Loi, *Lattanzio nella storia del linguaggio e del pensiero teologico pre-niceno* (Zürich, 1970), 137; Michel Perrin, *L'homme antique et chrétien: L'anthropologie de Lactance*, *Théologie historique* 59 (Paris, 1981), 68-9 with notes; A. Wlosok, *Laktanz* (1960), 182, 221.

⁴¹ *DI* 2.1.15 (BT, 112): *Parens enim noster ille unus et solus cum fingeret hominem id est animal intellegens et rationis capax, eum vero ex humo sublevatum ad contemplationem sui artificis erexit. Quod optime ingeniosus poeta signavit: 'pronaque cum spectent animalia cetera terram, os homini sublime dedit caelumque videre jussit et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus'.* Quot. Ov., *Met.* 1.84-6; see Cic., *Nat. D.* 2.140.

⁴² See *OD* 8.2, 10.26, 19.10; *DI* 2.1.15, 2.23, 18.1; 17.9, 18.1; 3.10.11, 12.26, 20.11, 27.16, 28.16; 7.5.6, 20, 9.11; *ID* 7.5, 14.2, 20.10; *Epi.* 20.4, 25.1, 65.4.

of God,⁴³ the apologist does affirm the providential order of the universe as a source of such knowledge. It is difficult to overestimate the role of the doctrine of providence in Lactantius' thought. The apologist himself admits that there is nothing 'so worthy or appropriate to God as providence',⁴⁴ and that one can hardly discuss any Christian doctrine at all without touching upon the topic of providence (*DI* 1.2.6). Lactantius not only goes to great lengths to defend the existence of divine providence but, once defended, he employs the doctrine of providence as evidence in order to demonstrate other tenets of Christian theology.⁴⁵ In writing in defense of this doctrine, Lactantius has ready-made arguments at his disposal taken from the Stoa, including the two most popular types of arguments, or *tropoi*, *i.e.*, from consensus (*e consensu omnium*) and from the orderly arrangement of the universe (*ex operibus dei*).⁴⁶ As to the former category, Lactantius maintains that no philosopher worthy of the name has ever denied the existence of providence. Those who have denied its existence, far from proving that providence does not exist, have merely succeeded in demonstrating that they are 'small and weak philosophers'.⁴⁷ In addition to the more learned authorities, the 'testimony of all people and nations' (*testimonia populorum atque gentium*) supports belief in the existence of providence (*DI* 1.2.4; *Epi.* 1.2). Though these *tropoi* were employed by the Stoics to defend the doctrine of providence, Lactantius also sees the latter form of argument, *i.e.*, *ex operibus dei*, as evidence of the working of an *aeterna mens* responsible for the providential order of the universe. 'For who cannot see that this world is governed, with such a wondrous and perfect plan, by some sort of providence; because there is nothing which can exist without some guide?'⁴⁸

In placing such a keen emphasis on the doctrine of providence, Lactantius is naturally concerned with Epicurean denials of its existence, and responses to

⁴³ I suspect that the connection of these notions with the Epicurean school would have discouraged Lactantius from adopting them. See Cic., *Nat. D.* 1.43-4. Lactantius, like the Stoics, sees human beings as naturally ordered to knowing God by the light of reason and through his effects. See *DI* 2.1.14-9; Cic., *Nat. D.* 2.4.

⁴⁴ *ID* 4.5 (SC 289, 100): *tam dignum, tam proprium deo quam providentia.*

⁴⁵ Lactantius argues for the existence of providence in *DI* 1.2, *ID* 9, *Epi.* 1, and the entire treatise of *De opificio Dei* was written in defense of providence. Lactantius uses this doctrine to support, for example, God's oneness (*DI* 1.2.1-6, 3.17-9; *Epi.* 2.1-8; *ID* 13.1-14.6), his nature as *aeterna mens* (*DI* 1.5.20-1), and his righteous indignation (*ID* 4.1-13; 17.1-20). For an extensive treatment of the doctrine of providence in Lactantius see Anthony P. Coleman, *Lactantius and the Doctrine of Providence*, Dissertation (Boston, 2014).

⁴⁶ These two types of arguments for the existence of providence appear in the list of *tropoi* given by both Cicero, *Nat. D.* 2.4-12, and Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 9.60-1. See Myrto Dragona-Monachou, *The Stoic Arguments for the Existence and the Providence of the Gods* (Athens, 1976).

⁴⁷ *ID* 9.8 (SC 289, 122): *minutos et inertes philosophos.*

⁴⁸ *DI* 3.20.13 (BT, 279): *Quis enim non sentiat hunc mundum tam mirabili ratione perfectum aliqua providentia gubernari, quandoquidem nihil est quod possit sine ullo moderatore consistere?* For other examples of Lactantius' use of the argument *ex operibus dei* see *DI* 1.2.5; 7.3.24; *Epi.* 1.3; *ID* 10.25-35. Compare Cic., *Nat. D.* 2.4, 15-7, 98-9; 3.26.

Epicurean arguments litter his *corpus*.⁴⁹ This is especially true of his first extant work, *De opificio Dei*, a text which Lactantius authored for the purpose of refuting those who denied the existence of providence.⁵⁰ In this text, Lactantius states that by examining the evidence for the existence of providence found in the human person, he is completing the work of Cicero (*OD* 1.12-4). Though Lactantius mentions three of Cicero's works by name when citing his inspiration for *De opificio*, the structure and content of the treatise would indicate that Lactantius was primarily drawing from and elaborating upon the Stoic Balbus' speech contained in Book 2 of *De natura deorum*.⁵¹ The apologist's thesis is that the order, intelligibility, and beauty, of the human person could only be the product of a 'most provident creator' (*providentissimus artifex*) (*OD* 11.2). 'If you consider utility, [human beings] display order, if you consider form, they display adornment. In such a way utility corresponds marvelously with beauty'.⁵² The repetition of the qualities of 'utility' (*utilitas*) and 'beauty' (*pulchritudo/decor*) in particular is consistent throughout *De opificio*, and are seen as a direct rebuttal against those who would affirm that the creation of the human person occurred in a random and haphazard manner.⁵³

Conclusion

To conclude this examination of the Institutes of Lactantius and Calvin, we ought first to summarize in brief the similarities between the two authors which were articulated above in detail. For both authors, the philosophers can never serve as guides to true wisdom or knowledge about God. This is the case, first, because true knowledge of God must meet the demands of piety or true religion. Both Calvin and Lactantius maintain the unity and indivisibility of wisdom and religion. Because of this union, true wisdom cannot be found where there is no true religion, and vice versa. Calvin, although not quoting him

⁴⁹ See, *inter alia*, *DI* 2.8.60-4; 3.17.1-43, 28.1-22; *ID* 4.1-15; *Epi.* 31.1-10.

⁵⁰ Chapters 2 through 7 of *OD* deal principally with the refutation of Epicurean claims.

⁵¹ Cic., *Nat. D.* 2.133-50. For an examination of Lactantius' sources in *OD* see Peter Roots, 'The *De opificio Dei*: The Workmanship of God and Lactantius', *Classical Quarterly* 37/2 (1987), 466-86. Although others have argued that the *Corpus Hermeticum* exerts a greater influence than the Stoics in *OD* (see *Corp. Herm.* 5.1-11; *DI* 2.10.14), Roots has rightly and ably returned the focus of the question of Lactantius' sources in *OD* back to Cicero's work – in particular *Nat. D.* On the Hermetic scholarship see Samuel Brandt, 'Über die Quellen von Laktanz' Schrift "De opificio dei"', *Wiener Studien* 13 (1891), 255-92; Luigi Rossetti, 'Il "De Opificio Dei" di Lattanzio e le sue fonti', *Didaskaleion* 6 (1928), 115-200; M. Perrin, *Lactance* (1974), 48-57.

⁵² *OD* 2.8 (SC 213, 114): *si utilitatem cogites, instructa, si speciem, ornata videantur: adeo miro modo consentit utilitas cum decore.*

⁵³ *OD* 6.1, 12. For the language of beauty and utility see, *inter alia*, *OD* 8.1, 5-8, 13, 10.4, 7, 10, 12, 18-27, 11.1, 13.3, 5, 7.

directly, mentions Lactantius in support of this belief (*Inst.* 1.4.3). The philosophers, therefore, in lacking true piety also lacked true wisdom. Second, in order to be reckoned as true wisdom, knowledge of God must minimally include a particular content. This content, although differing in details between the two authors, is an apprehension of God's oneness and providence.⁵⁴ These theological truths must be grasped in full in order for knowledge about God to be considered true wisdom. The philosophers, however, came to understand only portions of this material and, hence, none can be said to have attained true wisdom. Third, piety or true religion also contains an epistemological content. Since true wisdom and religion are indivisibly united, the latter too must be satisfied in order for knowledge of God to be considered true wisdom. The knowledge of God which piety demands is an apprehension of God as both 'lord' and 'father'. This knowledge will then give rise to the proper love and fear of God which constitutes true religion. Again, since the philosophers lacked these constitutive elements of true religion, they also lacked true wisdom.

True religion, *i.e.*, knowing and worshipping the one God, is the perfection of the highest human capacity. It alone separates humankind from every other living creature, and is that which the *status rectus* of the human person signifies. But the upright stature of human beings is not the only evidence found in creation of the *telos* of the human person. The use, beauty, and system of the universe serve as proof of God's providential care for his creation and of the natural human capacity to know God. The most striking evidence of this kind is to be found in the construction and composition of the human person. In their respective uses of the Stoic arguments for the existence of providence, Lactantius and Calvin do differ.⁵⁵ However, both use the argument from the orderly arrangement of the universe to support the belief in a *single providential* deity. And finally, the way in which the doctrine of providence is featured in both Lactantius and Calvin, its prominence and centrality to attaining a knowledge of God, and the ferocity with which its deniers are attacked, is yet another common feature which these two authors share.

In assessing these similarities, one must first note the rather obvious and ubiquitous use of Cicero by both authors, especially *De natura deorum*. Given his humanist education, Calvin certainly drew directly from Cicero's texts for this material. What this study claims, however, is that the preponderance of the

⁵⁴ For Calvin, the key element in understanding God's providence is its *totality*. God's will, whether it works without, through, or against intermediaries, is *always* accomplished (*Inst.* 1.17.1). For Lactantius, true wisdom lay in the knowledge of God's plan for the human person more generally. A convenient summary of Lactantius' content is to be found in *DI* 7.6.1-2. See note 34 above.

⁵⁵ Calvin uses the argument from consensus as evidence of the *semen religionis* as well as God's providence, whereas Lactantius ignores the former. See note 43 above. Needless to say, however, the fact that both employ the two major Stoic *tropoi* is yet another similarity which they share.

material held in common by Lactantius and Calvin would suggest that the former can be said to have influenced the latter's *use* of classical sources, and Cicero in particular. The reformer, no doubt, viewed the apologist as a predecessor of sorts; a fellow Christian who also received an education imbued with the classics and was responsible for discerning the usefulness of this material for the explication of Christian doctrine. For example, several of the common themes found in Calvin and Lactantius which cannot be attributed to Cicero or any other classical author, such as the indivisible union between true wisdom and true religion, and knowledge of God as 'lord' and 'father', relate directly to undermining the credibility of the classical philosophers. Thus, Lactantius ought to be viewed as a thinker who mediated Calvin's treatment of classical authors. Of course, one need look no further than the title of the *Institutio* for another example of this. Just as Lactantius modelled the title for his *Divinae Institutiones* after Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* and the *institutiones civilis juris*, so Calvin drew his titular inspiration from both classical sources and Lactantius.⁵⁶ Thus, rather than simply paying Lactantius an eponymic homage in the *Institutio*, Calvin was significantly influenced by Lactantius in the use and assessment of his classical sources.

⁵⁶ On Calvin's selection of a title for the *Institutio* see Richard Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford, 2000), 104; William Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (Oxford, 1988), 17.

Jerome and the *Christianus Perfectus*, a Transformed Roman Noble Man?

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ABSTRACT

Fiunt, non nascuntur christiani (e.g. Jerome, *Ep.* 107.1, from Tertullian, *Apol.* 18.4) seems to imply that conversion to Christianity demands a transformation of identity which at first sight does not appear to be compatible with Roman aristocratic values. In his letters to his aristocratic friends or patrons, Jerome, too, seems to invoke the idea that their adoption of the Christian faith and their embarking on the ascetic way of life requires such transformation. His letters could be read as instructions for this transformative process. However, many questions remain unanswered. To what extent could we actually speak of transformation, what model of Christian identity did Jerome present that could be appealing to these aristocrats? Indebted to insights presented in the work of a.o. Michele Salzman, Andrew Cain, and Peter Brown, but also taking into account and developing further the methodology of embodied early and medieval Christianity, I will explore how Jerome could exercise authority over a figure like Pammachius, so high above his own social standing, and how Jerome's model of Christian elite could have been accepted by the Roman aristocrats in light of its apparent requirement of a radical rupture with the past, at the same time safeguarding social superiority. Jerome appears to have offered a model that would make best ends meet: it did see conversion as discontinuous with the past, but at the same time it attempted to create a superior '*christianus perfectus*' which would rise high above the '*mediocre flock*'.

About two years have elapsed since I sent a brief letter to my dear Pammachius on the sudden passing of his Paulina, for I blushed to say more to so learned a man or to repeat to him his own thoughts, lest I should seem, not so much to be comforting a friend, as in foolish ostentation to be instructing one already perfect.¹

This is the picture Jerome paints of his friend Pammachius in his eulogy on Fabiola, which he had addressed to Oceanus. His 'dear Pammachius' (*Pammachio meo*), is 'so learned a man' (*uirum plura loqui*), 'one already perfect' (*perfectum*). This Christian senator of noble ancestry is presented as someone

¹ *Ep.* 77.1 (*Ad Oceanum de morte Fabiolae*): *Ante hoc ferme biennium, Pammachio meo pro subita peregrinatione Paulinae, breuem epistulam dedi erubescens ad disertissimum uirum plura loqui, et ei sua ingerere, ne non tam consolari amicum uiderer, quam stulta iactantia docere perfectum.*

who has completed the 'transformation' Jerome envisaged for his audience: a learned man who has become perfect and for whom instruction would be redundant. However, we must not be deceived by Jerome's excellent mastery of rhetoric and eloquence in *glorificatio* and *captatio*. It challenges us to look beyond the rhetoric and hypothesise underlying motives to Jerome's claims, to investigate how, why, and if a transformation to Jerome's model of the perfect, ideal Christian did take place.

Building on the work of Salzman, Rebenich, and Cain² I will scrutinise ideas of Roman *nobilitas* and transformation of this *nobilitas* into Jerome's model of the ideal Christian in the correspondence between him and Pammachius, touching upon the Roman tradition of patronage, epistolography, and rhetoric, to see if this could give us more insights into this peculiar partnership. I will focus on *Letters* 66 and 83 in particular, with some cross-referencing to the other epistles. *Letter* 66 is by most scholars and Andrew Cain most recently subjugated in the taxonomy of Jerome's epistolography under the genre of 'consolidating letters'. However, I would argue that rather than 'consolatory', this letter could also be read as an 'instruction'. It remains to be seen whether it was instructive for Pammachius, particularly in light of Jerome's later comment which was quoted at the opening of this contribution. Maybe one could read Jerome's reference to Pammachius in *Letter* 77 as a reaction to the reception of *Letter* 66: it could have been perceived as not, or not sufficiently 'consolidating' in character, and Jerome might have been criticised for using a consolatory epistle as vehicle to promote the teaching of his model of the ideal Christian. This view would support a reading of *Letter* 66 as instructive (or, following his antagonists, 'propagandistic': a publicity stunt), and it would give a plausible reason for Jerome's comment and reference to *Letter* 66 in *Letter* 77. To question the consolatory character of *Letter* 66 inevitably invites one to question the relationship between the correspondents. Therefore, I will highlight the aspects that offer us insight into two problems and what this could tell about their relationship, namely 1) Jerome's attitude to Pammachius and if this attitude shows some particular development, and 2) Pammachius's attitude to Jerome. I will explore how

² See for example Andrew Cain, *The Letters of Jerome: Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis, and the Construction of Christian Authority in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2009); Michele Salzman, 'Competing Claims to "Nobilitas" in the Western Empire of the Fourth and Fifth Century', in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (2001), 359-85, and *Id.*, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002); Stefan Rebenich, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis: Prosopographische und sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Stuttgart, 1992); Sylvia Letsch Brunner, *Marcella. Discipula et Magistra. Auf den Spuren einer römischen Christin des 4. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin and New York, 1998); Richard Lim, *Public Disputation, Power and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1995); Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle. Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Princeton and Oxford, 2012); Andrew Louth, 'Fiunt, non nascuntur Christiani: Conversion, Community, and Christian Identity in Late Antiquity', in *Being Christian in Late Antiquity: A Festschrift for Gillian Clark* (Oxford, 2014).

Jerome could exercise ‘authority’ – as he seems to claim, or whether he only appears to exercise ‘authority’ – over a figure like Pammachius, so high above his own social standing. In a more general sense, but based upon this individual case, I will explore how Jerome’s model of the ideal Christian could be accepted by Roman aristocrats, despite its apparent requirement of a radical rupture with the past. It seems to me that this is because Jerome is creating a ‘status group’ of Christian elite.³ However, it remains to be seen if Jerome with his model of a Christian *nobilitas* is indeed creating a separate ‘status group’ or if he is not simply leaving an already existing ‘status group’ completely intact. The seemingly ‘elitist’ character of his status group is revealed in its restricted accessibility: only those are eligible to be part of it if they wish to become perfect, to become a superior *christianus perfectus*, rising or dwelling high above the ‘mediocre flock’ even if they still provide services to the ‘less fortunate’. Jerome emphasises how Pammachius is helping the poor, and how he has lowered himself to dwell among them:⁴ however, this seems to be Jerome’s rhetoric, again, because the rest of the letter indicates that in no way Pammachius has ‘stepped down’ in rank (as we can also observe from language used in other letters) but that he provides services to the poor and the needy, not unlike what would have been commonly expected of a man in his position.⁵

³ Jerome’s Christian *nobilitas* network or status group is partially kept together, or based on, literary exchange in the form of (requests for) commentaries, treatises, and epistles; evidence of physical interaction between members of the group and Jerome is much harder to solidify. Prosopographic social network analysis is therefore restrained to narrative analyses. For Weberian status group criteria see Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie* (Tübingen, 1922).

⁴ See for example *Ep.* 66.5: *Hoc exercitu comitatus incedit, in his Christum confouet, horum sordibus dealbatur; munerarius pauperum, egentium candidates sic festinate ad caelum.*

⁵ The previous quote attests of Pammachius’ charitable activities, but the following reveals both the strength of Jerome’s rhetoric as well as that it hints that in essence, Pammachius does not lose his rank but is even exalted all the more: *Non est parum uirum nobilem, uirum disertum, uirumque locupletem potentium in plateis uitare comitatum, miscere se turbis, adhaerere pauperibus, rusticis copulari, de principe uulgum fieri. Sed quanto humilior tanto sublimior est. Lucet margaritum in sordibus et fulgor gemmae purissimae etiam in luto radiat* (*Ep.* 66.6-7). Note in particular Jerome’s assertion that Pammachius has an impressive pedigree, that he is educated and wealthy. Moreover, by his ‘lowering’ actions Pammachius is now even more a ‘pearl’, which will shine even brighter now it is surrounded by the dirt of the lower classes (this could also refer to the non-perfect state of those in society who surround him). Furthermore, Jerome calls Pammachius the most pure of all gems, which is shining in the mud. The English translation by Philip Schaff reads: ‘a gem of the first water will sparkle in the mire.’ ‘First water’ is a term which comes from the gemstone trade and means ‘highest quality’ (Oxford English Dictionary entry for ‘first water’). The use of such language might be intended to hint to the status of both correspondents, and better capture Jerome’s intention than my literal translation. I have not been able to find out if the Latin rendition was similarly connected to gemstone trade in the Roman world. For more on Jerome’s language of jewellery, see Andrew Cain, *Jerome’s Epitaph on Paula: A Commentary on the ‘Epitaphium Sanctae Paulae’ with an Introduction, Text, and Translation* (Oxford, 2013), 146.

As such Jerome is safeguarding his 'student's' social superiority. Although in the idealised literary *Überlieferung* 'conversion'⁶ is presented as discontinuous with the past, Jerome's (literary) creation of a superior *christianus perfectus*⁷ keeps his aristocratic patrons floating where they floated before: high above all ordinary people. This means I will take Michele Salzman's conclusions a step further, and argue that Jerome is not merely reflecting a rhetoric of Christian *nobilitas*, but that he accommodates the Roman nobility's 'status group' to remain distinct from (and defined against) the broader Christian flock. As such, the noble Christian is not only superior to 'ordinary' Christians of lower classes, but also to his peers of the senatorial aristocracy – both those who still adhere to the 'old religion' and those who have adopted Christianity (*in nomine*) but have not 'converted' to the ascetic form. This corresponds to the competitive character of the *clarissimate*,⁸ and forms a central element in Jerome's model of ideal ascetic conduct.⁹

Already this first observation shows that Jerome does not simply pick elements of the Roman *nobilitas* and subordinates them to a Christian *nobilitas*;¹⁰ Jerome rather adopts two of the key aspects of Roman *nobilitas*, namely its superiority and its segregation, without much translation of them into Christian terms, as such offering more of a *continuum* which at first sight seems like a radical rupture, but in practice it was not. For example, there is no indication that Pammachius and Paulina made a vow of continence, although at first sight Jerome may attempt to evoke such an allusion; if we read his text closely his addressee and his late wife did not give up trying to produce offspring. In Jerome's words, Paulina had found 'by several miscarriages that her womb was not barren, she could not give up all hope of having children and had to allow her own reluctance to give way to the eagerness of her mother-in-law and the

⁶ I chose to avoid the use of the concept of 'conversion' as much as possible, since it is a very subjective and loaded term which obscures the complex reality of religion on the ground and presupposes radical boundaries between encapsulated and easily distinguishable religions which can be put into boxes. If religion in all its manifestations and with all its individual agents is regarded as embedded and embodied in a complex society, use of the term 'conversion' reveals institutional apologetic agendas which react to what they face 'on the ground', see Markus Vinzent, 'Embodied Early and Medieval Christianity: Challenging its "Canonical" and "Institutional" "Origin"', *Religion in the Roman Empire 2* (2016), 203-16.

⁷ A true *vir illustris*. See M. Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy* (2002), 38, where she expands on *illustres* as the highest among the Roman senatorial aristocracy.

⁸ See also Michele Salzman who does recognise Jerome's rhetoric, but she does so more or less as an aside rather than to elaborate it in detail, see particularly *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy* (2002), 200-1, where she stipulates that it has not been her aim to discuss individual cases, but rather give a general, overall picture of the aristocracy adopting and adapting Christianity.

⁹ Again, this is acknowledged by M. Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy* (2002), 204, but not developed in detail.

¹⁰ 'Hierarchy of piety', as Michele Salzman calls it, see *ead.*, 'Competing Claims to "Nobilitas" in the Western Empire of the Fourth and Fifth Century' (2001), 363, which subordinates core values such as family and pedigree which constitute the very basis of *nobilitas*.

chagrin of her husband'.¹¹ Moreover, it testifies both of Pammachius and his wife's compliance with Roman expectations which had not been abolished by their conversion. Jerome recognises the duty to produce offspring for inheritance reasons, and he does not radically despise of it, but rather endorses that after having fulfilled that duty, spouses should ideally opt for a further life of marital continence (chastity, after the task has been completed...). Likewise, Jerome seems to hint that Paula had not given all her wealth to the church and alms-giving, but rather that she had divided the inheritance amongst her offspring, when he writes: '[o]r what better instance can there be of justice than your mother, who having divided her substance among her offspring has taught them by her own contempt of riches the true object on which to fix their affections?'¹² As such, Paula too had complied with Roman aristocratic convention. When we read the often referred-to citation that Pammachius, according to Jerome, 'moves amid the senators in their purple clothed in sombre garb',¹³ scholars tend to highlight the ignorance of compliance with Roman elaborate dress codes.¹⁴ However, what should not be missed is that it also shows how Pammachius did not relinquish his public office as a senator, but that he held on to it. Similarly, he continued other public activities and manifestations, as Jerome attests how he has heard 'that you have erected a hospice for strangers at Portus'.¹⁵ Paulinus of Nola also testifies of this fact; he adds that Pammachius had also built a narthex for St Peter's Basilica in Rome, and the *titulus Pammachii*.¹⁶ The construction projects of Roman aristocrats did not cease, although it seems that they now rather invest their money in projects related to Christian religion.

What then, as Jerome copies Tertullian's adagium of *fiunt, non nascuntur christiani*, is the actual transformation of identity? Is it only Jerome's radical ascetic model which even radicalises the gap between the ordinary people and their super heroes? When Jerome in his epistles instructs his students to abandon the world and seek seclusion from it, he does not deny them their old positions and lets them continue the practices related to their social standing, including but not limited to patronage, self-(re)presentation, intellectual activities, perfection of virtue, and manifestation of their praise-worthy-generosity through charitable works. And yet, as Peter Brown has pointed out in *Through*

¹¹ Ep. 66.3: *Dumque crebris abortiis et experta fecunditate conceptuum non desperare liberos et socrus auiditatem maritque tristitiam praeponit imbecillitati suae [...].*

¹² Ep. 66.3: *Quid matre iustius, quae inter liberos opibus distributes docuit diuitias contemnendo, quid filii amare deberent?*

¹³ Ep. 66.6: *[...] inter purpuras senatorum furua tunica pullatus incederet [...].*

¹⁴ Peter Brown most recently in *Through the Eye of a Needle* (2012), e.g. 27-30, 220-3.

¹⁵ Ep. 66.11: *Audio te xenodochium in portu fecisse Romano [...].*

¹⁶ See for a list of Pammachius's charitable acts Paulinus of Nola, Ep. 13. 11-4 (trans. J. Quasten), in *Ancient Christian Writers. Letters of St. Paulinus of Nola* (Mahwah, NJ, 1966): For *titulus Pammachi* see Steffen Diefenbach, *Römische Erinnerungsräume, Heiligenmemoria und kollektive Identitäten in Rom: Heiligenmemoria und kollektive Identitäten im Rom des 3. bis 5. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* (Berlin, 2007), 355.

the Eye of a Needle, there are in fact indications of radical change in comportment by those senatorial aristocrats who opted for radical asceticism – such as Paulinus of Nola – and he illustrates the dismay expressed by their peers for example for bodily neglect.¹⁷ Jerome also alludes to this when he writes to Pammachius how the latter had appeared in the Senate in a monk's sackcloth instead of the senatorial purple. But the observation is preceded by an emphasis on Pammachius's pedigree and illustrates him as 'the glory of the Furian stock [...] whose grandfathers and great grandfathers have been consuls'.¹⁸

If one could speak of radical rupture, then the neglect of bodily hygiene – held in high esteem by the Roman aristocrats – is definitely one aspect that would support this claim, but it only increases the distance between an ascetic *nobilitas* and a Roman *nobilitas* – was it also meant to be an approximation between the Christian noble and the flock?

A *lackmustest* could be the role of patronage.¹⁹ Before we discuss patronage, we should profile Pammachius and Jerome's Roman *nobilitas*.²⁰ Pammachius was a Roman senatorial aristocrat, a descendant of the *gens Furia*,²¹ and a fellow student of Jerome at the school of the famous grammarian Donatus in Rome. Pammachius was related to Marcella, another one of Jerome's patron-students,²² who was his cousin.²³ Through his marriage to Paulina Pammachius was related

¹⁷ Examples of such bodily neglect could be: refusal to wear fine garments, being 'enveloped in the dull smell of the underbathed', see Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle* (2012), 220-3.

¹⁸ *Ep.* 66.6: *Quis hoc crederet ut consulum pronepos et Furiani germinis decus, inter purpuras senatorum furua tunica pullatus incederet, ut non erubesceret oculos sodalium, ut deridentes se ipse rideret?*

¹⁹ See also for example Stefan Rebenich, 'Asceticism, Orthodoxy, and Patronage: Jerome in Constantinople', *SP* 33 (1997), 358-77, and for a more general assessment of patronage M. Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy* (2002), 205-9.

²⁰ Pammachius, a Roman aristocrat and senator from the *gens Furia*, had also been a former fellow student of Jerome. For the biographical details of Jerome's Roman *illustres*, see below and see A.H.M. Jones, J.R. Martindale and J. Morris (eds), *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, 1971), vol. I A.D. 260-395; for Pammachius's entry see p. 663.

²¹ *Ep.* 66.7: 'Before he began to serve Christ with his whole heart, Pammachius was a well-known person in the senate. Still there were many other senators who wore the badges of proconsular rank'. This shows that Pammachius was of proconsular rank. It is not entirely certain if his rank was honorary, or if he indeed did serve as proconsul. He might have been proconsul of Africa, see 'Pammachius', in *The Prosopography of the later Roman Empire*, p. 663.

²² The best way to denote them is to call them 'patron-students'; only calling them students would wrongly picture Jerome in a higher 'hierarchical' place of authority (an image which he is eager to convey), but simply calling them his patrons would denigrate or underemphasise the instructive character of their relationship in which Jerome was the teacher. The term 'patron-student' both acknowledges Jerome's dependence on them, as well as the learning aspect, the instructive character (teacher-student) of their interaction.

²³ Pammachius' cousin Marcella, descendant from the illustrious Roman *gens Marcella*, inhabited a palace on the Aventine with her mother Albina; a residence and society she would never leave, not even when she devoted herself to the ascetic life. See *Ep.* 127 on Marcella.

to Paula, his mother-in-law, a Roman noble woman from the *gens Aemillia*.²⁴ Furthermore, Furia,²⁵ Fabiola,²⁶ and Oceanus²⁷ are worth mentioning, too. These were all archetypical Roman patrician families: they all belonged to the highest echelons of Roman senatorial aristocracy, the proper *nobilitas* or *illustres*.²⁸ Of Pammachius we learn that he was a patrician, who turned to the ascetic way of Christian life after he had been widowed, as Jerome records how ‘since Paulina fell asleep the Church has posthumously borne the monk Pammachius, a patrician by his parentage and marriage, rich in alms, and lofty in lowliness’.²⁹ Jerome portrays Pammachius as the ‘first among Christian senators’, the first monk among his class, the ‘most Christian of nobles, and most noble of Christians’;³⁰ and *christianus perfectus*.³¹ Furthermore, Pammachius is ‘the leader of the patrician order, [who] first set the example of turning

²⁴ Paula, a Roman noble woman from the *gens Aemillia* (related to the Gracchi, Scipios, and Agamemnon), married to senator Toxotius (Julian family): an archetypical Roman patrician household; see Jerome *Ep.* 108 on Paula, see also A. Cain, *Jerome’s Epitaph on Paula* (2013).

²⁵ Furia, a Roman noble lady of the family of Furius Camillus, see *Ep.* 54.

²⁶ Fabiola was a descendant of the *gens Fabia*, and she belonged to the same circle. For more details see Jerome’s eulogy *Ep.* 77. In chapter 10 he records that Pammachius had built the hospice in Portus Romae together with Fabiola: *Certabant uir et femina, quis in portu Abrahae tabernaculum figeret [...] Iugunt opes, sociant uoluntates, ut, quod aemulatio dissipatura erat, concordia cresceret. Neqdum dictum, iam factum: emitur hospitium et ad hospitium turba concurrat. [...] Xenodochium in portu Romano situm totus pariter mundus audivit.* Jerome seems to imply here that first there was a competition between Fabiola and Pammachius to have a hospice erected in Portus: this would strongly support the level of competition that was still carried on between aristocrats even after they had adopted an ascetic life style. See also ‘Fabiola’, in A.H.M. Jones, J.R. Martindale and J. Morris (eds), *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, 1971), vol. I A.D. 260-395, p. 323.

²⁷ Oceanus was a Roman noble man probably from the Fabian family, as suggested by F.A. Wright, see his *Jerome. Select Letters* (Cambridge, Mass., 1933), 483. This claim could be supported by Jerome’s addressing of Fabiola’s eulogy to Oceanus; see Jerome, *Letters* 69 and 77 which are addressed to him.

²⁸ See M. Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy* (2002), 37-9, for a discussion on the distinction between ‘standard’ senators in the *clarissime* and those who would call themselves *nobilitas*, *illustres*, or *spectabiles*.

²⁹ *Ep.* 66.4.

³⁰ *Ep.* 57.12: [...] *uir omnium nobelium Christianissime, Christianorum nobilissime [...]*.

³¹ Although Jerome would often stipulate the uniqueness or primordiance of Pammachius, Pammachius was not the only one among his ranks to dedicate himself to the ascetic life. A parallel can be found in Paulinus of Nola, who mentions the Roman senatorial aristocrat Turcius Apronianus, who is, as Salzman states, ‘a self-proclaimed ascetic, and this earned him a higher status’, see M. Salzman, ‘Competing Claims to “Nobilitas” in the Western Empire of the Fourth and Fifth Century’ (2001), 367; reference to Paulinus of Nola is *Carm.* 21.202ff. (CSEL30, 164ff.). On Apronianus, see *PLRE* 1:87; and Dennis E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters and Poems* (Berkeley, 1999), 20. Paulinus himself is a parallel too, and it is in his writings that we find evidence for a certain ‘radical rupture’ with secular aristocratic life. Peter Brown has also elaborated on these examples (see above). Salzman shows that ‘Paulinus’s renunciation of a secular career and adoption of an ascetic Christian lifestyle rocked the senate; pagan and Christian aristocrats expressed dismay at his choice’, see M. Salzman, ‘Competing Claims to “Nobilitas” in the Western Empire

monk'.³² Here again his leading 'secular' position is emphasised without a sign that it had been given up. The following citation taken from a much later letter (402 CE), endorses this: 'But you are Christians and the lights of the senate: accept therefore from me the letter which I append'.³³ Here both Pammachius and Marcella are addressed as 'lights of the senate' and it sounds as if they are still very much part of it indeed. Jerome acknowledges that Pammachius is not the only aristocrat to adopt Christianity, but does not leave to chance to stipulate his primacy, as he exhorts how 'now many wise powerful and noble are not Christians only but even monks. And among them all my Pammachius is the wisest, the mightiest, and the noblest: great among the great, a leader among leaders, he is the commander in chief of all monks'.³⁴ Note how Jerome speaks of Pammachius in possessive terms: he ensures that he claims him, almost as if to say credits for his creation ought to go to Jerome. It might even reveal how much Jerome himself desired to be acknowledged as such (*cfr. infra*). Pammachius' exaltation is taken a step further when Jerome narrates that Pammachius has 'reached the highest point. You have made your way from the root to the top of the tree. You are the first of monks in the first city of the world [...]'.³⁵ The addendum 'first city of the world' is interesting as he is obviously referring to Rome. As such, Rome is granted primacy over the holy places in the East, and more importantly over Jerusalem (which perhaps in Jerome's ideas is only given a heavenly importance as 'first city of the heavens/of heaven'). In *Letter* 118 to Julian Jerome refers back to Pammachius as one who is 'noble by birth, in Christ made nobler still'.³⁶ Here Jerome is very clear that conversion to ascetic Christianity does not imply that one loses one's nobility and noble status, rather the ascetic conversion adopts and strengthens, even improves and perfects this status.

However, with little literary evidence that is not from Jerome's hand, it is not an easy, and perhaps it is even a presumptuous task, to try to reconstruct the historical Pammachius.³⁷ Luckily, there exist other written records which

of the Fourth and Fifth Century' (2001), 369. Furthermore, there is Pammachius' co-author of *Letter* 83, Oceanus, a Roman noble man.

³² *Ep.* 66.13: [...] *patricii generis primus inter primos monachus esse coepisti* [...].

³³ *Ep.* 97.3: *Uos, Christiani senatus lumina, accipiter et Graecam et Latinam etiam hoc anno epistolam* [...].

³⁴ *Ep.* 66.4: *Tunc rari sapientes, potentes, nobiles christiani, nunc multi monachi sapientes, potentes, nobiles. Quibus cunctis Pammachius meus sapientior, potentior, nobilior: magnus in magnis, primus in primis, ἀρχιστρατηγὸς monachorum.*

³⁵ *Ep.* 66.11: [...] *statim summum tenes; de radice peruenis ad cacumen; primus inter monachos in prima urbe (primum sequeris patriarcham)* [...].

³⁶ *Ep.* 118.5: [...] *nobilis es: et illi, sed in Christo nobiliores* [...].

³⁷ Patricia Cox Miller has pointed to the prudence required when trying to convey historical figures from Jerome's writings, in particular for Eustochium, see 'The Blazing Body: Ascetic Desire in Jerome's Letter to Eustochium', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (1993), 21-45, 23-4, and especially 25: 'Eustochium's literal body [...] cannot even be understood apart from

mention Pammachius, namely in letters from Augustine³⁸ and Paulinus of Nola,³⁹ and there is some archaeological evidence related to the historical Pammachius – at least to his ‘charitable activities’ – which might help in our reconstruction, and the relation between Pammachius and Jerome in particular, and how this then relates to Jerome’s transformative teaching and his model of the ideal Christian.

So when we categorise these aristocrats as *nobilitas*, what does this imply? The criteria or expectations for ‘secular’ *nobilitas* according to Salzman were that ‘[...] a Roman senatorial noble was thought to possess certain superior personal qualities; traditionally, the well-born were considered to possess a high level of cultural attainment, outstanding virtue, conspicuous civic and political commitment, and proud comportment’.⁴⁰ It is interesting to see that these are almost exactly the criteria Jerome’s model of the noble *christianus perfectus* requires or proposes, but then (mostly) translated in Christian terms: virtue, charitable works, holy arrogance, being most noble in or with Christ, being learned, educated.⁴¹ However, whereas Salzman claims that ‘the traditional Roman senatorial bases and definition – family pedigree combined with public office – [were] but subordinated to Christian piety’,⁴² I would, for Jerome, turn the argument upside down and state that for Jerome, Christian piety is modelled according to the definition of *nobilitas*. Although he often speaks of humility, and certainly also models or remodels some notions of the definition of *nobilitas* according to Christian rhetoric, in principle the core of his re-definitions is at least as much a redefinition of what Christian aspirations are to those of the old *nobilitas*-definition as it is (and only in some instances) a subordination of *nobilitas* to Christian piety. Therefore, a more precise definition is required to scrutinise in which areas he subjugates the one to the other, in which he merges them, and in which he adds new elements and neglects other old ones, so that we get a nuanced picture of how this entire process works. This would show that in Jerome, the ‘redefinition’ of *nobilitas* is certainly less polemic than what Salzman implies. Here, we crash into the problems that come with the ‘conversion’ model of late antiquity. Rather than seeing ‘good birth and the highest form of Christian virtue in opposition’,⁴³ we

textual references’. Similarly, Andrew Cain has urged for caution when we try to reconstruct the historical figure of Marcella based on Jerome’s *Liber ad Marcellam*, see chapter 3 ‘Claiming Marcella’, in A. Cain, *The Letters of Jerome* (2009), especially at 78.

³⁸ Augustine, *Ep.* 58, see below.

³⁹ Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 13.

⁴⁰ M. Salzman, ‘Competing Claims to “Nobilitas” in the Western Empire of the Fourth and Fifth Century’ (2001), 360.

⁴¹ For parallels, see for example *Letters* 22, 52, 77, 108, 130.

⁴² M. Salzman, ‘Competing Claims to “Nobilitas” in the Western Empire of the Fourth and Fifth Century’ (2001), 362.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 363.

have to rather see them as complementary. And rather than seeing the Christian claim to *nobilitas* as universally applicable,⁴⁴ this does not seem a definition Jerome would adhere to.⁴⁵ He presupposed nobility. Jerome does not aim at lower classes, he does not stress the notion of 'all are one in Christ'. Those who follow Jerome's model, and are able to abide by it, are the educated senatorial aristocrats. There is no attempt on Jerome's behalf to 'reach out'.⁴⁶ Although it is sometimes admitted that the appropriation also leads to an alteration of the Christian claims and views,⁴⁷ this would imply that an 'old conservative notion' like *nobilitas* was adopted because Jerome wanted to convert noble people.⁴⁸ Instead, Jerome portrays himself as being part of, or at least aiming at such nobility for himself and his peers. Against all the rhetoric of a new religion, he and many others were extremely conservative nobles.

In order to achieve such nobility agency, networking, and PR were required. These came mostly in the form of patronage. Pammachius was not the only man of high standing with whom Jerome established – or rather forged, or feigned – a close or personal relationship. Jerome also maintained relations with other influential people⁴⁹ such as Damasus,⁵⁰ Dexter, Florentinus, Evagrius of Antioch,⁵¹ Nebridius and other people of the Theodosian court at Constantinople.

⁴⁴ M. Salzman, 'Competing Claims to "Nobilitas" in the Western Empire of the Fourth and Fifth Century' (2001), 363.

⁴⁵ Rather to the contrary: his model of Christian *nobilitas* restored the old Roman exclusivist notion of *nobilitas*, as an antidote against the opening-up of senatorial rank to civil and military officers, as becomes apparent in *Ep.* 66.7: 'The most distinguished privilege loses its prestige when lavished on a crowd, and dignities themselves become less dignified in the eyes of good men when held by persons who have no dignity'.

⁴⁶ This is an aspect which might be contrasted with those serving 'the institution' more directly, e.g. bishops. Salzman does seem to admit that Jerome presupposes nobility, although she still argues that he does it somehow unknowingly or unintended: 'Jerome, for example, appears almost obsessed with noting origins and consistently reserves this virtue for virgins and ascetics, male and female. But he, like Ambrose, Paulinus of Nola, and many other proponents of asceticism in the late fourth century, consider as eligible to attain the highest form of Christian "nobility" only those who were actually of noble birth and who could thus make a show of renouncing their *nobilitas* (in traditional terms). Thus, ironically, what at first may appear as a radical break with elite conceptualisations of *nobilitas*, is similarly tied to aristocratic ideals', Michele Salzman, 'Elite Realities and Mentalités: The Making of a Western Christian Aristocracy', *Arethusa* 33 (2000), 347-62, 359.

⁴⁷ M. Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy* (2002), 214.

⁴⁸ See for example M. Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy* (2002), 18. However she seems to envisage the institution: that is, to Christian leaders and spokesmen.

⁴⁹ Note that in order to remain close to the topic of this contribution, I will only list Jerome's relations with male aristocrats.

⁵⁰ Damasus was the Bishop of Rome, which means he belongs to the clergy. I believe that therefore the correspondence between him and Jerome is of a different nature.

⁵¹ Evagrius of Antioch was also a priest, and should therefore likewise not be considered as directly similar or parallel to Jerome's Roman aristocratic patron-students such as Pammachius. For the relation between Evagrius and Jerome, see S. Rebenich, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis* (1992), 67-70.

One does well to remember that patronage is not, as Jerome in his letters would make it appear, a kind of ‘friendship’, but should rather be seen as a business relation.⁵² Regardless, patronage came with certain rules of conduct of which some very much resemble what we in our modern days would regard as expressions of friendship in the watered down sense of Facebook.⁵³ Here we have to take into account the function of letter-writing in these circles: conventions, rhetoric of flattery (*captatio*), forms of *salutatio*, *glorificatio*, required formulas, and stylistic rules. When one looks at the sources it is immediately clear that in the Jerome-Pammachius correspondence there are only two letters with a formal *salutatio*, namely *Letter 83* from Pammachius and Oceanus to Jerome, which opens *Pammachius et Oceanus Hieronymo presbytero salutem*, and Jerome’s response in *Letter 84* which opens *Hieronymus Pammachio et Oceano fratribus salutem*.⁵⁴ The other letters open in narrative-style, of which the opening of *Letter 97* resembles closest a *salutatio*: ‘Once more with the return of spring I enrich you with the wares of the east and send the treasures of Alexandria to Rome’.⁵⁵ It does not conform to the formulaic requirements of a *salutatio*, but it has a first-person, the author, who addresses the second person plural, stating that he will ‘enrich’ them with ‘treasures’, that is to say Jerome writes he is sending them gifts. Literary exchange – and epistolography in particular – could maintain, but also establish, create, and build relationships; and, to follow Thomas Hunt, communities could be built on literary correspondence.⁵⁶ As Andrew Cain has pointed out, epistolary exchange could serve to project ‘the virtual presence of its physically absent author’.⁵⁷ Better relations, one may add, were maintained by letters accompanied by gifts. This aspect of epistolography became particularly important for Jerome after he had left Rome, and was eager to not lose hold of the reigns of the precious circle of patron-students which he had built and secured in those three years in the capital.

⁵² Here we should point out the difference between ‘peerage’, which ought to be understood as ‘friendship’ among equals – that is within same class –, and ‘patronage’, which is a patron-client relation.

⁵³ Friendship in the Facebook sense is a teleologically oriented friendship (business friendship, if you like), or no friendship at all, something like the one you can sense between Jerome and Pammachius. Does Jerome really think he is seen as a friend by Pammachius? Does he really care about Pammachius? Even if we deploy a non-romantic friendship idea and base it on late antique social friendship – it is a media-friendship, one of letters in Jerome which would be one of Facebook today.

⁵⁴ *Ep.* 84.1.

⁵⁵ *Ep.* 97.1: *Rursum orientalibus uos locupleto mercibus et Alexandrinis opes primo Romam uere transmittito.*

⁵⁶ Thomas Hunt explains this along the lines that literary correspondence has the ability to create relations, to connect, in *Saint Jerome and the Ethics of Literary Production* (hard copy kindly provided by Thomas Hunt to the current author).

⁵⁷ A. Cain, *The Letters of Jerome* (2009), 92.

After having discussed Roman and Christian *nobilitas*, the circle of Pammachius, patronage, and the situation of the letters, it is time to condense all this down to the relation between Pammachius and Jerome. So, could we answer who influenced whom? Pammachius seems to have had his 'fair share' in the definite rupture of the friendship between Jerome and Rufinus by holding back a personal letter from Jerome to Rufinus whilst publicising the vigilant *Contra Rufinum*.⁵⁸ As such, we can say that he clearly directs Jerome: not only in what his client should and should not write, but also whom he should interact with, and with whom contact is best to be broken off.⁵⁹ In line with this Pammachius seems to have put an effort to 'filter' Jerome for the Roman audience, which are apparent in Jerome's allusions to his patron's censorship of his writings in *Letter 48*, where he writes: 'I quite recognise the kindness and forethought which have induced you to withdraw from circulation some copies of my work against Jovinian'.⁶⁰ Further references are found in *Letter 49*:

The remaining points which are censured in my treatise are, I take it, of less importance, or else resolve themselves into this. I have, therefore, refrained from answering them, both that I may not exceed the limit at my disposal, and that I may not seem to distrust your intelligence, knowing as I do that you are ready to be my champion even before I ask you.⁶¹

By stating that he does not wish to 'distrust Pammachius's intelligence' he does not only reveal that his addressee had been tampering with his text before it was publicised, he also most humbly subjugates to his patron's judgement who clearly without even having consulted with Jerome before had acted upon

⁵⁸ See e.g. S. Rebenich, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis* (1992), 201: 'Gemeinsam mit einem Brief, der ebenfalls gegen Rufin polemisierte, schickte [Hieronymus] 399 seine Übersetzung an Pammachius und Oceanus. Da sich aber Pammachius, der für die Veröffentlichung auch dieser Arbeit aus der Feder des Hieronymus verantwortlich zeichnen sollte, für die Übersetzung nicht begeistern konnte, ja sogar eine weitere Verbreitung für gefährlich erachtete, hielt er das Werk unter Verschluss'.

⁵⁹ We know how Jerome happily emphasises his status as former classmate of Pammachius, it must be emphasised that Rufinus was so, too. This has also been pointed out by S. Rebenich, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis* (1992), 27. However, Jerome makes it appear, as do our manuscript witnesses at least in Jerome's corpus, that Pammachius does not seem to feel the need to protect his other former classmate: he seems to not have a business relation with him, whereas he does have one with Jerome. However, we learn from the proceedings of the Council of Carthage 411 that Caelestius has testified to have met Rufinus in the company of Pammachius. Moreover, Pammachius seemed to have been Rufinus' host. This sheds a whole different light on the picture of the anti-Rufinus-Pammachius we know from Jerome's correspondence. I intend to investigate this in further research. Again, this could potentially be interpreted as additional evidence that Jerome exploits their shared past as classmates as pure rhetoric, but that in reality it did not entail any feelings of bonding or indebtedness.

⁶⁰ *Ep. 48.2: De opusculis meis contra Iovinianum quod et prudenter et amanter feceris exemplaria subtrahendo, optime noui.*

⁶¹ *Ep. 49.20: Cetera, quae in libro nostro reprehensa sunt, uel leuiora puto uel ad eundem sensum pertinentia; unde ad ea respondere nolui, ne et libelli excedere magnitudinem et tuo uiderer ingenio diffidere, quem patronum causae meae ante habui, quam rogarem.*

and censured Jerome's work. Jerome ostentatiously adds his conviction that Pammachius is willing to defend his case at Rome. He seems to have derived this impression from Pammachius' letter to Jerome, in which the former had called for the latter to defend his views:

[...] now that I have been challenged by your most delightful letter, a letter which calls upon me to defend my views by an appeal to first principles, I receive my old fellow-learner, companion, and friend with open arms, as the saying goes; and I look forward to having in you a champion of my poor writings.⁶²

Of course, the mention of 'poor writings' may sound like a *captatio benevolentiae*, but in the circumstances of this relationship and letter exchange, it is rather the hardly deliberate or light-heartedly given free licence to Pammachius to alter Jerome's works. It was of course also in Pammachius's self-interest for his own reputation to be kept pristine that his clients were not brought into disrepute. As such, it can be expected of Pammachius to write about (and circulate) his own concerns with regard to ideas or actions of his clients that had caused uproar, and to demand of them to take responsibility and be accountable for their actions. This also reveals Pammachius' diplomatic strength, which is further attested in his policy of never mentioning by name those whom he criticises, such as for example in *Letter 83*, where he testifies that '[a] reverend brother has brought to us sheets containing a certain person's translation into Latin of a treatise by Origen – entitled *peri archōn*'.⁶³ It is a conventional technique in ancient literature, particularly in apologetics and epistolography. Similarly, we find Pammachius attest in the same letter:

The writer in the preface to his work has, with much subtlety but without mentioning your holiness' name, implied that he has done no more than complete a work which you had yourself promised, thus indirectly suggesting that you agree with him.⁶⁴

However, despite not revealing the 'writer's' identity, Pammachius acts less diplomatic here and seems to play into Jerome's sensitivity for his own reputation; to put it bluntly, he is adding oil to the fire. He threatens Jerome that if he does not speak out against this 'writer' (Rufinus), the public will think the two are on a par. In Jerome's *Letter 57* we find another reference to Pammachius' accusations, where Jerome laments:

What men like you call fidelity in transcription, the learned term pestilent minuteness κακοζηλίαν. Such were my teachers about twenty years ago; and even then I was the

⁶² *Ep. 49.1: Nunc autem prouocatus dulcissimis litteris tuis et huiusmodi litteris, quae me ad philosophiam nostri dogmatis prouocarent, et condiscipulum quondam et sodalem et amicum obuiis, ut aiunt, manibus excipio defensoremque meorum opusculorum paro.*

⁶³ *Ep. 83.1: Sanctus aliquis ex fratribus schidas ad nos cuiusdam detulit, quae Origenis nomine uolumen, quod περιάρχων scribitur, in Latinum sermonem conuersum tenerent.*

⁶⁴ *Ep. 83.1: Sane subtiliter in praefatione operis sui mentionem, tacito nomine, tuae sanctitatis expressit, quod a te promissum opus ipse compleret, illud oblique agens, etiam te simili ratione sentire.*

victim of a similar error to that which is now imputed to me, though indeed I never imagined that *you* would charge me with it.⁶⁵

Note that Jerome cunningly seems to oppose ‘men like Pammachius’ to the ‘learned’, which reads like an implicit attack on his addressee. Likewise we find another reference to censorship, as well as Jerome’s flattery and defensive position a little further in the same letter:

But to pass by this limitless field of discussion and to show you, most Christian of nobles, and most noble of Christians, what is the kind of falsification which is censured in my translation, I will set before you the opening words of the letter in the Greek original and as rendered by me, that from one count in the indictment you may form an opinion of all.⁶⁶

Jerome glorifies Pammachius as most noble by birth and in faith, but at the same time criticises his censorship, and requests his patron to revise his opinion based on his exhortation in this letter.

As one of his prime distributors and publishers of his writings, Jerome was quite dependent upon Pammachius. This makes it all the more intriguing why there is no eulogy, why there is only one letter by Pammachius’ hand that has been preserved, and why Jerome did not attempt to be more hospitable to his friend after the latter had lost his wife. Unless, indeed, their relationship was mostly a matter of business and amicable language was but rhetoric.

Furthermore, Pammachius’ concern for (Nicene⁶⁷) orthodoxy is prominent, and evidence for this is not only found in Jerome but also in Augustine. From Pammachius’ own hand we learn that he is concerned with Rufinus’ translation which ‘contain[s] many things which disturb our poor wits and which appear to us to be uncatholic’.⁶⁸ In the prescript to *Letter 58* from Augustine to Pammachius we read how in this letter Augustine congratulated Pammachius, the Senator, whose appeals brought his Numidian tenants away from the Donatists, back to the Catholic Church. We get the impression from the letter that there had been unrest amongst the tenants of Pammachius’s Numidian estates, in the province where Donatism originated.⁶⁹ This attitude reveals Pammachius’ loyalty

⁶⁵ *Ep. 57.5: Quam uos ueritatem interpretationis, hanc erudite κακοζηλίαν nuncupant. Unde et ego doctus a talibus ante annos circiter uiginti et simili tunc quoque errore deceptus, certe hoc mihi a uobis obiciendum nesciens [...].*

⁶⁶ *Ep. 57.12: Sed ut infinita praeteream et ostendam tibi, uir omnium nobelium Christianissime, Christianorum nobilissime, cuius modi falsitates in epistulae translatione reprehendant, ipsius epistulae ponam cum Graeco sermon principium, ut ex uno crimine intellegantur et cetera.*

⁶⁷ This could be argued when one picks up the suggestion made by Stefan Rebenich in his reworked English monograph on Jerome, *Jerome* (2002), 28, who claims that the ‘Christian litterati [*sic*] in the western Empire [...] maintained the position of Nicene orthodoxy and sympathized with the ascetic movement’.

⁶⁸ *Ep. 83.1: Et quoniam in his multa sunt, quae tenuitatem ingenii nostri permouent, quae minus catholice dicta existimamus [...].*

⁶⁹ See the prescript: *A. Pammachio, cl. viro senatori, peramanter gratulatur quod suos Numidiae colonos Donatistas suis adhortationibus ad catholicam Ecclesiam adduxerit (n. 1-2)*, Augustine,

to the expectations that come with the role of patron in the classical (Roman) definition, and which seems to have remained powerful even within a Christian context.⁷⁰

Jerome does not quite portray Pammachius as his ‘pet project’ as he does with his female protagonists, but at the same time one gets the impression that Jerome is trying to use Pammachius as a vehicle for his teaching and his model of the *christianus perfectus* to a wider Roman audience; this is partially expected from Pammachius in his role as patron, and by acting as Jerome’s ‘agent’ and distributor, and sometimes censor, of the latter’s literary production Pammachius is conforming to this role. Again, this is within expectations of what defines *nobilitas* in senatorial aristocracy; the same goes for *nobilitas* in Jerome’s Christian elitarian model, and in line with this the role of patrons.

As we have seen, the language in the epistolary correspondence is further evidence of the patron-client relation between Pammachius and Jerome. Jerome’s apparent ‘friendly’, ‘amicable’ language is that of a client, appropriate to a subordinate subject, emphasised – or maybe exaggerated – in *Letter 48*: ‘I hear that the hopes of the entire city are centred in you, and that bishop [*pontifex*] and people are agreed in wishing for your exaltation. To be a bishop [*sacerdos*] is much, to deserve to be one is more’.⁷¹ Apart from this being a glorifying compliment to Pammachius, this segment can also be read as an (indirect) offence to denigrate the bishop of Rome: it is not uncommon for Jerome to (sometimes more, sometimes less) subtly criticise the Roman clergy.⁷²

Much importance is given to *captatio*, for which a parallel can be found in the Damasus-Jerome correspondence.⁷³ The little correspondence⁷⁴ between Pammachius and Jerome might be another indicator of the (more) business-like relationship.⁷⁵ This is evident from the forms of address applied by Jerome in

Ep. 58 (PL 33). Augustine expresses his gratitude for Pammachius’s decisive role in trying to steer a North African group of tenants away from their Donatist sympathies. Pammachius owns land in Numidia.

⁷⁰ Other evidence also indicates that Jerome still expects this to be so, when he writes to Furia that she should ideally donate to Christians or causes, but he seems to acknowledge and tolerate that she does donate to non-Christian causes as well: ‘*Omni petentite da, sed maxime domesticis fidei*’, *Ep. 54.12*. This is a reference to *Luke 6:30*.

⁷¹ *Ep. 48.4: Audio totius in te urbis studia concitata, audio pontificis et populi uoluntatem pari mente congruere. Minus est tenere sacerdotium quam mereri*. In *Prosopography* this segment is read as evidence for Pammachius’ potential candidacy for the Roman See, but that might be reading too much into Jerome’s rhetoric of *glorificatio*.

⁷² Plenty examples of Jerome’s clerical criticism in his letters can be found in *Ep. 22* to Eustochium, *Ep. 52* to Nepotian, *Ep. 125* to Rusticus, *Ep. 130* to Demetrias.

⁷³ See for an excellent assessment of the relationship between Damasus and Jerome Andrew Cain, chapter 2 ‘A Pope and His Scholar’, in A. Cain, *The Letters of Jerome* (2009), 43-67.

⁷⁴ The Jerome-Pammachius corpus consists of seven letters which can all be dated post-393; none of the letters date from during Jerome’s stay in Rome. Of these seven letters only one is by Pammachius (co-authored by Oceanus).

⁷⁵ Unfortunately and perhaps also revealing is the fact that few letters have been preserved of people who wrote to Jerome. Those who are preserved like the ones by Damasus, Theophilus,

his letters to Pammachius, where we can see how Jerome clearly tries to accommodate his patron but at the same time he already claims Pammachius, seemingly without the latter's consent (see below). For example, Jerome's rhetoric illustrates Pammachius as the advocate of his case, 'I do not speak thus that I may provoke you to write on the subject yourself – although I know your zeal in the study of the sacred writings to be greater than my own – but that you may compel my tormentors to do so'.⁷⁶ This segment also denigrates Pammachius, for Jerome appears not to want his patron to publish on this discussion himself: why would he express such urge? Yet, at the same time he wishes for Pammachius to defend Jerome's writings, and instruct others on Jerome's behalf, mainly by distributing his works.⁷⁷ Jerome expresses how he looks 'forward to having' him as 'a champion' of his 'poor writings; if, that is to say, I can first conciliate your judgment to give sentence in my favour, and can instruct my advocate in all those points on which I am assailed'.⁷⁸ Aware that this letter will be circulated in Rome, Jerome makes a clear stance that Pammachius is his advocate, and makes sure to claim him before the Roman audience. Nevertheless, Pammachius seems to have criticised his client's behaviour, who in turn defends himself making use of similar military typology:

I would not have you engage in an encounter in which you will have nothing to do but to protect yourself, your right hand remaining motionless while your left manages your shield. You must either strike or fall. I cannot account you a victor unless I see your opponent put the sword.⁷⁹

Innocent, Augustine, Epiphanius, and Pammachius, co-authored by Oceanus (the latter preserved in Jerome's epistolary correspondence as *Letter* 83), are rather short (with the exception of Augustine's) or technical, relating to Jerome, the interpreter of Scripture (Damasus, Augustine), or being critical of him as translator and promotor of Origen (Pammachius/Oceanus, Augustine, Theophilus, Epiphanius). In all cases the letters deal with doctrine, not with ascetic ideals [except for the Jovinianist controversy] or aristocratic identities. Yet, as there are relatively few letters to Jerome preserved, this observation on content might not be significant, although especially with Pammachius the difference of tone between Jerome's letters to Pammachius and the one preserved by Pammachius/Oceanus is noticeable, and could presumably tell us more about the relation between Pammachius and Jerome, and point out the differences how Jerome would like us to believe their relationship existed, and what would have been more likely to be the case ... or at least how to question it when taking into account Pammachius' address to Jerome. Characteristics and rules of epistolography are important to take into consideration in this respect as well.

⁷⁶ *Ep.* 48.3: *Nec hoc dico, quo te ad scribendum prouocem, cuius in sacris litteris stadium prae me fero, sed ut alios, qui nos lacerant, hoc facere compellas.*

⁷⁷ *Ep.* 57.1: [...] *hanc epistolam misi, quae te et per te alios, qui nos amare dignantur, rei ordinem doceat.* Jerome's emphasis on his expectation that Pammachius will inform others also attests of his activities as distributor of Jerome's works (and ideas).

⁷⁸ *Ep.* 49.1: [...] *manibus excipio defensoremque meorum opusculorum paro, ita tamen, si ante te placatum iudicem habuero, immo, si oratorem meum super omnibus, quae in me arguuntur, instruxero.*

⁷⁹ *Ep.* 49.12: *Nolo tale certamen, in quo tetantum protegas, et torpente dextera sinistra clipeum circumferri. Aut ferendum tibi est aut cadendum. Non possum te aestimare uictorem, nisi aduersarium uidero trucidatum.*

Jerome's doubts of the efficacy of his pleas for Pammachius' defence on his behalf are emphasised in his rhetoric in the accompanying *Letter 48*, where he writes:

I have dedicated to you a defence of the work in question [*Letter 49*], feeling sure that when you have read it you will yourself satisfy the doubts of others on my behalf; or else, if you too turn up your nose at the task, you will have to explain in some new manner that section of the apostle [*1Cor. 7*] in which he discusses virginity and marriage.⁸⁰

The fact that Pammachius has received the special dedication of the work implies that therefore he is expected to defend it. Similarly, Jerome rhetorically argues in *Letter 57*:

I leave everything to your discretion. You can read the letter of Epiphanius both in Greek and in Latin; and, if you do so, you will see at once the value of my accusers' lamentations and insulting complaints. For the rest, I am satisfied to have instructed one of my dearest friends and am content simply to stay quiet in my cell and to wait for the day of judgment. If it may be so, and if my enemies allow it, I hope to write for you, not philippics like those of Demosthenes or Tully, but commentaries upon the scriptures.⁸¹

Jerome has played the ball back to Pammachius and now expects him to speak up for him in Rome. Yet, Jerome also anticipates criticism which he expects will find its way to his pigeon hole upon publication of his letters, and maybe he refers to critique he has already heard of in the past, as he defends his letter to his patron, whom he qualifies as a friend, a claim which is likely to be, and might have been contested:

Christian modesty sometimes requires us to be silent even to our friends, and to nurse our humility in peace, where the renewal of an old friendship would expose us to the charge of self-seeking. Thus, when you have kept silence I have kept silence too, and have not cared to remonstrate with you, lest I should be thought more anxious to conciliate a person of influence than to cultivate a friend. But, now that it has become a duty to reply to your letter, I will endeavour always to be beforehand with you, and not so much to answer your queries as to write independently of them. Thus, if I have shown my modesty hitherto by silence, I will henceforth show it still more by coming forward to speak.⁸²

⁸⁰ *Ep. 48.2: Itaque, quod solum facere potui [apologetikon] ipso operis tibi [prosephonesis], quem cum legeris, aut ipse pro nobis ceteris satisfacies aut, sit tu quoque narem contraxeris, illam apostolic [perikopen], in qua de uirginitate et nuptiis disputant, aliter disserere compelleris.*

⁸¹ *Ep. 57.13: Unde arbitrio tuo cuncta permitto, ut legas ipsam epistulam, tam Graecam quam Latinam, et ilico intellegas accusatorum meorum nenas et pretiosas querellas. Porro mihi sufficit amicum instruxisse carissimum et in cellula latitantem diem tenatum expectare iudicii. Oportet, si fieri potest, et si aduersarii saeuierint, commentarios potius scripturarum quam Demosthenis et Tullii Philippicas tibi scribere.*

⁸² *Ep. 48.1: Christiani interdum pudoris est etiam apud amicos tacere et humilitatem suam magis silentio consolari quam retractando ueteres amicitias ambitionis crimen incurrere. Quamdiu tacuisset, tacui nec expostulare unquam super hac re uolui, ne non amicum quaerere, sed potentiorum uidere expetere. Nunc autem prouocatus officio litterarum primas semper partes*

It is worth mentioning that this particular letter is the first correspondence we know of between Jerome and Pammachius. There is no evidence of correspondence between the two after Jerome had left Rome upon completion of his education, neither from the period he spent at Rome between 382-385 CE. If Pammachius had indeed been the dear friend Jerome claims, courtesy rules of friendship would have required for the relationship to be maintained through correspondence. Jerome's defence on grounds of 'Christian modesty' seem to resonate accusations of this nature. Moreover, his defence that the public would interpret his potential letters to Pammachius as 'self-seeking' are weakened, and public opinion confirmed, when one realises how this very first letter is written exactly in search of his defence and his ideas which are at stake, so entirely out of the author's self-interest.

When we turn to assess Pammachius' style of addressing Jerome, we get a clearer picture of the business-character of the relationship. It is of course difficult when one has to derive all evidence from but one letter, but it might give us a reasonable impression of how Pammachius perceived his client, and it very well displays its business relation rather than its friendship character. Jerome is very much portrayed as the one who should obey his patron's demands, as we can extract from the following segments, where Pammachius and Oceanus write: 'We therefore request your excellency to be so good as to bestow upon this particular matter an attention which will benefit not only ourselves but all who reside in the city'.⁸³ This also attests of their intended actions to circulate Jerome's response in Rome. Furthermore, they 'desire [Jerome] to make evident the interpolations which his defender has introduced'.⁸⁴ Their use of imperatives is another piece of evidence which supports the argument that the relationship was one of patron-client: 'You will also confute and overthrow all statements in the sheets which we have sent to your holiness that are ignorantly made or contradict the Catholic faith'.⁸⁵ And, in addition: 'Remove then the suspicions men cannot help feeling and confute your assailant; for, if you ignore his implications, people will say that you admit their truth'.⁸⁶

Elements of Pammachius' address of Jerome also resonate in Jerome's own letters, where he laments how he 'stand[s] in the thick of the fray, my life in constant danger: you who profess to teach me are a man of books. "Do not", you say, "attack unexpectedly or wound by a side-thrust. Strike straight at your

habere temptabo et non tam rescribere quam scribere, ut et uerecunde hucusque tacuisse et uerecundius loqui coepisse cognoscar.

⁸³ *Ep. 83.1: Quaesumus praestantiam tuam, ut in hoc specialiter, non tam nobis quam uniuersis qui in Vrbe habitant, profuturum opus digneris impendere [...].*

⁸⁴ *Ep. 83.1: Et quae a defensore eius interpolata sunt, prodas.*

⁸⁵ *Ep. 83.1: Quae etiam in schedis istis, quas ad sanctitatem tuam direximus, uel contra catholicam regulam uel inperite dicta sunt, redarguas atque conuincas.*

⁸⁶ *Ep. 83.1: Purga ergo suspiciones hominum, et conuince criminantem, ne si dissimulaueris, consensisse uidearis.*

opponent. You should be ashamed to resort to feints instead of force". As if it were not the perfection of fighting to menace one part and to strike another'.⁸⁷

A man of Pammachius' standing would most likely have had many clients whom he would have had to manage, administer favours to, and consult; Jerome was just one of them. That Jerome sometimes seems to imagine a closer friendship might be because of the competitiveness required in search for patronage with other clients competing for Pammachius' attention and favours.⁸⁸ Jerome's references to their shared education⁸⁹ is his attempt to distinguish himself from other clients. Pammachius in his role as patron has no need to emphasise such 'precedent' or shared background.

Yet another factor is social mobility. Jerome and his peers wished to belong to the true *nobilitas*, and not to be considered marginal provincial aristocrats:⁹⁰ having a patron of the likes of Pammachius, who is not only a patron but whom you could portray as a 'friend', would give evidence of a relationship which transcends the pure business-like relationship of patronage, and as such give evidence of being 'peers' with the true *nobilitas* of the Roman senatorial aristocracy. Being 'peers' with them, means, according to the 'rules' that define the *clarissimate* (and within this rank the *nobilitas*): being equal.

Conclusion

So, taking all these aspects into account, what kind of transformations took place? As we have seen in the opening quote of this article, Jerome portrays Pammachius as role-model for Christian senators, the 'first monk' amongst them; so if we may follow Jerome in *Letter 77* Pammachius is the transformed Roman noble man who has become a *christianus perfectus*, but the question remains: why is there no eulogy?⁹¹ On the other hand this could reveal that

⁸⁷ *Ep.* 49.13: *Tu me stantem in proelio et de uita periclitantem studiosus magister doceas. Noli ex oblique et, unde non putaris, uulnus inferre: directo percute gladio. Turpe tibi est hostem dolis perire, non uiribus; quasi non et haec ars summa pugnantium sit, alibi minari et alibi percutere.* This relates back to the military typology addressed above.

⁸⁸ Andrew Cain, chapter 1 'The Voice of One Calling in the Desert', in A. Cain, *The Letters of Jerome* (2009), 25-42, emphasises Jerome's attempts to manipulate his autobiography so as to claim authority and thus secure his credentials as a spiritual mentor to the Roman aristocrats, thereby almost over-emphasising Jerome's self-interest rather than seeing the bigger picture of competition for patronage, as well as identifying this not just as an attempted authority claim but also as 'branding' and 'marketing'.

⁸⁹ They were classmates in the school of Donatus, see for example the citation above from *Ep.* 49.1 where Jerome calls Pammachius his 'old fellow learner'.

⁹⁰ This is striking, for Jerome qualifies exactly as such a provincial, marginal figure.

⁹¹ I must again stipulate that if Jerome would have really thought Pammachius were an example worthy to be followed he would have written a *vita*, an epitaph or eulogy on his friend, but he has not.

Pammachius, though patron-student of Jerome, was not perceived by his client as 'marketing product'.⁹²

I hope that this article has shown that the question of transformation of identity is far more complex than Jerome's idealised literary efforts make the reader believe: agents, agendas, idealised reconstructed reality, rhetoric, social expectations and customs, rules of literary interaction or correspondence and interpersonal communication, external expectations, peerage, patronage, and the merging of, or rather the blurred overlap of the domains of various religious traditions, even perhaps the secular and religion, and how all of this is being presented to us, again, by actors or agents with particular agendas one of which was clearly to be part of what was so attractive, namely to be a member of the Roman *nobilitas*.⁹³

⁹² Maybe because a male audience required different methods of persuasion for transformation according to Jerome's model of the noble *christianus perfectus*? These are aspects to be followed up in further research. Another idea here would be that Pammachius' superiority to Jerome would have prevented the latter from seeing him as 'marketing product': Jerome as a senior male teacher can patronise his female patron-students and that makes them more 'marketable' because they are, in a way, more 'subordinate' and thus more suitable for branding, to serve as marketing products (brand wagons of Jerome's teaching); likewise with the eulogy on Nepotian, who was much younger than Jerome hence could be considered 'subordinate'. He is the only male student he has written a eulogy for. The historicity of the other *vitae* which have men as their subjects is disputed, and the nature of those literary products is different from those *vitae* included in Jerome's epistolary corpus.

⁹³ It would be interesting to look at how these forms of individual agency can offer us better insight into 'lived religion' and illustrate the diversity of Christianities, rather than attempting to fit everything into one framework of a universal(ised) Christianity, and if it does not fit then classify them as 'marginal(ised)' or even 'heretic'. The following segment from *Ep.* 66.7 also requires further investigation: 'The most distinguished privilege loses its prestige when lavished on a crowd, and dignities themselves become less dignified in the eyes of good men when held by persons who have no dignity'. This shows that Jerome's *nobilitas* is an antidote to the opening-up of senatorial rank to provincials, civil officers *etc.* (and the massively increasing number of senators as a result of that). I deal with the Pammachius-Jerome relationship in much greater detail in two chapters of my doctoral thesis, where I apply the methodology of 'Lived Ancient Religion' (J. Ruepke) and 'Embodied Early and Medieval Christianity' (M. Vinzent).

Domina, Filia, Conserva, Germana: The Identity of the Correspondent in Saint Jerome's Letters

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ABSTRACT

The article examines St. Jerome's letters to his Christian friends from the circle of Marcella in Rome. The idea of the Church Father regarding the identity and the image of a woman as a correspondent and of himself as an author is clearly displayed in these texts: both in the rhetoric of the epistolary genre and the textual fabric of the letters. The forms of address towards the collocutor, borrowed from the social Roman family relationship dictionary, leave its pagan dimensions. They raise up into the religious field creating a new idea about family and society, based on spiritual kinship, bond by ties stronger and deeper than those of the regular family ties and epistolary friendship of the Roman letter writers.

Numerous of Jerome's letters are addressed to his friends, oponents, well-known Christian apologists including even heretics and pagans.¹ However, some of the most interesting among them, which amount up to one fifth of his overall correspondence, are written to his female friends in Rome. Most of these letters contain little personal information being dedicated to the interpretation of the Scriptures or particular issues of Christian doctrine. The letters examined in this study were written between 382 and 385 AD during Jerome's second stay in Rome, and are addressed to an affluent female intellectual circle in the centre of which was the noble Marcella, who was the addressee of the most numerous texts of the author. The translation of the Scriptures marks the enormous impact of his personality on the development of Christian doctrine at the time, as well as on the development of Christianity as a leading European religious doctrine in the centuries to come.² As Andrew Cain points out 'Jerome also was the first Latin Christian to root his authority as an orthodox translator, textual critic, and interpreter of the Bible in a reading knowledge of its text in the original languages, notably Hebrew. In championing his "back to the

¹ On this topic see Stefan Rebenich, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis. Prosopographische und sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Stuttgart, 1992). The epistolary works of Jerome are thoroughly analyzed by Andrew Cain, *The Letters of Jerome: Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis, and the Construction of Christian Authority in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2009).

² See Stefan Rebenich, 'The Vir Trilinguis and the Hebraica Veritas', *VC* 47 (1993), 50-77 and *id.*, *Jerome* (London, 2002).

sources” methodology he sought to do for biblical studies in the Latin-speaking world what Origen, after whom he consciously patterned himself, did for the Greek-speaking one’.³ Much of his endeavor the author discusses in detail both from a philological and a spiritual perspective with the women to whom he wrote during his stay in Rome. From the texts themselves it becomes clear that in many cases his correspondents are the ones who suggest ideas and give insights about the use of certain translation strategies.

Most numerous are his letters to Marcella, a key figure in the Roman social life from the end of the IVth century. She created a circle of Christian women who used to get together on a daily basis. Some of them even lived in her palace on the Aventine Hill in Rome. This is a unique manifestation of the fact that contrary to some popular beliefs Christianity spread its power far beyond the social groups of slaves, the poor and the oppressed and illiterate population. In this case a social and cultural phenomenon of strong Christian propaganda is observed revealed by the vibrant response of the rich and influential women: wives, mothers or sisters of the men of power in the Empire. This female Christian ‘school’ had a huge impact on the further development of the Christian doctrine as a developing mass religion. Jerome became their spiritual teacher and mentor. They read with him the Old and New Testament and interpreted them; he taught them Hebrew, as they themselves already knew well ancient Greek to an extent to read the New Testament in the original.⁴

As we can see from their epistolary portraits, that the unifying thread linking together all these noble women is not only their wealth and belonging to the most influential Roman families, not only their incredible dedication to the Christian religion and the spiritual fervor of their ascetic life, but also their refined intellect and education.

Years later, in a letter, which is a eulogy to Fabiola, Jerome remembers how she knew by heart and recited his letter, which he had written to his friend Heliodorus in 374 AD, where he praised ascetic life: ‘... earnestness of her prayers, the brilliancy of her conversation, the tenacity of her memory, and the quickness of her intellect? Had you heard her speak Greek you would have deemed her ignorant of Latin; yet when she used the tongue of Rome her words were free from a foreign accent’.⁵ Lamenting the death of Blaesilla in 389 AD, he recalled her incredible talent, memory, intelligence and philological knowledge. Blaesilla overcame the difficulties of Hebrew in only a few months in order to be able to compete with his mother Paula in the recitation of Psalms.⁶

³ A. Cain, *The Letters of Jerome* (2009), 198.

⁴ About the women from Marcella’s circle see further Jerome, *Select Letters* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1980), 483-503.

⁵ *Letter 77, 9: Librum, quo Heliodorum quondam iuvenis ad heremum cohortatus sum, tenebat memoriter...*

⁶ *Ibid.*

In his letters to these bright individuals Jerome reveals his idea about what the identity of the women who had devoted their life to Christianity should be. His views can be traced down both in the rhetoric of the epistolary genre and in his directly expressed attitudes to his correspondents, as well as in the fabric of the texts themselves where he explicates his attitude to the Roman mores of the time.

In this way two major facets in Jerome's mindset, which are contrasting and opposing each other, can be highlighted: the ideal image of the Christian female on the one hand, and the secular lady submerged in care of the material and carnal, on the other.

This text aims to present the attitude to the woman as an interlocutor in the epistolary exchange in the works of a Christian author who "turns away from his fellow-men with ill-disguised contempt in order to share generously his erudition with the pious women of the Roman Church".⁷ The nuances of the virtual female identities projected in the letters of Jerome are *lady (mistress), daughter, fellow-servant* and *sister*. They are traceable in the epistolary attitude of the author himself and will be examined through analysis of individual texts. The Christian Father himself has synthesized his attitude to his female students and recipients of his epistolary texts in one of his most popular letters dedicated to virginity and addressed to the virgin Eustochium in a statement that is used as the starting point of this article. In paragraph 26 of the letter 22 the author manifests and justifies his overall attitude to his interlocutors in the epistolary dialogues: 'Therefore, my Eustochium, daughter, lady, fellow-servant, sister – for the first name suits your age, the second your rank, the third our religion and the last our affection'.⁸ These qualifications of the recipient, although representing items belonging to kinship terms and the social sphere of the Latin lexis are used outside of their secular meanings and present a strict religious hierarchy, thus creating a new idea of a family and society based on spiritual kinship and collating a new relation between the slave and the master, father and daughter, slave and his fellow-servant, brother and sister in the field of the new Christian community. What is more, they show such a high degree of the author's respect, such a sense of empathy and affection to his correspondents which reveals an even stronger interrelation that is filled with much deeper feelings compared with the ordinary epistolary friendship.⁹ This is what makes the relation between the author and the recipient to feel almost sacred.

⁷ Letter 39, 1: ... *orandi instantiam, nitorem linguae, memoriae tenacitatem, acumen ingenii ... Si Graeca loquentem audisses, latine eam nescire putares: si in romanum sonum lingua se verterat, nihil omnino peregrini sermo redolebat...*

P. Brown, *The Body and Society. Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988), 427.

⁸ *Itaque, mi Eustochia, filia, domina, conserva, germana – aliud enim aetatis, aliud meriti, illud religionis, hoc caritatis est nomen...*

⁹ See for example the idea about the epistolary friendship in Antiquity in K. Thraede, *Grundzüge griechisch-römischer Brieftopik* (München, 1970), especially 125-46. See also the

Which are the visible characteristics of the genre that mark the attitude of the author to his recipients? I can compare Jerome's letters to women with the correspondence of his contemporary doctor of the Church – Augustine. Unlike the letters of St. Augustine addressed to women, Jerome's texts lack *inscriptions*, i.e. long, polite and full of praising epithets addresses in which the sender has to show respect for the addressee and especially courtly courtesy to their social position. St. Augustine's letter to their common correspondent Fabiola, for example, begins with the following: 'To the most religious and preeminent lady, his daughter laudable in the Charity of Christ, Fabiola, Augustine gives greetings in the Lord'.¹⁰

In Jerome's letters rather spontaneous addresses are interwoven in the text, usually in the first paragraphs, but sometimes in the middle or at the end of the text. Their spontaneity and 'out-of-place use' makes us believe that they are not a rhetorical tool and do not serve simply the text requirements, but indicate the author's sincere attitude towards his correspondents escaping from being official and distant. These addresses are not a manifestation of courtesy and are not mandatory rhetoric formulas expressing politeness, bearing in mind that kindness itself was not particularly typical of the acidulous nature of the Christian writer. We should also not forget that Augustine's letters were written when he was holding the institutional position of a bishop, which Jerome never got. Another possible explanation for the lack of *inscriptions* may be the greater degree of familiarity which Jerome had with his recipients. Despite the undeniable similarities between Augustine's and Jerome's letters, those of Jerome sound more naturally, are more detailed and tinted with more emotion than the epistolary texts to women of Aurelius Augustine. The continuous use of possessive pronouns when Jerome addresses his women correspondents, as well as the common use of deminutives contribute to the warm sound his texts: *mi Marcella, Blesilla nostra, virguncula nostra, Pacatula nostra, mi domina, mi filia, muliercula, tiruncula*.¹¹ An expressive example is the phrase which does not permit any objections as if it puts a seal for possession at the end of letter 45 to Asella where Jerome refers to Paula and Eustochia: "... whether the world wills it or no, they are mine in Christ!"¹²

Augustine writes letters to women without emphasizing this part of his correspondence. The issues he tackles are always in the form of questions concerning

analysis of Greco-Roman letter writing in relation with society and character formation in Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia, 1985), 27-49. See also Elizabeth A. Clark, *Jerome, Chrysostom, and Friends: Essays and translations*, Studies in Women and Religion 1 (New York, 1979). Elizabeth Clark investigates friendship between the sexes in the early Church in Late Antiquity.

¹⁰ Letter 267: *Dominae religiosissimae et praestantissimae, et in Christi caritate laudabili filiae Fabiolae, Augustinus in Domino salutem.*

¹¹ See *Letters*: 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 45, 107, 128 etc.

¹² ... *velit nolit mundus, in Christo mei sunt!*

faith and the Christian doctrine that he is interested in at the moment, thus engaging the women in a natural way in theoretical problems. The addressees of his letters play the role of rhetorical means, of markers demanded from the style of the epistolary genre. Jerome, on the contrary, focuses strongly on his correspondence with Christian women, he knows them well and uses them as examples for one another, he refers to their own letters that they write to each other and in his letters the discussed matters are always designed specifically for the particular receiver, although he might have himself been engaged in another topic.

Among Augustine's letters there is not a single depiction of a Christian woman. Even his letter to the virgin Demetrias' mother Juliana,¹³ who would have to present the perfect image of a virgin devoted to Christ, is in fact a response to his opponent, the heretic Pelagius, on the issue of God's grace and human will. Such depictions abound in Jerome's texts.¹⁴

In his letters Augustine addresses issues that do not refer to the women's personalities, while Jerome's topics are the women themselves, their lives, the environment they live in, the dynamics of the social life in Rome and the colourful culture of the end of the IVth century.¹⁵ Augustine and his correspondents rarely know each other in person.¹⁶ The women do not know each other, they don't have shared memories, they have not shared experiences, activities and emotions. The real connection between the sender and the receiver projected in the letters has nothing to do with specific life situations, with the people inhabiting the two worlds of the text. With a few exceptions, women are just a vehicle to create the text, while his aim is different, namely, to discuss the Holy Scriptures, the Christian truth and divine knowledge. Contrariwise, Jerome's correspondents become part of the text only *after* his relations with them have already been established. He knows them well and they know him. This allows him to write about himself openly, to share his emotions, fears, visions, dreams and insults and to address such issues when the women are concerned. The goal of his epistolary text is twofold: to get to know himself and his addressees on the one hand, and to put to the fore the divine knowledge, the Christian faith, the ascetic ideal and the Scriptures where the latter functions both as rhetorical means and purpose of the letters.

¹³ Letter 188.

¹⁴ E.g. see the Letter 24 to Marcella – *Laus Asellae*; Letter 108 to Eustochium - *Vita Paulae*, which is analyzed in A. Cain, *Jerome's Epitaph on Paula: A Commentary of the Epithaphium Sanctae Paulae* (Oxford, 2013); Letter 127 to Principia about Marcella's life and an eulogy of the qualities of women; Letter 66 to Pammachius – a consolation about the death of his wife Paulina and Letter 77 – a consolation to Oenus about Fabiola's death.

¹⁵ The most colourful depiction of the Roman *mores* is in Letter 22 to the virgin Eustochium (paragraphs 13-6; 32; 35-6).

¹⁶ Augustine's biographer Possidius says: *Feminarum intra domum eius nulla unquam conversata est, nulla mansit, ne quidem germana soror, quae vidua Deo serviens multo tempore usque in diem obitus sui praeposita ancillarum Dei vixit, sed nec fratris sui filiae, quae pariter Deo serviebat...*, *Vita Augustini* 26.

To be in the role of a correspondent of Augustine, besides the compulsory requirement for high social, intellectual and moral upliftment and strong Christian faith, one should be prepared enough to be able to read and discuss the biblical texts in Latin as the author uses them as a basis for creating completely new ones and interprets particular parts using allegorical exegesis. To be in the role of a correspondent of Jerome to the above requirements should be added good knowledge of the pagan Roman literature (Ennius, Nevius, Virgil, Horace, Cicero, Percius' satires and Lucretius' poetry) as well as to know perfectly Greek and to have some knowledge in Hebrew.

*Lady (Mistress) – an address of the rank*¹⁷

In this sense, the female recipient is primarily a *domina* for Jerome who highly appreciates the above mentioned intellectual abilities, the memory and the zeal of his women-correspondent. A *domina* is not only the virgin serving Christ, but also her mother, who brought her up and breastfed her with her own milk. His letter dedicated to virginity begins with addressing the 'daughter' interwoven in a biblical quote.¹⁸ The author calls the young woman 'Dame' in the second paragraph¹⁹ and further down (in paragraph 20) of the same letter, the author praises in a special way all virgins thus implying his attitude towards marriage.²⁰ In the same paragraph Jerome rehearses a fictitious dialogue with the imaginary mother of his *domina* accusing her that she envies her daughter, while actually she has received grace instead by becoming a mother-in-law of Christ: 'Why, mother, do you grudge your daughter her virginity? She has conferred on you a high privilege: you are now the mother-in-law of God'.²¹ This quote is further evidence of the transfer of common kinship vocabulary (*sponsa, socrus*) into a new, sacred and religious context.

*Daughter – an address of the age*²²

Jerome's letters may contain the address *daughter (filia)*, since in most cases he writes to a lot of women that are much younger than him. Often his correspondent's age is quite fragile. In his letter to Leta²³ he addresses the upbringing of her daughter, who is a baby. In another letter devoted to the same issue

¹⁷ *Domina – nomen meriti*

¹⁸ *Audi, filia, et vide et inclina aurem tuam et obliviscere populum tuum...*, Letter 22, 1.

¹⁹ *... mi domina Eustochium - dominam quippe debeo vocare sponsam domini mei...*

²⁰ *Laudo nuptias, laudo coniugium, sed quia mihi virgines generant!*

²¹ *Quid invides, mater, filiae? ... Grande tibi beneficium praestitit: socrus Dei esse coepisti.*

²² *Filia – nomen aetatis*

²³ Letter 107.

he speaks to the father Gaudentius about the upbringing of little Pacatula, who is a very young child. It starts with a complaint about the difficulty to write to a little girl: 'It is hard to write to a little girl who cannot understand what you say, of whose mind you know nothing, and of whose inclinations it would be rash to prophesy. For how can you speak of self-control to a child who is eager for cakes, who babbles on her mother's knee, and to whom honey is sweeter than any words'.²⁴

A touching paternalistic attitude, a clear emotion and bitter sorrow are evident in his letter dedicated to the death of Paula's daughter Blaesilla, who died at the age of 20. In the second paragraph of the letter the author freely releases his own feelings: 'But what is this? I wish to check a mother's weeping, and I groan myself. I make no secret of my feelings; this entire letter is written in tears ... But he is a poor comforter who is overcome by his own sighs, and from whose afflicted heart tears are wrung as well as words. Dear Paula, my agony is as great as yours. I was her father in the spirit, her foster-father in affection'.²⁵

Besides the bitter and sincere sorrow in the letter in which tears are an integral and meaningful part of the rhetorics, besides the physical description of a grief-stricken parent, the reader can see the author's self-identification as a spiritual father and mentor in the love of Christ of the young Blaesilla. From the said so far, it can be concluded that the address *filia* in his texts is a tool to express Jerome's deep conviction that his correspondents are his spiritual daughters, whom he educated with the love of the *doctrina Christiana*.

*Sister – an address of the affection*²⁶

Women are also his sisters in faith (*germana*) and equivalent partners of the new family, the confined circle of ascetics who are equally committed to religious pursuits and Christ's ministry despite the fact that they are physically separated from the world in the palace on the Aventine hill and far away from the noise of the metropolis. In letters 29 and 32 Jerome finishes his text in a similar way – by greeting 'our common mother', which again reminds of the idea of *familia* and turns the author into a brother for his correspondents: "If

²⁴ Letter 128, 1: *Causa difficilis parvulae scribere, quae non intellegat, quid loquaris, cuius animam nescias ... ut spes magis in ea laudanda, quam res sit. Quid enim hortaris ad continentiam, quae placentas desiderat, quae in sinu matris garrula voce balbutit, cui dulciora sunt malla quam verba.*

²⁵ Letter 39, 2: *Sed quid agimus? Matris prohibitori lacrymas, ipsi plangimus. Confiteor affectus meos, totus hic liber fletibus scribitur. Non est optimus consolator, quem proprii vincunt gemitus, cuius visceribus emollitis, fracta in lacrymis verba desudant ... eodem me dolorum perpeti tormenta quae pateris: patrem esse spiritu, nutricium caritate...*

²⁶ *Germana – nomen caritatis.*

our common mother is well, I would be glad and I pray God for her health";²⁷ "I hope that Albina, your mother and mine, is well...cherish her with double affection, both as a Christian and as a mother".²⁸ The author's sincere attitude becomes transparent by the specific double relation between love and obligation to his recipient's mother both from biological and Christian aspect. He loves Marcella's mother concomitantly as a Christian mother and in his identity of her son and Marcella's brother. It is worth mentioning here that the imaginary identity of the various correspondents leads to changes of the epistolary behaviour of the author himself and results in different identities of him too.

*Fellow-servant – an address of the religion*²⁹

The female identity 'fellow-servant' (*conserva*) is a woman sharing slavery with the great Christian author. This woman's identity is best revealed in a series of letters from the year 384 written to Marcella where Jerome discusses the meaning and the translation of certain Hebrew words and concepts.³⁰ The shared slavery in Jerome's letters to Marcella refers not only to the strict asceticism as it is in his letters to the virgin Eustochium. In his relationship with Marcella and Paula slavery, which is, of course, desirable, expresses not only a moral self-denial and strict self-control in dressing, behavior, food, communication and intentions, but also high intellectual asceticism meaning serving the others through correct interpretation of the Scriptures and flawless interpretation of the sacred texts. This shared slavery alludes the heavy burden the author carries on his shoulders of the huge responsibility to all believers, which he shares with his correspondent. In this way Jerome sees her as a person able to bear the same burden, to share his responsibilities in their mutual service to God.

The author's attitude to his correspondent as to a collaborator and a colleague is clearly visible in the analysis of the sequence of the letters to Marcella written one after another in 384 AD: 25; 26; 27; 28; 29; 32, where Jerome discusses the meaning and the translation of certain Hebrew words and concepts.

As in many other letters, Jerome begins letter 25 to Marcella about the ten names of God, telling about how they both were reading *Psalms* 90 when they came upon a certain verse that demanded explanation. In fact the author reminds his recipient a situation which triggered the creation of his own text later on, although she herself had been present on the occasion and must have remembered it. The reference to a previous experience serves to highlight the proximity

²⁷ *Mater communis si valeat, gaudeo et ut valeat, Dominum praecor* (Letter 29, 7).

²⁸ Letter 32, 2: *Albinam communem matrem valere cupio: ... una atque eadem Christiana simul diligitur, et mater.*

²⁹ *Conserva – nomen religionis.*

³⁰ About the letters to Marcella see A. Cain, *The Letters of Jerome* (2009), 68-98.

between the two participants in the conversation and gives a sense of real communication between them. The emphasis on the communicative function of an epistolary text and the implicated attitude to the receiver as a fellow-servant is probably the reason why the letters of this sequence start in the following way: "I'll do what you asked".³¹ The last phrase refers also to *domina*, i.e., the writer fulfills the desire of his dame, who is also his colleague in the common servicing (slavery). Exactly the same epistolary situation is repeated in the next letter (26) discussing the meaning of some Hebrew words where the author reiterates a shared experience, which has created the need for his letter. The only difference is that this time, Marcella asked him in person and not in a letter to explain the meaning of the words *Alleluia* /*Laudate Dominum*/, *Amen* /*fiat*/, *Maran Atha* /*Dominus noster venit*/, which she had come upon scattered in the Scriptures. The whole letter is a model for etymological and philological analysis as well as a logical explanation of the reasons why his particular translation is the adequate one. At the end of the text he apologizes that he has exceeded the volume of a letter accepted for the epistolary genre. The exceeding the required brevity of a letter is a common feature of Jerome's epistolary manner to demonstrate an affection to the addressee. Jerome's reflection on the genre becomes a reflection on his correspondent as if writing an epistolary text was a substitute for a real physical presence. He explains to Marcella that he is going to stop there so that she could even more eagerly want to learn about the things Jerome has not mentioned.³² It can be assumed that the correspondence between them is a kind of pleasure which has to be stopped at its peak in order for the longing for it to be prolonged. The pleasure of correspondence shall be extended by inflaming lust, passion and desire. If in his patristic epistolary texts Jerome explicitly denies every idea of carnal pleasure, the exchange of letters with Marcella have turned into a source of delight itself. She is held in constant suspense waiting for the next letter to come which is likely to lead to addiction, i.e., the epistolary exchange can be seen as a kind of spiritual drug!

In the next text (letter 27) to the same correspondent Jerome actually replies to his opponents who accused him of changing some parts of the New Testament which had already been adopted. Again, the author needs his *fellow-servant* to help him carry his burden and responsibility of his endeavor and enable him to defend himself. In this case he calls upon Marcella to become his co-author, ally and mediator of his response to his opponents. He suggests that she is strong enough and prepared to stand alongside him and in the first paragraph of the letter he boldly uses an imperative insult saying: 'One who does not like the water of the purest spring should lap from puddles!'³³ His detractors should understand that he works with a pure spring alluding to the

³¹ Letter 25, 1: *Faciam quod petisti.*

³² Letter 26, 5.

³³ Letter 27, 1: *Quibus si displicet fontis unda purissimi, coenosos rivulos bibant...*

Greek original of the Bible. In paragraph 2 he goes on to say: 'I would rather put my finger in my mouth than dare say what others are not ashamed to do'.³⁴

The beginning of his next letter to Marcella (28) once again reinforces the author's concept of the letter as a drug, as a desired pleasure that would relieve their 'shared slavery': 'To cause a greater desire in you by my silence'.³⁵ In response to his correspondent's request he explains to her the meaning and the adequate translation in Latin of the Hebrew words *Sela* and *Diapsalma* mentioning that this is a topic worthy of a book rather than a letter, which by definition should be brief. He undertakes the task to quote Origen word for word as long as she does not find it too *onerousus*, i.e., too heavy a burden in their shared intellectual slavery. However, he leaves the end of his text open, letting Marcella to make her own judgment: "I leave it to your judgment".³⁶

Letter 29 as all of this series is written at the request of the correspondent, as evidenced by the preamble of the text. The intertwining of the genre reception and his attitude to the recipient is defined most precisely in Jerome's letters to women: 'Obligation of the letter is to write something about family matters or everyday life and to turn somehow the absent people into present, while communicate to each other what they want or what they did, but in the meantime allowed such a feast to taste with lectures, and with the salt of the doctrine'.³⁷ Here the letter is compared with a feast, with eating a meal in which learning is the main spice. The correspondent's identity varies: first, she is his dame: she brings the desired topics for discussion to the fore; she is also a daughter and a student: the author is her mentor; third, she is a fellow-servant in their shared slavery in their serving God, and finally, she is his sister at the common table since the letter is by default a text dealing with family matters. The metaphor *convivium* is an important indicator of the perception of the letter as a celebration of communication. A former tool for exchange of daily news and ordinary daily routines, now the letter is a celebratory feast for the soul through the exchange of thoughts, where *Doctrina Christiana* is the most important part, the finest spice – the salt, which is crucial for the overall taste of the food. The author explains Marcella's attitude to the letter, for whom it is a genre disregarding the common daily topics and unlimited by the narrow range of the secular family matters: 'But in reality you are fully devoted to treatises, you do not write about anything else but about the issues which torture

³⁴ Letter 27, 2: ... *ac meum, si fieri potest, os digito velle comprimero, ne audeam dicere, quae alii facere non erubescunt.*

³⁵ Letter 28, 1: *Maior tibi cupiditas silentio concitatur.*

³⁶ Letter 28, 6: *tuo iudicio derelinquo.*

³⁷ Letter 29, 1: *Epistolare officium est de re familiari, aut de quotidiana conversatione aliquid scribere, et quodammodo absentes inter se praesentes fieri, dum mutuo quid aut velint, aut gestum sit, nuntiant: licet interdum confabulationis tale convivium, doctrinae quoque sale condiatur.*

me and urge me to read the Scriptures'.³⁸ Marcella is his inspiration for his 'sinking' in the holy texts, but she is also his 'fellow-servant' in their epistolary responsibility, which is sanctified and elevated, becoming part of their religious devotion. A woman-correspondent never deals with ordinary household affairs, she writes only on issues related to *Doctrina Christiana*, which has a powerful intellectual impact. It is the incentive to search for brand new answers, new analysis and translations of the Scriptures. The metaphor of the letter as a feast and the pleasure of food continues throughout the whole text of the letter: 'The letters are not sweet if they don't smell of a pastry; if they are not prepared by Apicius and if there is nothing in them smoked from the right of the teachers of the time'.³⁹ The letter as food, identifies the woman-recipient as a participant and commensal, a companion enjoying the same food, a friend – both a host and a guest, whom the author treats hospitably with his text and she, in turn, does the same. The allusion to the letter as a treat, though common in Jerome's letters to women, finds its culmination in the reference to the great Roman chef Apicius known for his work *De re coquinaria*. I assume that the severe ascetism, the long fasting and the strict control on his diet, which Jerome preaches elsewhere in his letters, make him unleash his imagination and see allusions and even visions of artfully prepared food in the otherwise quite common epistolary genre. Lengthy parts of the text are in fact a reiteration of Marcella's letter. Jerome even uses her manner of quoting the Bible, and thus the text is converted into a dialogue of the Bible with itself through the author's and the recipient's quotations. The exceptional trust between the two is revealed at the end of the letter where the author makes an unusual request, namely, all other matters related to his translation activities to be discussed 'in private', just between the two of them. This implies that the letter is not confidential, and suggests being read by other people not belonging to the circle of their spiritual family. The end of the letter might have later been followed by a face-to-face conversation, another proof of their alienation from the public. The request also suggests a clear distinction between the written word as an open, and the oral – as a closed type of conversation.

In the following message to the same lady (letter 32) Jerome continues to complain about the challenges he faces in his translation 'slavery'. The excuse that the letter is quite short (*i.e.*, that he has ignored to some extent his epistolary service) finds its explanation in the fact that he is very busy comparing Aquila's translation with the Jewish original, where translation work is seen as another form of religious service. The brevity of this letter, however, is offset by sending Marcella two other letters addressed initially to Paula and

³⁸ Letter 29, 1: *Verum tu, dum tota in tractatibus occuparis, nihil mihi scribis, nisi quod me torqueat, et Scripturas legere compellat.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*: *Non sunt suaves epistolae, quae non placentam redoleant, quas non condit Apicius, in quibus nihil de magistrorum huius temporis iure suffumat.*

Eustochium. This fact makes it obvious that the letter's length is important for the relations between the correspondents. Generally, the brevity of the letter is a mandatory feature of the genre defined in many manuals of the epistolary genre of the Late Antiquity.⁴⁰ In the case of Jerome he apologizes for violating the rule. However, most often he apologizes for exceeding the canonical length, since considering the letter a pleasure, he often exceeds the norm, thus creating his own epistolary style and this way of writing letters in his trademark. Another conclusion stemming from the analysis of the beginning of the text concerns the type of the epistolary network which is supposed to be a closed system reminiscing the concept of a family as the letters to his other sisters (daughters and dames) are made available to Marcella in order to satisfy her thirst for reading.

It is also interesting when the author had time to write these letters since from his texts it becomes clear that he used to spend the whole time with his women-friends and students. Apparently their absence was compensated by almost hourly exchange of written texts, which should not be brief, and when they appeared to be short the shortcoming was compensated quantitatively by adding more texts. 'The reason for writing such a short letter', apologizes the Christian exegete, 'is twofold: the bearer was in a hurry, and I did not want to deal with it as something incidental'.⁴¹

In a fictitious dialogue resembling a real conversation, the writer asks a question on behalf of his correspondent: 'You may ask me: But what is so important and so necessary to make you neglect the gift of epistolary conversation?'⁴²

The important work appears to be the comparison of the the original text and Aquila's Greek translation of a paragraph of the Old Testament. Jerome explains: 'And to admit to a friendly mind – I have found many things related to the strenghtening of our faith'.⁴³ The quote eloquently suggests the author's trust in the recipient, and the attitude towards her is revealed in the denomination of the correspondent as *amica mens* (*a friendly mind*), i.e. she is his *conserva* in his interpreting serving and a friend in the intellectual epistolary exchange – *philophronesis*.

⁴⁰ See Iulius Victor, *Ars rethorica, De epistolis: In familiaribus litteris primo brevitatis observanda...* See also Conte Gian Biagio, *Latin Literature. A History* (Baltimore and London, 1994), 629. About the history of ancient epistolography see also М.Е. Грабарь-Пассек, *Античная эпистолаграфия* (Москва, 1976); A.J. Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists*, Society of Religious Studies (Atlanta, 1988), and S.K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia, 1985).

⁴¹ Letter 32, 1: *Ut tam parvam Epistolam scriberem, causae duplucis fuit: quod, et tabellarius festinabat, et ego, alio opere detentus, hoc quasi παρέργω me occupare nolui.*

⁴² *Ibid.*: *Quaeris quidnam illud sit tam grande, tam necessarium, quo epistolicae confabulationis munus exclusum sit.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*: *... et ut amicae menti fatear, quae ad nostram fidem pertineant roborandam, plura reperio.*

Thus Jerome rethinks the idea of the *familia Romana* and the basic functions of the ancient epistolary genre. He deepens the relationship between correspondents elevating their identities and creating new models of Christian communication through letters. Writing to his women friends Jerome creates a new epistolary family of spiritually and intellectually close people, united by the pleasure of the *convivium* of the correspondence, tasted with the salt of *Doctrina Christiana*.

***Muliercularum socii* (Hier., Ep. 133,4): donne ed eresia nell'Epistolario di Gerolamo**

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ABSTRACT

Jerome's *Letters* offer remarkable room to analyse the relationship between women and heresy in the fourth century. As is well known, among the followers of heretical sects there was a large number of ladies and young girls. The concept of women as 'naturally' inclined to heresy is strictly connected to the idea of female weakness as well as to the presence of women among heretical sects, especially during the period of the 'Great Church'. Jerome himself in several letters portrays the heretical women as companions of the most famous heretical leaders, using in some cases the explicit reference to *2Tim.* 3:6-7. The *insania* of the heretical women may be defined as the incapacity to observe the Holy Scriptures. While these women follow false monks and heretics, so that they cannot be considered virgins but prostitutes, those women who follow the Christian doctrine engage themselves with the Holy Scriptures, becoming the living proof of a positive behaviour.

Gnosticismo, montanismo, origenismo, donatismo, arianesimo sono solo alcune di quelle eresie o controversie contro le quali il cristianesimo dovette intervenire in nome dell'unità della Chiesa e della salvaguardia della retta dottrina cristiana. E in alcuni di questi movimenti dissidenti, come per esempio in quello gnostico e in quello montanista, le donne non solo sono state accettate ma il loro ruolo appare determinante, anche se per un corretto giudizio bisogna tener presente quella vena polemica che affiora nei testi cristiani, quasi sempre ortodossi, volti a ridicolizzare gli avversari mostrandoli succubi di donne¹. Come Virginia Burrus ha notato, questa associazione donne/eresia raggiunge il suo apice nel IV secolo d.C.² Tra i Padri della Chiesa, per il suo carattere di polemista indomabile fino ai suoi ultimi giorni di vita, Gerolamo con i suoi scritti offre molto materiale al riguardo.

Nell'epistola 133 a Ctesifonte, lo Stridonense traccia una lunga lista di eresie, in cui menziona i capi delle varie sette eretiche, accompagnati dalle loro

¹ Si veda Clementina Mazzucco, *'E fui fatta maschio'. La donna nel cristianesimo primitivo (secoli I-III)* (Firenze, 1989), 16-7.

² Si veda Virginia Burrus, 'The Heretical Woman as Symbol in Alexander, Athanasius, Epiphanius, and Jerome', *HTR* 84 (1991), 229-48, 231-3, 246-8.

partners femminili, seguaci e collaboratrici di questi falsi profeti. E così Simon Mago ha posto le fondamenta della sua eresia aiutato da Elena; Marcione si è fatto precedere a Roma da una donna pronta ad adescare le anime; Apelle ha avuto come compagna delle sue dottrine Filumena, Montano Prisca e Massimilla. In questa lista gli eretici sono qualificati come *muliercularum socii*, ossia compagni di donnette³. L'occorrenza non è unica: Gioviniano è ugualmente trattato all'interno di un *entourage* composto da *mulierculae*⁴. Possiamo cogliere nell'uso di questo termine dispregiativo un aspetto della diatriba anti-femminista che non è peculiare solo di Gerolamo, ma alla quale il polemista fa volentieri appello⁵.

Non a caso, il santo di Stridone non si limita a definire le donne eretiche come *mulierculae*, ma ai suoi occhi esse 'si lasciano trasportare da una parte e dall'altra da qualsiasi vento di dottrina, pronte ad imparare senza mai raggiungere la conoscenza della verità'⁶. Gerolamo accoglie qui la tradizionale opinione sulle donne. Il concetto della donna 'per natura' incline all'eresia è il risultato dell'idea di debolezza che connota la figura femminile. Nel pensiero antico infatti la perfezione umana spetta agli uomini. La donna è caratterizzata da debolezza (*astheneia*), mentre l'uomo dalla virtù e dalla forza (*andreia*)⁷; sulla base di una falsa paraetimologia i Latini connettono *mulier* a *mollities*, mentre il sostantivo *vir* con *virtus* e *vis*⁸. *Mulier a mollitie*: anche negli scritti geronimiani le donne sono spesso connesse all'*imbecillitas*. L'*imbecillitas feminea* o *imbecillitas muliebris* è un aspetto della precaria condizione dell'*imbecillitas humana*, così che alla fragilità, tipica della condizione umana, la donna ne aggiunge una peculiare del suo sesso; l'altro termine costantemente usato

³ Si veda Hier., *Ep.* 133,4 (ed. Isidorus Hilberg, CSEL 56 [Vindobonae-Lipsiae, 1918], 248): *Simon Magus heresin condidit Helenae meretricis adiutus auxilio. Nicolaus Antiochenus, omnium immunditiarum repertor, choros duxit femineos. Marcion Romam praemisit mulierem, quae deceptarum sibi animos praepararet. Apelles Philumenen suarum comitem habuit doctrinarum. Montanus, immundi spiritus praedicator, multas ecclesias per Priscam et Maximillam, nobiles et opulentas feminas, primum auro corrumpit, dein heresi polluit.* Si tenga presente anche il contributo di Alberto Ferreiro, 'Jerome's Polemic against Priscillian in his Letter to Ctesiphon (133,4)', *REAug* 39 (1993), 309-32.

⁴ Si veda Hier., *Adv. Iov.* 2,36.

⁵ Per il problema di donne ed eresia in Gerolamo si veda l'utile contributo, qui tenuto presente, di Patrick Laurence, 'L'implication des femmes dans l'hérésie: le jugement de saint Jérôme', *REAug* 44 (1998), 241-67; Alberto Ferreiro, *Simon Magus in Patristic, Medieval, and Early Modern Traditions* (Leiden-Boston, 2005), 84-8.

⁶ Si veda Hier., *Ep.* 75,3.

⁷ Per un'analisi di queste tematiche si veda Elena Giannarelli, *La tipologia femminile nella biografia e nell'autobiografia cristiana del IV secolo* (Roma, 1980), 13-25; Eva Cantarella, *L'ambiguo malanno. Condizione e immagine della donna nell'antichità greca e romana* (Roma, 1981); Umberto Mattioli, *Astheneia e andreia. Aspetti della femminilità nella letteratura classica, biblica e cristiana antica* (Roma, 1983).

⁸ Si veda un frammento di Varrone conservato da Lattanzio, *De opif. Dei* 12,17 (ed. Samuel Brandt, CSEL 27 [Pragae-Vindobonae-Lipsiae, 1893], 46).

da Gerolamo per caratterizzare la donna è *fragilitas*. Il *fragilior sexus* si oppone al *robustior sexus*, tanto che, quando il satirista deve elogiare la forza e la *virtus* di una donna, scrive che è *oblita sexus e fragilitatis immemor*, vale a dire che ha dimenticato il suo sesso e ha superato la sua debolezza⁹. Gerolamo condivide la classica opinione per cui la donna è incostante, pronta a cambiare opinioni: *mutabilis fluctuansque sententia, si suo arbitrio relinquatur*, egli dice nell'epistola 130,17, citando e variando le parole di Ermes in *Eneide* 4,569-70. La visione negativa della donna viene utilizzata come categoria interpretativa anche nelle opere esegetiche, in contesti influenzati dall'antifemminismo giudaico; addirittura nell'analisi allegorica di alcuni passi della Sacra Scrittura, lo Stridonense associa le donne alla materia, spiegando che esse sono più vicine alle cose materiali. Nella veste di instancabile traduttore e commentatore della Sacra Scrittura, Gerolamo non potrebbe dimenticare l'affermazione di Paolo sulla donna: 'non fu Adamo ad essere sedotto, ma la donna fu sedotta e cadde nel peccato' (1Tim. 2:14), sebbene non menzioni esplicitamente l'espressione paolina, limitandosi ad affermare che la donna 'è più incline a peccare'¹⁰. Nella natura femminile è inscritto che queste siano più inclini degli uomini a peccare e, pertanto, a legarsi a falsi maestri, prestando fede a dottrine che le allontanano dai doveri tradizionalmente spettanti loro in quanto mogli e madri. Diviene così palese la loro debolezza, una debolezza che le rende più propense a trasgredire, a prestare fede a dottrine erranee, nonché a insegnarle.

Ma le accuse contro le donne, in particolare quelle tacciate di eresia, possono essere più precise, al punto da essere individuate in tre aspetti, come suggerisce l'epistola 75:

Ireneo racconta ... che un certo Marco, discendente della radice gnostica di Basilide, ha fatto la sua prima comparsa nelle Gallie e con le sue idee ha contaminato le regioni che sono attraversate dal Rodano e dalla Garonna; ma sono state soprattutto le donne della nobiltà a venir sedotte dalla sua eresia, dato che prometteva loro la partecipazione a certi misteri occulti e si accattivava il loro amore con artifici di magia e con la rivelazione di sconosciuti godimenti carnali. Poi ha valicato i Pirenei, si è insediato in Spagna ed ha preso di mira i palazzi dei ricchi; ma chi vi cercava erano soprattutto le donne 'che si lasciano trasportare da varie passioni, pronte ad imparare senza mai raggiungere la conoscenza della verità' (2Tim. 3:6-7)¹¹.

⁹ Si pensi a Fabiola, che si consacra a vita ascetica, o al ritratto di Paola che aspira a vivere con i monaci Egiziani. Su questa tematica in Gerolamo si veda Valeria Novembri, 'Philosophia and Christian Culture. An Antidote to Female Weakness in Jerome's Letters', *SP* 44 (2010), 471-85. Si veda anche Hier., Ep. 77,9 (ed. Isidorus Hilberg, CSEL 55 [Vindobonae-Lipsiae, 1912], 46): *Oblita sexus, fragilitatis inmemor ac solitudinis tantum cupida ibi erat, ubi animo morabatur; Ep. 108,14 (CSEL 55, 324-5): Mirus ardor et uix in femina credibilis fortitudo! Oblita sexus et fragilitatis corporeae inter tot milia monachorum cum puellis suis habitare cupiebat.*

¹⁰ Si veda Hier., In Eccl. 7,28.

¹¹ Hier., Ep. 75,3 (CSEL 55, 32): *Refert Irenaeus, uir apostolicorum temporum et Papiae, auditoris euangelistae Iohannis, discipulus episcopusque ecclesiae Lugdunensis, quod Marcus quidam de Basilidis Gnostici stirpe descendens primum ad Gallias uenerit et eas partes, per*

Uno dei mezzi usati dallo gnostico Marco per sedurre le donne è la magia, l'occulto, ossia forze misteriose che ben si adattano ad un contesto volto a mettere in luce la connivenza tra uomini e donne nel quadro dell'eresia. Siffatta connivenza riposa su alcuni vizi e difetti, la cupidigia e la dissolutezza, ma soprattutto su quanto riportato alla fine del testo tramite la citazione di *2Tim. 3:6-7*: l'incapacità delle donne a scoprire la retta fede.

Il primo rimprovero è la cupidigia: nell'epistola 133 Montano è un predicatore immondo che agisce grazie a Prisca e Massimilla, donne nobili e ricche, che hanno corrotto col loro danaro non poche chiese, per poi contaminarle con l'eresia; Donato è stato aiutato dalle ricchezze di Lucilla, senza dimenticare la famiglia della vergine Demetriade, accusata di fornire aiuti agli eretici¹². Non vi è dubbio che la cupidigia e il potere di corruzione dell'oro appartengono ai discorsi dei moralisti, ma aprono al tempo stesso uno spaccato sulla realtà dell'epoca: Gerolamo non è il solo a lanciare strali contro quei chierici che stanno dietro alle matrone per carpire ricchezze, tanto che i vescovi sono visti come *captatores* di ricchezze. I costanti inviti della Chiesa a trasformare in rendite regolari a favore dell'istituzione ecclesiastica le forme femminili di carità 'disordinata' mostrano la complessità del problema, le cui conseguenze economiche finiscono spesso in un contenzioso tra gerarchie ecclesiastiche e potere civile. Non appare allora strano che alcuni eretici abbiano ricercato il sostegno di quelle nobili dame in grado di fornire loro i mezzi necessari alla divulgazione della loro dottrina¹³.

Il secondo aspetto di denuncia riguarda la licenziosità sfrenata dei costumi, un motivo assai frequente allorché si vuole mettere in cattiva luce le donne adepte di una qualsiasi religione che non sia quella ufficialmente accettata. Non suscita alcuna meraviglia il fatto che Gerolamo qualifichi come prostitute le vergini manichee: 'Ma vergini del tipo che si dicono esistere presso varie sette eretiche ... sono da ritenersi squaldrine non vergini ... Esse travestono la turpitudine della loro esistenza sotto l'onore usurpato del titolo di vergine'¹⁴. E non meno incisivo il ritratto delle seguaci di Gioviniano, qualificate come 'Amazzoni che, con il seno scoperto, le braccia e le ginocchia nude, provocano al combattimento della dissolutezza gli uomini che vengono ad affrontarle'¹⁵. Del resto, nella già menzionata epistola 75,3 lo gnostico Marco 'seduce le nobili donne'. La polemica si iscrive nel campo d'azione della *libido*, così che

quas Rodanus et Garunna fluunt, sua doctrina maculauerit maximeque nobiles feminas quaedam in occulto mysteria repromittens hoc errore seduxerit magicis artibus et secreta corporum uoluptate amorem sui concilians, inde Pireneum transiens Spanias occuparit et hoc studii habuerit, ut diuitum domus et in ipsis feminas maxime adpeteret, quae ducuntur uariis desideriis semper discentes et numquam ad scientiam ueritatis peruinentes' (*2Tim. 3:6-7*).

¹² Si veda Hier., *Ep.* 133,4.

¹³ Si veda Keith Hopkins, *Death and Renewal* (Cambridge, 1983), 238-47.

¹⁴ Hier., *Ep.* 22,38.

¹⁵ Hier., *Adv. Iov.* 2,37.

è possibile instaurare un *trait d'union* tra genere, sessualità ed eresia, un rapporto profondamente radicato nella mentalità cristiana ortodossa. Collegando condotte ed affermazioni licenziose alle posizioni degli eretici, Gerolamo stabilisce un nesso fra *carnalis concubitus* ed *haeretica pravitas*. Ogni trasgressione allo spazio sacro diventa indizio di eresia e contribuisce a disegnare un ritratto dissoluto e vizioso di eretici ed eretiche, funzionale al successo e alla popolarità della repressione: si tratta di mostrare che gli eccessi della *libido* e l'errore dottrinale corrono lungo lo stesso binario. L'intreccio di peccati della carne con la colpa ereticale si va consolidando anche grazie a relazioni adulterine o concubinarie, a rapporti sessuali con consanguinei o *cum meretrice*. Nell'epistola 133,3 a proposito di Priscilliano e di Mani, si ritrova il luogo comune dell'immoralità degli eretici, unito alla dissolutezza dei seguaci, presentati in compagnia di donnicciole che mentre si accoppiano e si abbracciano, declamano i versi di *Georgiche* 2,325-327. L'accusa non sembra fuori luogo: secondo Sulpicio Severo, Priscilliano sotto tortura avrebbe ammesso delle relazioni sessuali con donne sposate¹⁶. Al paragrafo 4 della stessa epistola si legge che Simon Mago ha goduto dell'aiuto della meretrice Elena, mentre Nicola di Antiochia sarebbe *omnium immunditiarum repertor*.

Il ricorso ad accuse a sfondo sessuale rivolte contro gli eretici per sottolinearne la devianza, proiettandola su un piano morale oltre che dottrinale, non è nuova: risale già a Ireneo di Lione¹⁷. Gerolamo, enfatizzando la depravazione degli eretici, e in particolare quella che si manifesta nei vizi della carne, mira a dilatare la distanza che separa i *credentes* eterodossi dai fedeli cattolici, avallando l'opzione repressiva e rafforzando le basi del consenso ad essa accordato. In ultima analisi, una simile operazione consolida il ruolo che l'autorità ecclesiastica esercita in quanto guida verso la salvezza ed autrice del discorso morale nel quale la *societas christiana* possa individuare i propri modelli di comportamento.

Gerolamo continua ad assistere all'evidente presenza di donne tra gruppi eretici nella veste non solo di seguaci, ma anche di profetesse e predicatrici pronte ad insegnare in un periodo in cui la Grande Chiesa non lo ammette. Eloquentemente quanto si legge nel trattato sulla Trinità attribuito a Didimo di Alessandria della seconda metà del IV secolo: 'Non è permesso a una donna scrivere impunemente libri di propria composizione e insegnare, perché così disonorerebbe il suo capo, cioè l'uomo' (*Trin.* 3,41,3).

¹⁶ Si veda Sulp. Sev., *Chron.* 2,48.

¹⁷ Si veda Ireneo, *Haer.* 1,13-15. Basti pensare che ogni eretico era ritenuto fraudolento, dedito al vizio e ad ogni oscenità sessuale. Si tratta di una opinione perdurante nel corso del tempo dove eretiche e streghe saranno spesso immaginate avere relazioni sessuali con Satana e con i demoni durante il Sabbath. Si veda Giovanni Grado Merlo, *Streghe* (Bologna, 2006); Dinora Corsi, 'Dal sacrificio al maleficio. La donna e il sacro nell'eresia e nella stregoneria', *QMed* 30 (1990), 8-62.

L'insegnamento va contro l'idea di formazione delle donne, tipica dell'antichità, consistente nel governare le faccende della *domus*, nel restare obbedienti e sottomesse ai propri mariti (1Tim. 5:14; Tt. 2:5), educando la prole all'ideale degli *antiqui mores* (1Tim. 5:10; 2Tim. 1:5), in modo da contribuire alla preservazione della *salus publica*, nonché al bene della Chiesa di Dio. Questi *exempla* di donne devono essere celebrati per condannare, di contro, le pretese delle altre di esercitare una qualche autorità nell'ambito dell'insegnamento pubblico diretto anche agli uomini. Le donne devono apprendere esclusivamente quello che è necessario per essere buone mogli e madri; il resto è *ad luxuriam*, soprattutto l'audacia di voler insegnare agli uomini. Al fine di dare maggior fondamento alla proibizione dell'insegnamento si ricorre alla Scrittura. Cominciando da Eva, tutte le donne sono entrate a partire dalla creazione in una condizione di peccato nella quale rimangono. Oggi come allora, la donna si lascia ingannare; Eva lo fu dal serpente, mentre nel momento presente dai falsi profeti che seducono le donne accolte nelle loro case¹⁸. Ricettacolo di peccati e passioni, mancanti di discernimento del bene e del male, si addebita alla loro naturale debolezza e ignoranza quella facilità nell'essere influenzate e toccate da dottrine religiose devianti che poi esse diffondono.

In una lettera dove Gerolamo accusa quel mezz'uomo di Montano e ne denuncia gli errori, scrive: 'Eppure malgrado questi due tentativi, (Dio) non ce l'ha fatta a salvare il mondo. Ma finalmente è disceso, attraverso lo Spirito Santo, su Montano e su quelle due donne dalla mente malata, Prisca e Massimilla'¹⁹. Le donne eretiche sono donne *insanae*. Non a caso, lo scopo dell'epistola è anche quello di distinguere tra le profetesse degne di fede, quelle della Scrittura, e quelle che diffondono la parola malvagia, ispirate *daemoniaco spiritu*, oppure che sovvertono *vaticinatione mendacii fidem veritatis*: queste sono contrapposte a Debora, Hulda e alle quattro figlie di Filippo²⁰. Tutte queste donne hanno insegnato profetizzando, ma in cosa consiste la differenza? L'insania delle profetesse eretiche può essere definita come l'incapacità nel rispettare la Scrittura, che si manifesta nel loro invasamento, o meglio in quella che Gerolamo chiama *extasis*, il delirio o invasamento sotto il segno della falsa profezia. Ciò è ribadito anche per la *comes* di Apelle: Filumena. Gerolamo non manca di annotare: 'Il saggio Tertulliano ha scritto con eleganza contro Apelle e la sua vergine Filumena, che è stata posseduta da un angelo perverso e dallo spirito diabolico, dicendo che si trattava dell'angelo sul quale, ben prima della

¹⁸ Sull'opposizione Eva-Maria nel cristianesimo si veda Hugo Koch, *Virgo Eva, Virgo Maria: Neue Untersuchungen über die Lehre von der Jungfrauschaft und der Ehe Mariens in der ältesten Kirche* (Berlino, 1937); Giulia Sfameni Gasparro, 'La donna nell'esegesi patristica di Gen 1-3', in Umberto Mattioli, *La donna nel pensiero cristiano antico* (Genova, 1992), 17-50; E. Giannarelli, *La tipologia femminile* (1980), 9-19.

¹⁹ Hier., *Ep.* 41,4.

²⁰ Hier., *In Ez.* 4,13,17 (PL 25, 119B-C). Si veda P. Laurence, 'L'implication des femmes dans l'hérésie' (1998), 263-8.

nascita di Apelle, lo Spirito Santo aveva profeticamente gettato l'anatema per bocca dell'apostolo²¹. Secondo Tertulliano, Filumena aveva redatto un libro di *Rivelazioni* e, stando a Ippolito, proprio grazie a quest'opera ella avrebbe avuto un ruolo di preminenza con Apelle²².

Se le *mulierculae* degli eretici si caratterizzano per cupidigia, dissolutezza e falsa profezia, quale il ritratto delle donne animate dalla retta dottrina? Appartenente alla gens *Anicia*, la vergine Demetriade, a cui Gerolamo scrive in occasione della sua consacrazione alla verginità, viene esortata a custodire la retta fede contro l'origenismo. Dopo aver criticato il fatto che la dottrina di Origene continua ad avere un largo seguito, egli scrive:

Io, tuttavia, sono sicuro che se anche arriverà alle tue orecchie non le darai ascolto. Hai le tue maestre di Dio, la cui fede è la linea da tenersi in fatto di dottrina. Tu capisci quello che voglio dire. Perché Dio ti darà l'intelligenza in tutte le cose, e quindi contro questa pestifera eresia (ci sono cose ben peggiori di quelle che ho detto) non venirmi a chiedere subito una confutazione; non vorrei si pensasse che ti ho dato una proibizione invece di un semplice ammonimento, dal momento che lo scopo di quest'opera è di istruire una vergine e non di rispondere agli eretici²³.

Gerolamo non conosce personalmente Demetriade, ma l'allusione alla presenza di maestre di retta fede e la sua intelligenza danno una valutazione positiva della donna. E in effetti, nell'epistola a Principia lo Stridonense definisce *mulierculae* le donne agli occhi dei suoi avversari, ma il suo giudizio è ben diverso:

Può darsi che un lettore senza fede se la rida perché mi dilungo a lodare delle donnicciole. Ma se si richiamerà alla mente le sante donne che accompagnavano il Signore e lo assistevano con i loro beni e le tre Marie che stavano sotto la Croce, e particolarmente Maria la Maddalena, che per il suo zelo e per l'ardore della fede ricevette il nome di 'turrita' ed ebbe il privilegio di vedere Cristo risorto prima degli Apostoli, dovrà tacciare di superbia se stesso e non accusare noi di perdere tempo in bagattelle, noi che valutiamo la virtù dall'animo e non dal sesso²⁴.

La parte finale del brano racchiude il cuore del pensiero di Gerolamo e il suo atteggiamento verso le donne, ben esplicitato all'inizio dell'epistola 65, indirizzata a Principia e dedicata alla spiegazione del Salmo 44. Gerolamo scrive: «So, o Principia, figlia in Cristo, di essere biasimato dalla maggior

²¹ Hier., *In Gal.* 1,8 (PL 26, 344C).

²² Si veda Tert., *Praescr. haer.* 30,6.

²³ Hier., *Ep.* 130,16.

²⁴ Hier., *Ep.* 127,5 (CSEL 56, 149): *Rideat forsitan infidelis lector me in muliercularum laudibus inmorari: qui, si recordetur sanctas feminas, comites Domini Salvatoris, quae ministrabant ei de sua substantia, et tres Marias stantes ante crucem Mariamque proprie Magdalenen, quae ob sedulitatem et ardorem fidei 'turritae' nomen accepit et prima ante apostolos Christum uidere meruit resurgentem, se potius superbiae quam nos condemnabit ineptiarum, qui uirtutes non sexu sed animo iudicamus.*

parte, perché talora scrivo alle donne e preferisco il sesso più debole ai maschi. Perciò devo prima rispondere ai miei detrattori e poi venire alla piccola spiegazione che mi hai chiesto. Se gli uomini mi facessero domande sulla Scrittura, non parlerei alle donne». Qui il polemista si difende dall'accusa di dedicarsi troppo alle signore, mettendo non solo in evidenza la mancanza di *curiositas* maschile nei confronti del testo sacro, ma addirittura connotando le sue corrispondenti come un pubblico di tutto rispetto. Nel prosieguo della lettera egli esorta Principia a non vergognarsi assolutamente del suo sesso, mentre gli uomini a non vantarsi del nome che portano, ricordando che nella Sacra Scrittura vengono lodati anche modelli muliebri.

Da deboli creature le donne possono diventare sante tanto quanto gli uomini e degne della più alta gloria, ma il loro atteggiamento deve essere irreprensibile. Esse devono conformarsi a quel modello di santità più volte evidenziato da Gerolamo: devono dedicarsi alla meditazione della Sacra Scrittura, condurre una vita sobria, lontane dal lusso. Esse devono abbracciare il *sanctum propositum*²⁵, animate dalla volontà di far trionfare i principi della retta fede, a dispetto del dilagare delle dottrine errate. L'epistolario geronimiano permette di conoscere alcune di queste aristocratiche romane. Il pensiero corre a Paola. Nell'epistola 108 composta alla sua morte, dopo la descrizione delle virtù della donna, seguono le azioni da cui emergono tali virtù: in prima battuta la lotta contro le eresie. Lo Stridonense vuole dimostrare *quomodo (Paula) hereticorum caenosos devitaverit lacus*²⁶. Un sostenitore della dottrina origenista inizia a proporre a Paola *quaestiones* oggetto di forte dibattito all'epoca: la discussione verte infatti sulla dottrina origeniana dell'anima e della resurrezione dei corpi. Nonostante venga presentata poco addentro alle problematiche teologiche, le domande insidiose dell'eretico non fanno tuttavia vacillare l'attaccamento di Paola all'ortodossia.

Eloquente è la figura di Marcella. Nella veste di attenta discepola, solleva questioni relative ai testi biblici, propone a Gerolamo il problema del peccato irremissibile contro lo Spirito Santo sostenuto da Novaziano e probabilmente, al pari del suo maestro, non si sarà mostrata indifferente all'opera così sottile di Origene, abile nell'esplicazione esegetica dei testi sacri, in quanto capace di fornire soddisfacenti spiegazioni alle questioni più complesse²⁷. Non si lascia influenzare dalle idee di Montano, è insensibile all'eresia, avendo una non comune conoscenza della Scrittura²⁸.

²⁵ Si veda Patrick Laurence, 'Albine: la conversion d'une aristocrate romaine au *sanctum propositum*', *CrSt* 20 (1999), 257-74; *id.*, 'Jérôme et l'*ancilla Christi*: servitude et liberté', *Augustinianum* 37 (1997), 411-29.

²⁶ Hier., *Ep.* 108,23.

²⁷ Sul rapporto Marcella e Origene si veda Patrick Laurence, 'Marcella, Jérôme et Origène', *REAug* 42 (1996), 267-93.

²⁸ Si veda Hier., *Ep.* 127,4 (CSEL 56, 148): *Divinarum Scripturarum ardor incredibilis, semperque cantabat: in corde meo abscondi eloquia tua, ut non peccem tibi, et illud de perfecto viro:*

Marcella è la vedova cristiana che riassume in sé gli elementi di rottura tipici di questa tipologia femminile²⁹: la voglia di conoscere il testo sacro la spinge a superare le convenzioni³⁰; la sete di conoscenza le impone non un silenzio rispettoso verso il maestro, ma una aperta discussione delle risposte di costui ai suoi quesiti³¹. Lo zelo la giustifica agli occhi del suo stesso docente che cerca di riportare il comportamento della donna sulla linea paolina con il richiamo a *2Tim.* 4:2³². Nell'epistola 127 Gerolamo affronta il punto nodale del rapporto fra la donna e il sapere cristiano:

E poiché era molto prudente e conosceva ciò che i filosofi chiamano *tò prépon*, ossia quello che è nei limiti del non sconveniente, quando la si interrogava, rispondeva in maniera da dire che anche le opinioni sue non erano sue, ma mie o di qualunque altro, per darsi discepolo anche in ciò che insegnava. Conosceva in effetti l'affermazione dell'Apostolo 'Non permetto ad una donna di insegnare' (*1Tim.* 2:12) e non voleva apparire come colei che facesse ingiuria agli uomini, e talvolta a sacerdoti, quando la interrogavano su problemi oscuri ed ambigui³³.

La soluzione che Marcella offre allo scontro fra l'affermazione di *1Tim.* 2:12 e l'effettiva capacità delle donne di insegnare va in direzione della prudenza e della umiltà, qualità proprie della cristiana e dell'asceta cristiana. La dimensione della nobile vedova romana come 'creatura' di Gerolamo, che 'beve' da

et in lege Domini voluntas eius et in lege eius meditabitur die ac nocte meditationem legis non replicando, quae scripta sunt, ut Iudaeorum aestimant Pharisei, sed in opere intellegens, iuxta illud apostolicum: sive comeditis, sive bibitis, sive quid agitis, omnia in gloriam Domini facientes et prophetarum verba dicentis: a mandatis tuis intellexi, ut, postquam mandata complisset, tunc se sciret mereri intellegentiam scripturarum. Sull'importanza della Bibbia nella formazione delle donne si veda Clementina Mazzucco, 'Donne e Bibbia nel cristianesimo tra II e V secolo', in A. Valerio (ed.), *Donne e Bibbia. Storia ed esegesi* (Bologna, 2006), 23-49.

²⁹ Si veda E. Giannarelli, *La tipologia femminile* (1980), 66.

³⁰ La ritrosia di Gerolamo è così descritta in *Ep.* 127,7 (CSEL 56, 150): *Cum ... verecunde nobilium feminarum oculos declinarem, ita (scil. Marcella) egit ... ut pudorem meum superare industria.* Gerolamo riconosce a Marcella e alla sua caparbia insistenza il merito di avergli fatto superare il 'disagio' di avvicinarsi ad esponenti dell'altro sesso, sia pure per scopi più che onesti: spirituali, pastorali, esegetici.

³¹ Sulla figura di Marcella e sul suo ruolo si veda Silvia Letsch-Brunner, *Marcella: discipula et magistra. Auf den Spuren einer römischen Christin des 4. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1998).

³² Si veda Hier., *Ep.* 127,7. Gerolamo racconta che, mentre era a Roma per necessità ecclesiastiche, per modestia fuggiva gli sguardi delle nobili dame. Marcella insisteva talmente, secondo le parole dell'Apostolo 'opportunamente, importunamente' che la sua ingegnosità riuscì a vincere il pudore dello Stridonense.

³³ Hier., *Ep.* 127,7 (CSEL 56, 151): *Et quia ualde prudens erat et nouerat illud, quod appellant philosophi to prepon, id est decere, quod facias, sic interrogata respondebat, ut etiam sua non sua diceret, sed uel mea uel cuiuslibet alterius, ut et in ipso, quod docebat, se discipulam fateretur – sciebat enim dictum ab apostolo: docere autem mulieri non permitto (1Tim. 1:12) –, ne uirili sexui et interdum sacerdotibus de obscuris et ambiguis sciscitantibus facere uideretur iniuriam.* Si veda anche il contributo di Elena Giannarelli, 'Antiche lettrici della Bibbia: dame, martiri e pellegrine', in Claudio Leonardi, Francesco Santi, Adriana Valerio (edd.), *La Bibbia nell'interpretazione delle donne* (Firenze, 2002), 23-48.

lui un sapere, frutto di lungo studio, ma diventato sua natura grazie alla costante meditazione è eloquente. Gerolamo aggiunge: 'Poiché io godevo a quel tempo di una qualche reputazione nell'esegesi delle Scritture, non si adattò mai a domandare qualcosa sulle Scritture e ad accontentarsi subito, ma poneva questioni al contrario, non per cavillare, ma per imparare tramite domande le soluzioni ai quesiti che capiva si potevano opporre'³⁴. Conoscere e capire la Bibbia significa fare della propria vita uno specchio dei precetti divini e obbedire ad una fede vera, non intesa come ripetizione vuota di parole, del tutto sganciate dal comportamento dell'individuo. L'intelligenza e la capacità di apprendimento di una donna si manifestano attraverso tre elementi: la memorizzazione della Sacra Scrittura, in particolare i Salmi per questioni liturgiche; la conoscenza dell'ebraico; la perfetta padronanza del greco e del latino. Della Bibbia si deve *cotidie aliquid discere*. Ma questo omaggio alla prudenza di Marcella deve essere interpretato come voluta espressione di una diffidenza di Gerolamo verso quegli insegnamenti viziati da errori e suscettibili di condurre all'eresia? A proposito di Prisca e Massimilla, in Ippolito si trova l'idea secondo cui le donne devono guardarsi dall'insegnare, perché inclini all'errore e Tertulliano aveva ben evidenziato il gusto delle donne eretiche per l'insegnamento³⁵. Nell'ottica di Gerolamo questo non sarà il caso di Marcella, della quale, specie nella *querelle* origenista, ha potuto conoscere il suo ardore per la *doctrina christiana*. Se per il caso di Marcella non sussiste alcuna restrizione, ciò è dovuto unicamente alla sua virtù e al suo incredibile sapere, doti che le permettono di attribuirle un privilegio del tutto eccezionale³⁶. Tuttavia, ad esempio, per quanto concerne l'educazione intellettuale di Paola la giovane, essa dovrà essere assicurata da una maestra, mentre la sua formazione di vergine cristiana sarà sotto la guida di un'altra vergine, ma se andrà a Betlemme Gerolamo sarà il suo professore ed educatore³⁷: la vittoria del principio di *auctoritas* maschile è sancita. In una lettera a Paolino di Nola, Gerolamo ribadisce: 'Che vergogna! Conoscere quello che le donne insegnano agli uomini'³⁸. Ora, nel caso in cui si tratti di denunciare l'alleanza tra donne ed eretici, non si tratta soltanto di restrizione. La questione è più seria e difficile: ecco allora che i testi della

³⁴ Così Hier., *Ep.* 127,7 (CSEL 56, 151): *Et quia alicuius tunc nominis aestimabar super studio scripturarum, numquam conuenit, quin de scripturis aliquid interrogaret, nec statim adquisceret, sed moueret e contrario quaestiones, non ut contenderet, sed ut quaerendo disceret earum solutiones, quas opponi posse intellegebat.*

³⁵ Hipp., *Haer.* 8,19; Tert., *Praescr. haer.* 41,5.

³⁶ È stato notato come il termine *ingenium* ricorra spesso negli elogi che Gerolamo tesse delle sue discepole al fine di evidenziarne l'elevato livello intellettuale: Marie Turcan, 'Saint Jérôme et les femmes', *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé*, IV^e série, numéro III (1968), 259-72, 268.

³⁷ Hier., *Ep.* 107,13.

³⁸ Hier., *Ep.* 53,7 (CSEL 54, 453): *Alii discunt – pro pudor – a feminis, quos uiros doceant.*

Scrittura conservano tutta la loro forza e Gerolamo non esita a porre l'accento sulla responsabilità femminile, negando valore all'insegnamento femminile.

La proposizione di un modello femminile rappresenta per lui un'urgenza esistenziale e dottrina, così che l'interesse per una valorizzazione del genere femminile non andrà ridotto al mero esito di *topoi* letterari, ma ad una reale influenza che deve essere stata rilevante grazie alle donne che lo hanno circondato³⁹. Come in tutti gli autori antichi, anche in Gerolamo è presente la duplice visione della donna, negativa e positiva, che risale alla Scrittura attraverso l'opposizione Eva-Maria. Così se la *muliercula* eretica è la *femina instrumentum diaboli*, fonte di peccato e come tale da fuggire, la *mulier sancta et venerabilis* è colei che ha abbracciato il *sanctum propositum*: la vita ascetica, l'amore per la Scrittura, lo zelo per l'ortodossia⁴⁰.

³⁹ Su Gerolamo e le dame dell'Aventino si veda Ferdinand Cavallera, *Saint Jérôme. Sa vie et son œuvre* (Louvain-Paris, 1922), I 84-91; 100-13 *et passim*; E. Glenn Hinson, 'Women Biblical Scholars in the Late Fourth Century. The Aventine Circle', *SP* 33 (1997), 319-24.

⁴⁰ Si veda Roberta Franchi, '*Aurum in luto quaerere* (Hier., Ep. 107,12). Donne tra eresia e ortodossia nei testi cristiani di IV-V sec.', *SP* 52 (2013), 419-30; Patrick Laurence, *Jérôme et le nouveau modèle féminin. La conversion à la 'vie parfaite'* (Paris, 1997).

Prudentius: *Contra orationem Symmachi*, Bk. I

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ABSTRACT

Aurelius Prudentius Clemens was the foremost Christian Latin poet in the early Church and in late antiquity. One of his works, which had earlier been neglected, has been given more attention of late. It is his hexametric *Contra Orationem Symmachi*. This essay will address the controversial topic concerning the date of composition of Book I, as opposed to the composition of Book II. There are two main positions of scholars who have studied this issue. The Unitarians, who maintain that both Book I and Book II were composed and published in the period of late 402 or early 403. They argue for this date because of the poet's mention of the battle of Pollentia, fought on Easter, 6 April 402. Prudentius cites this battle in Book II. The other position, the Separatists, argues for an earlier date for Book I; the majority for the year 394. Their claim is that, in large part, Book I was composed well before the end of the century, and that Book I has another aim or purpose than that pursued in book II. There will also be an examination of the structure of Book I.

Date and Structure Reconsidered

Most commentators agree that Aurelius Prudentius Clemens was the foremost and most accomplished Christian Latin poet in the early Church, the prince of Christian poets, and, of all the Latin poets, the most read in the Middle Ages.¹ Some readers of his poetry may not realize that his talent included the many allusions he makes to various Latin poets and the neologisms which he invented. Emory B. Lease in his dissertation at Johns Hopkins in 1895 discussed these features.² In 1974 Valerie Edden praised his achievement thus:³

¹ Valentin Both, *Des christlichen Dichters Prudentius Schrift Gegen Symmachus* (Rastatt, 1882), 2; 3: 'Unter allen Autoren war er im Mittelalter der gelesenste'. Certain portions of this article were published in my study, 'Prudentius: *Contra orationem Symmachi*, Book I. Date and Composition Reconsidered', in *Album alumnorum Gualtero Ludwig septimum decimum lustrum emenso dedicatum, edendum curavit L. Braun* (Würzburg, 2014), 49-66. I wish to thank Walther Ludwig, Alan Cameron, Danuta Shanzer, Hermann Tränkle, and Roy Rosenstein for the help they have provided me in the preparation of this article.

² Emory B. Lease, *A Syntactic, Stylistic and Metrical Study of Prudentius* (Baltimore, 1895), 62-79, 73-4.

³ Valerie Edden, 'Prudentius', in J.W. Binns (ed.), *Latin Literature of the Fourth Century (Greek and Latin Studies)* (London and Boston, 1974), 160-80, 180.

'Where men could only find irreconcilable opposites, he could select and blend, and, without ever compromising his faith, create an entirely new type of Christian literature'. Almost a century earlier, Aimé Puech called the two books which comprise the *Contra orationem Symmachi* the most original work of Prudentius, and said that this poem had an advantage over his poems dealing with theology.⁴ This is of particular interest, in view of the fact that in 1981 Jean-Pierre Callu indicated that the poem *Contra orationem Symmachi* was the least of all his poems that held the interest of contemporary commentators.⁵ Yet that was thirty five years ago; there now seems to be considerably more interest in his poetry. The period in which he lived and composed his poetry was a time of the greatest importance to the European tradition of literature. In 1953 Ernst Robert Curtius included Prudentius as one of the major authors in the period from Theodosius to Charlemagne.⁶

He was born in Roman imperial Spain, either in *Caesaraugusta* (modern Saragossa) or in *Calaguris* (modern Calahorra), but certainly in the region of *Tarraconensis* along the Ebrus River. The actual place has been disputed. Italo Lana had addressed this issue together with the poet's civil and political career,⁷ but, as Antonius Bastiaensen has observed, the initial scholarly interest in Lana's study has declined because too much of it contained suppositions.⁸ The thorny question of his native place was also discussed by Theodorus Obbarius in 1845 and in earlier commentaries.⁹ His Spanish origin undoubtedly was helpful in the poet's later career in the empire, since the emperor Theodosius I was also from imperial Spain.

The work that is the subject of my remarks is the poet's *Contra orationem Symmachi*, in particular Book I, published in the early fifth century. This investigation will focus on the date of composition and the structure of Book I and also on the presumed connection of the two books.

⁴ Aimé Puech, *Prudence: Étude sur la poésie Latine Chrétienne au IV^e siècle* (Paris, 1888), 237: 'un avantage particulier ... c'est qu'ils sont d'un intérêt varié à la fois et plus general'.

⁵ Jean-Pierre Callu, 'Date et Genèse du premier livre de Prudence Contre Symmaque', *Revue des Études Latines* 59 (1981), 235-59, 235.

⁶ E.R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, tr. Willard R. Trask, Bollingen Series xxxvi (Princeton, 1953; 7th printing, 1990), 22.

⁷ Italo Lana, *Due capitoli prudentiani. La biografia. La cronologia delle opera. La poetica* (Roma, 1962).

⁸ Antonius A.R. Bastiaensen, 'Prudentius in Recent Literary Criticism', in J. den Boeft and A. Hillhorst (eds), *Early Christian Poetry: A Collection of Essays*, Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 22 (Leiden, 1993), 18.

⁹ Theodorus Obbarius, *Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina* (Tubingae, 1845), 11 n. 3. Yet in this note the editor does not agree with those who suggest Rome as a possible birthplace.

The Date of Composition

The first question is: when exactly were the two books of the *Contra orationem Symmachi* written? Were they both composed in the same year, or was each book composed in different years? Perhaps they were composed one after the other, many years apart.

Émile Faguet in 1883 was one of the first scholars to suggest late in the year 394 as the date of composition (or distribution, circulation) of Book I.¹⁰ He also states that the *Peristephanon* was written after Book I and before Book II of the *Contra orationem Symmachi*. His archrival disagreed five years later. In 1888 Aimé Puech contended that the poet published his edition in 405.¹¹ He further cited the hypothesis of Heinsius (1667) that the poet issued a second edition. This supposition was based on a variant of *Catherimerinon* X 9-16, where the Puteanus manuscript of the sixth century has a completely particular text.¹² Earlier in his account, Puech had indicated that the two books were written in 403 and then published, each with its own *Praefatio*, in 405.¹³

More recently, Jean-Pierre Callu proposed that Book I was written during the year 391.¹⁴ Danuta Shanzer contests the choice of the year 391 for the composition of Book I.¹⁵ Jill Harries suggested her theory, that Prudentius' *Contra orationem Symmachi* 'was originally two separate books, the first a response to Theodosius' victory in 394, and the second an attack on Quintus Aurelius Symmachus and his petition to the Emperor in 384. The motivation for Book II was, in fact, the recent victory of Emperor Honorius [and his general, Flavius Stilicho] at the recent battle of Pollentia'. Harries lists her grounds for a separate composition of the two books as follows: (1) a lack of overlap between Book I and Book II, (2) a slight incompatibility of *Praefatio* I with the subject of Book I, and (3) discourtesy to the emperor Honorius by his total omission from Book I.¹⁶ Alan Cameron maintained that the year of composition of Book I was 394.¹⁷ He gives the credit for the idea of the earlier date of composition of Book I to Émile Faguet.¹⁸ Christian Gnilka argued that the two books were written in 402 or 403.¹⁹ This renowned scholar does recognize that

¹⁰ Aemilius Faguet, *De Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carminibus Lyricis* (Burdigalae, 1883), 24-7; 25: 'Nonne igitur liquet ad hunc unice annum pertinere primum C.S. librum, hoc anno 395 ab exsultante Prudentio quod "superstitio avorum" jaceret, scriptum fuisse?'

¹¹ A. Puech, *Prudence* (1888).

¹² *Ibid.* 64.

¹³ *Ibid.* 58.

¹⁴ J.-P. Callu, 'Date et genèse' (1982), 235.

¹⁵ Danuta Shanzer, 'The Date and Composition of Prudentius' *Contra Orationem Symmachi*', *Rivista di filologia e di istruzione classica* 117 (1989), 442-62, 453-4.

¹⁶ Jill Harries, 'Prudentius and Theodosius', *Latomus* 43 (1984), 69-84, 79.

¹⁷ Alan Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford, 2011), 337.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Christian Gnilka, *Prudentiana*, Band II – *Exegetica* (Leipzig, 2001), 265.

certain historians and philologists who are interested in history have raised further questions about these two books regarding the issue of Symmachus and his proposal of 384. Those questions are: (1) what compelled the poet after so many years to contest and attack this proposal of the pagan senator? And (2) why does Prudentius describe the event, not before Valentinian II, but before Honorius and Arcadius, as though Symmachus had not raised the issue with his *Ratio* 3 in 384, but first at the time of the composition of the poem? Gnilka states that he has not yet come to a satisfactory answer to these questions. On the other hand, he does refer to the theory of Danuta Shanzer, that the poet may have composed Book I mostly in 394 and Book II later in 402/403.²⁰ Michael Brown has recently stated his opinion that the two books of the *Contra orationem Symmachi* were conceived of and composed in 402.²¹ Brown derives his view on the date of composition from Giovanni Garuti's edition of 1996.²² I cannot agree with the argument and conclusion in Brown's brief introduction. Some years after Brown's dissertation, Hermann Tränkle, *emeritus* Professor of the University of Zurich, suggested that Book I is far more concise, more vivid, and more colorful than Book II, and that the character of each is clearly diverse.²³ He also suggests that the assumption of an original unity must again answer certain objections.

There are two schools of thought with respect to the date of composition. The first, the Unitarians, believe that both Book I and Book II were composed mostly between 401 and 403. Members of this group are Faustus Arevalus (1788), Henricus Middeldorpf (1823), Theodorus Obbarius (1845), Albertus Dressel (1860), Clemens Brockhaus (1872), Augustin Rösler (1886), Aimé Puech (1888), Friedrich Solmsen (1965), Italo Lana (1966), Wolf Steidle (1971), Timothy D. Barnes (1976), Siegmund Döpp (1986), Jean-Louis Charlet (1986), A. Baldini (1988), Anne-Marie Palmer (1989), François Heim (1992), Giovanni Garuti (1996), Aldo Bartalucci (1998), Christian Gnilka (2001), and Michael Brown (2003).²⁴

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Michael Brown, *Prudentius' Contra Symmachum, Book II: Introduction, Translation and commentary* (dissertation, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 2003).

²² Giovanni Garuti, *Contra Symmachum*, Collana di Filologia Classica 9 (Roma, 1996) 23-4.

²³ Hermann Tränkle, *Prudentius Contra Symmachum: Gegen Symmachus* (Turnhout, 2008), 47.

²⁴ Faustus Arevalus, *Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina*, Tom. I (Romae, 1788), cited by T. Obbarius, *Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina* (Tubingae, 1845), xi, n. 39; Henricus Middeldorpf, *Commentat. De Prudentio et theologia Prudentiana*, Part I (Vratislaviae, 1823), 50; Theodorus Obbarius, *Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina* (Tubingae, 1845), xi, n. 39; Albertus Dressel, *Aurelii Prudentii Clementis quae extant Carmina* (Lipsiae, 1860), xiii, n. 28; Clemens Brockhaus, *Aurelius Prudentius Clemens in seiner Bedeutung für die Kirche seiner Zeit* (Lipsiae, 1872), 73-4 n. 3: 'Beide im Jahre 403'; P. Augustin Rösler, *Der katholische Dichter Aurelius Prudentius Clemens* (Freiburg i. Breisgau, 1886); A. Puech, *Prudence* (1888); Italo Lana, *Due capitoli prudenziali. La biografia. La cronologia delle opere. La poetica* (Roma,

The second group, the Separatists, includes Émile Faguet (1883), Villelmus Zappacosta (1967), Jean-Pierre Callu (1981), Jill Harries (1984), Danuta Shanzer (1989), Hermann Tränkle (2008), and Alan Cameron (2011).²⁵ Walther Ludwig advises me that he now believes that ‘parts of Book I were composed several years apart’.²⁶ The majority in this group maintains that Book I was essentially written by the year 394, while Callu argues for the year 391, as indicated above.

It is a fact that some of those who support the Unitarian claims are aware of certain difficulties that their position faces. They seem to recognize that various arguments of the Separatists may have some valid and convincing merit.²⁷ I will attempt a solution.

The answer to the issue of the date of composition of the first Book of the *Contra orationem Symmachi* is that Book I was formulated in principle considerably before 402 or 403, namely *circa* 394.²⁸ The best explanation of the dating of Book I and Book II of this poem is that offered by Alan Cameron in 2011.²⁹ In his view, Prudentius in 405, when he was composing the general *Praefatio* for all of his collected poems, ‘decided to gather his three anti-pagan hexameter works together into a two-book poem’: one dating from right after the battle of Frigidus in September 394 (the Theodosian encomium), the undated diatribe against paganism in general, and Book II which was inspired by the Roman victory at Pollentia in 402.³⁰

1962); Friedrich Solmsen, ‘The Conclusion of Theodosius’ Oration in Prudentius’ *Contra Symmachum*’, *Philologus* 109 (1965), 310-3, 310; W. Steidle, ‘Die dichterische Konzeption des Prudentius und das Gedicht *Contra Symmachum*’, *Vigiliae Christianae* 25 (1971), 241-81; Timothy D. Barnes, ‘The Historical Setting of Prudentius’s *Contra Symmachum*’, *American Journal of Philology* 97 (1976), 373-86, 376; Antonio Baldini, ‘Il *Contra Symmachum* di Prudentio e la conversione del Senato’, *Rivista Storica dell’Antichità* 17/8 (1987-1988), 115-57; Anne-Marie Palmer, *Prudentius on the Martyrs* (Oxford, 1989); François Heim, *La théologie de la victoire de Constantin à Théodose* (Paris, 1992); J.-L. Charlet, ‘*Sit devote Deo Roma*. Rome dans le *Contra Symmachum* de Prudence’, in *Commemoratio. Studi di filologia in ricordo di R. Ribuoli*, a cura di S. Prete, Didascalie 2 (Sassoferrato, 1986), 33-42; Aldo Bartalucci, *Contro i Pagani: Carmen cod. Paris. Lat. 8084* (Pisa, 1998), 37; C. Gnllka, *Prudentius* (2001), 265 n. 7; M. Brown, *Prudentius’ Contra Symmachum, Book II* (2003), Abstract: ‘the work was produced as a whole in 402’.

²⁵ A. Faguet, *De Carminibus Lyricis* (1883); V. Zappacosta, ‘De Prudentii libro *Contra Symmachum*’, *Latinitas* 15 (1967), 202-18; J.-P. Callu, ‘Date et Genèse’ (1982), 235-59; J. Harries, ‘Prudentius and Theodosius’ (1984), 69-84, 79; D. Shanzer, ‘The Date and Composition’ (1989); H. Tränkle, *Prudentius* (2008), 46; A. Cameron, *The Last Pagans* (2011), 337.

²⁶ Private correspondence dated 18 September 2014.

²⁷ See, e.g., H. Tränkle, *Prudentius* (2008), 47-8.

²⁸ C. Gnllka, *Prudentius* (2001), 265 n. 7.

²⁹ A. Cameron, *The Last Pagans* (2011), 346. I present his argument.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 349.

The Structure of Book I

It is striking that the only work of Prudentius which takes note of contemporary affairs and dates is his *Contra orationem Symmachi*.³¹ The second book is clearly dated by reference to the battle of Pollentia on Easter, April 6, 402 (Bk. II 718-20), but with no reference to the battle of Verona in the summer of 403.³² In the first book, however, there are indications that the contemporary year was around 394. The poet alludes to the two usurpers, Maximus and Eugenius (Bk. I 410-1). The fact that Prudentius clearly indicates these dates for Book I and Book II has a bearing on the structure of the two poems. Indeed, as Alan Cameron has stated, 'there is nothing in *CS I* that need be later than 394.'³³

There have been several views on the structure of Book I. Friedrich Solmsen in 1965 saw three main parts in Prudentius' account of Rome's pagan past (I, 42-407).³⁴ He sees the structure as follows: (1) 42-296: in which Prudentius discusses the true, human and immoral quality of various gods. Within this section, there is a part devoted to Augustus (245-77), and (2) 297-353: here the poet speaks of the habit of deifying parts of the physical world, such as the *colles, freta, flumina*, and *flammae*. Solmsen calls this part the *theologica physica*. There is also a part devoted to the cult of the sun (309-53), (3) 354-407: here Prudentius deals with the *di inferi*, with the inclusion of an invective against the gladiatorial games (379-407).

Within the structure of the oration of Theodosius (415-505) Solmsen indicates the notice of Constantine made at 467-95. There then follows the results of the policy of Theodosius (506-615), which include the response of Rome (511-611). Next, there is a return to Theodosius I (612-31), the simultaneous praise and condemnation of Symmachus (632-49), and the final coda (650-7).

In 1976, Timothy D. Barnes, on the other hand, stated quite bluntly that the argument and structure of the *Contra orationem Symmachi* are simple.³⁵ He sees the exordium or introduction and the remainder of Book I as follows:

³¹ D. Shanzer, 'The Date and Composition' (1989), 447.

³² Many scholars in the past have debated about the date of the battle. Caesar Baronius in 1607 and Edward Gibbon in the eighteenth century (1776-1778) maintained that the battles of Pollentia and Verona both were fought in 403. For a renewed argument for the date in 403, see J. Barrie Hall, 'Pollentia, Verona, and the Chronology of Alaric's First Invasion of Italy', *Philologus* 132 (1988), 245-57. His arguments have been challenged by Timothy Barnes; see T.D. Barnes and R.W. Westall, 'The Conversion of the Roman Aristocracy in Prudentius' *Contra Symmachum*', *Phoenix* 45 (1991), 50-61, 59 n. 41. Yet it seems that in recent years the majority of scholars support the dating of Pollentia as Easter Sunday, April 6, 402, and that of Verona in the summer of 403.

³³ A. Cameron, *The Last Pagans* (2011), 349.

³⁴ Friedrich Solmsen, 'The Powers of Darkness in Prudentius' "Contra Symmachum"', *Vigiliae Christianae* 19 (1965), 237-57, 240.

³⁵ T.D. Barnes, 'The Historical Setting of Prudentius' *Contra Symmachum*', *American Journal of Philology* 97 (1976), 373-461, 378-9.

The policies of Theodosius have not yet completely driven paganism from Rome (1-6). The poet then pleads for divine intervention (6-8). The initial theme is next developed at greater length (9-41). A series of gods are denounced: Saturn, Jupiter, Mercury, Priapus, Hercules and Bacchus (42-144). Many gods, including Mars and Venus, are in fact only mortals whom ignorant people have deified (145-244). The apotheosis of the emperors continued this custom (245-77). Yet it was Christ who willed and directed the successes and victories of Rome (278-90). In spite of this, the pagans at Rome continued blindly to worship the above named gods, as well as deified natural forces such as air, fire, water, as also the shades of the underworld (291-402). Then Theodosius, the victor over the usurpers Maximus and Eugenius, decreed that Rome and its inhabitants truly become Christians (408-505). Rome gladly obeys (506-43). Leading Senators and the population at large in Rome become Christians (544-90). Pagan Senators are now in the minority, and the Christian Senators vote to expel idolatry from Rome (591-615). This was accomplished without compulsion; the emperor Theodosius even promoted some pagans to the highest honors (616-21). Symmachus, although unnamed, is invoked with reference to his consulate in 391 and his earlier urban prefecture in 384-5 (622-31). The poet then praises the eloquence of Symmachus, again anonymously (632-42). In the final verses of Book I Prudentius claims the right to defend his own faith (643-67).

According to Jean-Pierre Callu in 1981, the structure of Book I was very well balanced.³⁶ He is one of the first to notice that there is a correspondence of the 41 verses at the beginning of Book I with the 42 verses at its conclusion. The structure in his view, first, after the introduction, is that it contains the history of the pagan gods in three sections. (1) a general history of paganism (42-163), (2) the history of the national religion (164-286), and (3) the deification of natural forces (286-407). Here one can see a balance of 122, 123, and 121 verses. The second major division in Callu's outline presents the current politico-religious scene at Rome. Its two elements include the voyage and oration of Theodosius (408-510) and the response of Rome (511-615). Again, these two sections are balanced with about 100 verses in each. The third and final division is the conclusion (616-57).

The structure of Book I, according to Siegmund Döpp in 1986, seemed to be the following: Prudentius begins his invective against paganism, and here Döpp appears to stress the invective rather than the panegyric in the exordium (1-4). There follows the pagan reaction (5-8). The Christian emperor focuses on the eternal salvation of all those under his protection (22-41). Then the poet presents his historical survey of paganism (42-407). The emperor Theodosius is seen as the victor over the two usurpers (408-14). This section is followed by

³⁶ J.P. Callu, 'Date et Genèse du Premier Livre de Prudence Contre Symmaque', *Revue des Études Latines* 59 (1981), 235-59, 246, esp. n. 3.

the lengthy oration of Theodosius (415-505). There then follows a list of aristocrats in Rome who converted to Christianity (506-77) and the Christian citizens of Rome (578-607). There is a reference to the poet and politician Symmachus, although he is not named (622-42). Prudentius concludes Book I (643-57).

In 1989, Danuta Shanzer called the structure of Book I odd,³⁷ and she quotes Jill Harries' statement that this first book 'was written at a different time and for a different purpose'.³⁸ Shanzer considers the fact that the composition of the *Contra orationem Symmachi* seems to be close to panegyric and that the central question in Book I is Theodosius.³⁹ Shanzer records the praise directed to Theodosius for the cure of error (1-41). She then devotes 408-510 to the major speech of Theodosius; this includes the awkward transition to this speech (408-14). There then follows the personification of *Roma* and her response (511-611). Shanzer places the return to Theodosius at 612-31. This is followed by the praise and condemnation of Symmachus (632-649) and the final coda (650-57).

In 1996, Giovanni Garuti provided an interesting outline of the structure of both Books.⁴⁰ After his outline for the *Praefatio* to Book I, Garuti lists four major sections of the Book: (1) verses 1-41, an encomium to Theodosius; (2) 42-407, an invective against the pagan gods; (3) 408-631, the salutary intervention of Theodosius and the restoration of Christianity at Rome; and finally (4) the eloquence of Symmachus, although unnamed, as a model of style but not of content. In the second section describing the pagan gods, Garuti lists five separate catalogues of the idols. The first one (42-144) contains Saturn, Jupiter, Mercury, Priapus, Hercules, and Bacchus. The second catalogue (164-96) lists the founders of Rome: Mars and Venus, Minerva, Juno, Cibeles, and the dead heroes. The third catalogue (245-77) lists Augustus, Livia, Antinous (the lover of Hadrian). The fourth catalogue (297-353) lists the natural elements (earth, water, air, and fire), which includes the cult of the Sun. The fifth catalogue (354-407) contains the gods of the underworld. This last list includes a subsection (379-407) which argues against the gladiatorial games. Toward the end of Book I Garuti lists the salutary intervention of Theodosius I with an emphatic Christian restoration (408-631). The final section in his view contains the fact that the eloquence of Symmachus is a model only for style, but by no means of content (632-57).

Twelve years later in 2008, Hermann Tränkle issued his edition and translation into German of Prudentius' two books against Symmachus. Tränkle sees the structure as beginning with a brief reference to Theodosius, and then

³⁷ D. Shanzer, 'The Date and Composition' (1989), 443.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 445; J. Harries, 'Prudentius and Theodosius' (1984), 77.

³⁹ D. Shanzer, 'The Date and Composition' (1989), 447.

⁴⁰ G. Garuti, *Prudentius Contra Symmachum* (1996), 20-1.

abruptly at v. 42 the poet poses the rhetorical question whether Saturn would have been a better ruler.⁴¹ This begins the section, ending at v. 402, on the pagan cults at Rome, including the gods of the underworld and a section on the gladiatorial games. At v. 408 the poet returns to the emperor Theodosius as victor over two usurpers and who addresses Roma personified (415-505). Leading senators and citizens of Rome become Christians (506-602). Prudentius refers to Symmachus, although unnamed (622-42). Book I ends at v. 657.

Alan Cameron in 2011 described Book I thus: ‘The core of Book I (42-407) is a rambling attack on paganism. The first half of this section (42-296) argues that most pagan gods were originally just kings deified by a credulous posterity; the second half (297-407) that other gods were originally natural forces like water and fire (Neptune and Vulcan)’.⁴² He stresses the fact that there are no contemporary references in this section that contains the attack on paganism.⁴³ Regarding the structure of both books, Cameron comments that the needed narrative transition between the two books is missing.⁴⁴ In addition, he makes it clear that in the *Contra orationem Symmachi* we do not have only one anti-pagan invective by the poet, but rather three poems.⁴⁵ And these three poems are: (1) Bk. I 1-41 and 408-624, which are dated to 394; (2) Bk. I 42-407, which is undated; and (3) Bk. II, which is dated by the battle of Polentia in 402.

One thing patently clear in the various comments on the structure of Book I of the *Contra orationem Symmachi* is that all agree on the lengthy section (42-407) which is a description of the history of paganism in Rome. For Prudentius this section is an invective. This section cannot be dated, since there is no reference to any contemporary events or persons within it.

A particularly pertinent feature in the structure is the *cordon rouge* focused on the emperor Theodosius which is interlaced throughout Book I. In the *exordium* (1-41) we find the panegyric to Theodosius. Five times is there a reference to him: *medicina principis* (3-4), *moderator orbis* (9), *vir solus* (14), *hic [imperator]* (28), and *dux sapiens* (36). Toward the end of this book there is another section of 41 verses (608-49) with a return to Theodosius, thus providing a frame to the entire book.⁴⁶ Within this section, the emperor is referred to as *dux bonus* at 618 and *ipse* at 622. The prominent oration of Theodosius, which has a length of 90 verses (415-505), is not at the center of the book, but it is enclosed by the initial panegyric and the return to Theodosius at the end of the book.

⁴¹ H. Tränkle, *Prudentius* (2008), 29.

⁴² A. Cameron, *The Last Pagans* (2011), 343.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 344: ‘with no contemporary reference’.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 347.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 349.

⁴⁶ J.-P. Callu, ‘Date et Genèse’, (1981), 246. He appears to be the first to point out the correspondence of one section (1-41) with another at the conclusion (608-49).

Another striking issue, which Alan Cameron pointed out, is that there are three forced and awkward transitions found in Book I. The first is found at 40-1, where the transition is made by a rhetorical question, of whether Rome would be better ruled by Saturn or the current emperor, Theodosius. This is the way by which the poet introduces his lengthy invective against paganism. The second clumsy transition is at 408-14 and it is meant to introduce the prominent oration of Theodosius.⁴⁷ There is a third awkward transition at 622-4, and it occurs after a return to Theodosius at verse 608. This is the abrupt transition, which introduces the eloquence of Symmachus (unnamed) by the use of *tibi* and a reference to the office of consul in 391. All three transitions are helpful in dating the composition. The first follows the panegyric to Theodosius (1-41). The second refers to the *princeps* (410) who was victorious over two usurpers (Maximus and Eugenius); this provides the date of 394. The third gives us the dates of the two offices held by Symmachus in 384-5 and 391.

The undated invective against paganism (42-407) can be divided into two sections: that of the history of paganism in Rome (42-378) and the invective against gladiatorial games (379-407). There is then a transition to the speech of the emperor (408-14), and Theodosius is referred to here as *princeps* (410). Following the oration of Theodosius (415-505) there are four sections: (1) the personification of Rome and the address to her (506-44); (2) early Roman heroes and prominent Christians in Rome (545-69); (3) Christian senators (570-7); and (4) Christian citizens in Rome (578-607). The 41 verses framing the entire poem at 1-41 and the corresponding 41 verses at 608-49 have been pointed out above. These 41 verses constitute the return to the theme of Theodosius and the fact that this emperor had awarded the eloquent and unnamed Symmachus to two high offices in the empire. Prudentius concludes this first book with his coda (650-7), when he states that it is time for him to end this poem. This is a common classical *topos*.⁴⁸

It is also of interest to note that, at the end of Book I, the poet refers to the eloquence of the eminent Symmachus. Prudentius does not fail to praise his own eloquence in *Cathemerinon* IX, 82: *solve vocem, mens sonora, solve linguam nobilem / dic tropaeum passionis* ('Release thy voice, my tuneful heart, release thy nimble tongue. Tell of the victory of the passion'⁴⁹).

The Alleged Connection between Book I and Book II

The next issue to be considered is the thorny question of the alleged connection between Book I and Book II. Is there any real connection between Book I,

⁴⁷ A. Cameron, *The Last Pagans* (2011), 344, where he discusses all three transitions.

⁴⁸ See E.R. Curtius, *European Literature* (1953), 85.

⁴⁹ English translation by H.J. Thomson, Loeb edition (1949).

which Jill Harries describes as ‘a response to Theodosius’ victory in 394’, and Book II, which she describes as ‘an attack on Symmachus’.⁵⁰ Her three grounds for a separate composition of the two books are discussed above in the section on the structure of Book I.

Most scholars would agree that the two books that bear the title of *Contra orationem Symmachi* are indeed exceptional, since they are the only poems from all of the poetry of Prudentius that do indeed ‘openly allude to contemporary events and people’.⁵¹ One might also wonder why the poet chose the title, *Contra orationem Symmachi*, for these two books, since the poem (at least Book II) was directed against the *Relatio* 3 of Symmachus, and that was an official report in 384, not a true oration. It is also commonly agreed that Prudentius composed and published the *Praefatio* for all of his works in the year 405, when he was fifty-seven years of age. That was also the public attestation to these two books. Danuta Shanzer clearly states that ‘yoking together of two such different books is in itself odd, as is the structure of Book I’.⁵²

It is obvious that the character of Book I and that of Book II is completely different. Herman Tränkle in his edition and translation of the *Contra orationem Symmachi* in 2008 is explicit in his reasons.⁵³ Book II is definitely and clearly a refutation point by point, of the proposal of Symmachus in 384 to restore the altar of Victory to the Senate chamber in Rome. Book I is not as systematic as Book II, for in essence Book I is a diatribe against paganism in general, and also as applied to Rome. It is meant as a tribute to the emperor Theodosius I, in his lifetime, and is intended to thank him for his condemnation of paganism and its shrines in Rome. Furthermore, it salutes him as a true Christian emperor leading Rome, now Christianized, to further victories in the empire.

That the *Praefatio* of Book I has no connection with content of Book I itself is also clear. This is a further oddity in the claim that the two books are closely connected. It seems that when in the early fifth century the two books of this poem were published, the *Praefatio* addressed to St. Paul and the *Praefatio* addressed to St. Peter were inserted at the beginning of each book. The *Praefatio* addressed to St. Peter is very appropriate, since the main topic of Book II is Rome, where St. Peter was the first bishop. The *Praefatio* addressed to St. Paul in book I, on the contrary, does not seem appropriate. Book II is about the Roman Senate and the Altar of Victory there, the restoration of which Prudentius is pleading and arguing to reject. Then also, the two basilicas referred

⁵⁰ J. Harries, ‘Prudentius and Theodosius’ (1984), 69-84, 79. I present her argument.

⁵¹ D. Shanzer, ‘The Date and Composition’ (1989), 442-62, esp. 442.

⁵² *Ibid.* 443.

⁵³ H. Tränkle, *Prudentius* (2008), 47: ‘Das erste ist weitaus konziser, lebendiger und farbiger, das zweite nicht nur viel länger und langfädiger, sondern auch stellenweise umständlich lehrhaft ... so daß sich gegen die Annahme einer ursprünglichen Einheit immer wieder Bedenken erheben’.

to in Book I are those of St. Peter (in Bk. I 583: *Vaticano tumulum sub monte*) and St. John Lateran (in Bk. I 585). Both of these basilicas in Book I refer to St. Peter, and not to St. Paul. The poet does refer to the dedication of *San Paolo fuori le mura* in the year 391 by Theodosius, but that was in another poem from another series, i.e. *Peristephanon*, 12. 47-8.⁵⁴ One would have expected some reference to St. Paul in Book I, if the *Praefatio* to Book I focuses on St. Paul. Yet it does not.

The *Praefatio* in Book I presents the passage in the *Acts of the Apostles*,⁵⁵ in which St. Paul is bitten and poisoned by a snake, and his subsequent miraculous recovery and the welcome extended to him by the natives on the island of Malta. This has nothing to do with the content of Book I, a diatribe against paganism and a eulogy to emperor Theodosius I. The proportion of the number of verses between the *Praefatio* and the following Book are most unusual: for Book I the ratio is 89 verses to 657 verses; for Book II the ratio is 66 to 1,132. Because of these reasons, it is clear that there is no connection between the *Praefatio* of Book I to the Book itself. Perhaps the two *Praefationes* were added to each of the two books sometime after the Battle of Verona in the summer of 402 or 403, but certainly in 405, when Prudentius published these two books with his other poems. They were added, in the hope that it might give some sort of unity to these two 'disparate and unconnected poems'.⁵⁶

Jill Harries presented a convincing argument for the separate composition and limited circulation of Book I.⁵⁷ She suggests that, 'if composed separately, its amalgamation with Book II may teach us something about Prudentius' poetic technique, and, if Book I were the result of Theodosius' victory and perhaps the poet's own visit to Rome in the mid 390s, it will bring the poet himself into sharper focus as a poet of the Theodosian era'.⁵⁸ The main point of her argument is that, if the two books were published together in the year 405, complete with their individual prefaces, it is very likely that the poem in two books could have given offense to the imperial court at that time. Book I is clearly replete with praises for the then-reigning emperors' father, Theodosius. There is no mention in Book I of either Arcadius or Honorius, nor of their birth and careers. It was at least an error of tact or propriety not to mention the reigning emperors in that book; most sensitive poets would not have made that error. The Separatists present a convincing argument that in Book I the emperor Theodosius I was alive.

A further oddity is that no mention of Symmachus or indeed of his *Relatio* 3 appears until the very end of Book I (at v. 622), and there, even with no

⁵⁴ Prudentius, *Perist.* 12. 47-8: *regia pompa loci est: princeps bonus has sacravit arces...*

⁵⁵ *Acts* 28.

⁵⁶ J. Harries, 'Prudentius and Theodosius' (1984), 78.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 75-8. I present her argument.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 75.

mention of his name.⁵⁹ This conflicts with the normal practice of Prudentius in his other poems, where he clearly proclaims his subject.

The fact that a few verses in praise of, and at the same time, in condemnation of the renowned pagan Senator Symmachus, inserted toward the end of Book I seems to indicate an extremely late and hasty attempt to make some sort of connection to, and a bridge to Book II. It appears to be a very artificial after-thought indeed. Furthermore, the expression at Book I (v. 656), where Prudentius refers to his 'long booklet', indicates that this is an insertion after he had composed *both* Book I *and* Book II. Book I (v. 1-655) was certainly *not* a long booklet. Only Book I and Book II together would have constituted a long poem of almost 1,800 verses.

As Alan Cameron has pointed out, while Book II reflects a much later date than that of Book I, 'there is no *continuity* between the books'.⁶⁰ After a consideration and study of the two schools of thought – the Unitarians and the Separatists – it seems that with full confidence one may subscribe to and join the position of the Separatists. Jill Harries has a good summary:⁶¹ 'It is therefore possible that the *Contra orationem Symmachi* was a serial composition, in which the two books were written seven years apart, the first being a response to the events in 394, as is established by the opening lines already discussed above, the second a reaction to the events of 402'.

Summary and Conclusion

Prudentius was a talented, sincere and dedicated Christian poet. His attack on paganism and pagan practices at Rome, as exemplified in Book I, was intense and certainly biased from the Christian point of view. Symmachus, on the other hand, appears to be far more tolerant in matters of religious belief. This renowned orator and senator at Rome is memorable for his statement: *uno itinere non potest perveniri ad tam grande secretum*.⁶² Perhaps this concept was common to authors in the fourth century AD. His fellow pagan, the orator and politician Themistius (fl. 390), has a similar, and perhaps independent, statement in his *Oratio* 5.69a: 'No single road leads to the one and only goal ... nevertheless, all lead to that one goal'.⁶³

Book II is essentially a clear refutation, point by point, of the claims made by Symmachus in 384 in his petition to restore the altar of the goddess Victoria in

⁵⁹ This discreet action of Prudentius reminds one of the similar way in which Claudian refers to Eutropius without naming him in the poet's panegyric on Theodorus (*Theod.*, 265-9).

⁶⁰ A. Cameron, *The Last Pagans* (2011), 345.

⁶¹ J. Harries, 'Prudentius and Theodosius' (1984), 77.

⁶² Symmachus, *Ratio* 3.10: 'It is not possible to arrive at such a great secret by one sole path'.

⁶³ R. Malcolm Errington, *Roman Imperial Policy from Julian to Theodosius* (Chapel Hill, 2006), 293 n. 9, where he gives the Greek text.

the Senate chamber at Rome. St. Ambrose had earlier done the same, as had Prudentius, in his *Epistulae* 17 and 18. This is patently clear. Book I, however is a combination of an encomium for emperor Theodosius I and, in addition, a diatribe against paganism in general and at Rome in particular. Prudentius neatly places the general condemnation and denunciation of paganism (verses 42 to 407) between an initial panegyric to Theodosius (verses 1 to 41) and his address to Rome (verses 415 to 505). In his attack against paganism, contemporary works, even those anonymous ones, supporting this sort of attack, may well have influenced Prudentius in this section of Book I. The passages devoted to Theodosius could have been composed at any time after his accession as emperor (379). The diatribe against paganism could have been composed at any time after 380. They may have been completely separate poems, but were finally joined together to form Book I in or after the year 394. As Jill Harries indicates, the two Books were written several years apart, 'the first being a response to the events in 394 ... the second a reaction to the events of 401'.⁶⁴ More recently in 2008, Hermann Tränkle has pointed out that Book I is much more concise, lively and colorful, and that Book II is not only longer, but also very complicated and didactic.⁶⁵ The character of Book I and that of Book II is completely different. Danuta Shanzer states the fact that 'yoking of two such different books is in itself odd, as is the structure of Book I'.⁶⁶ There is only an alleged connection, no true connection, between the two books. Friedrich Solmsen, Timothy D. Barnes, Jean-Pierre Callu, Siegmund Döpp, Danuta Shanzer, Giovanni Garuti, Hermann Tränkle and Alan Cameron all agree that the section of verses 42-407 is a description of the history of paganism in Rome. This section is an invective composed by Prudentius and it cannot be dated.

There is a remarkable feature in the structure of Book I, and that is the *cordon rouge*, focused on Theodosius. This was discussed above in the section on the structure of Book I. This *cordon rouge* is interlaced throughout Book I in three places: (1) 1-41, a panegyric to the emperor; (2) 415-505, the main oration of Theodosius; (3) another 41 verses (609-49) with a return to Theodosius. The first and third are of equal length and frame the speech of the emperor.

Alan Cameron's view of the structure of this Book contains three awkward and forced transitions: (1) 40-1, made by a rhetorical question; (2) 408-14, which introduces the oration of Theodosius; and (3) 622-4, which introduces the eloquence of Symmachus (unnamed). Of interest here is the similar fact that Claudian refers to Eutropius the Eunuch in his panegyric on Theodorus without naming him (*Theod.* 265-9). As we have seen, all three transitions are helpful in dating the composition.

⁶⁴ J. Harries, 'Prudentius and Theodosius' (1984), 77.

⁶⁵ H. Tränkle, *Prudentius* (2008).

⁶⁶ D. Shanzer, 'The Date and Composition' (1889), 443.

The conclusion to the above discussion is twofold. First, Prudentius composed Book I of his *Contra orationem Symmachi* before the year 394 and Book II in 402 or 403 prior to the publication of the entire corpus of his poems in 405. Secondly, there is no connection between Book I and Book II, and they are poorly joined together. Finally, even though Prudentius does not cite the following verse of sacred scripture, it may very well have influenced him in principle and in his poetry:

Et haec est victoria, quae vicit mundum: fides nostra.

(‘And this is the victory which conquered the world: our faith’) (1John 5:4)

‘Let him thus be a Hippolytus’ (*Perist.* 11.87): Horror and Rhetoric in Prudentius’ *Peristephanon* 11

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ABSTRACT

The characterization of Hippolytus, the main protagonist of Prudentius’ *Peristephanon* 11, draws heavily on earlier literary traditions, most importantly Seneca’s *Phaedra*. Nevertheless, the Hippolytus-imagery is carefully adapted in order to develop a rhetoric of bodily fragmentation and reunion. This discourse makes the minds of the readers receptive for a proper veneration of the saint’s relics.

Introduction

The 11th poem of Prudentius’ *Peristephanon* (*Perist.*), which was written around 400-405 AD, concentrates on the martyrdom of Hippolytus: a bishop who is put on trial, because he tries to convert other people.¹ The magistrate furiously orders him to be torn apart by horses, consequently to re-enact his own name (*hippo-lytos*): *ergo sit Hippolytus, quatiat turbetque iugales, / intereatque feris dilaceratus equis* (‘Hippolytus let him be then. Let him get a team frightened and agitated and be torn to death by wild horses’, *Perist.* 11.87-8).² The magistrate’s verdict explicitly connects the martyr Hippolytus to his mythological namesake, whose fate is recorded by among others Euripides, Seneca and Ovid.³ The mythological Hippolytus rejects the advances of his stepmother *Phaedra*, after which he dies a cruel death, getting entangled in the reins of his chariot and then being torn apart by the horses.⁴ Prudentius’ rhetoric of fragmentation in *Perist.* 11 is highly dependent on the use of imagery

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¹ *Perist.* 11.77-170 describes the subsequent trial, martyrdom, death and burial of Hippolytus.

² The text and translations from *Perist.* 11 are taken from *Prudentius Vol. II*, ed. Henry J. Thomson, Loeb Classical Library 398 (Cambridge and London, 1953).

³ Eur., *Hipp.* 1173-254, Ovid., *Met.* 15.492-546, Sen., *Phaedr.* 991-1114.

⁴ According to one version of the story, Hippolytus is restored to life by Asclepius; see Callim., *Fr.* 190 Pf. and Virg., *Aen.* 7.765-82.

related to the mythological figure of Hippolytus. Like his mythological namesake, the Christian Hippolytus is bound with his feet to a span of horses and then dragged around. His body is scattered on the rocks and in the thorny bushes. After the martyr's cruel death, his followers collect the bodily remains and put them in a shrine, which attracts large crowds of worshippers.⁵

This article focuses on the rhetoric which is exploited by Prudentius in order to describe the cruel fate of Hippolytus in *Perist.* 11. In the past thirty years, relatively much attention has been paid to the theme of bodily fragmentation in relation to the dispersed narrative structure of the poem and the cult of relics.⁶ However, these studies have not fully taken into account Prudentius' remodelling of the mythological figure of Hippolytus. This article aims to fill this gap, firstly, by comparing *Perist.* 11 to other productions from the literary and artistic context; secondly, by discussing the connection between the contents and narrative structure of the poem; and thirdly, by providing a preliminary discussion of the function of the rhetoric of bodily fragmentation in the cult of relics. This might elucidate the ways in which the mythological figure of Hippolytus is transformed in order to create an effective rhetoric of corporeal dismemberment and unity in *Perist.* 11, which makes the minds of the readers receptive for a proper veneration of the saint's relics.

1. Adaptation of the Hippolytus-paradigm

In *Perist.* 11, the traditional representation of the mythological Hippolytus is innovatively adapted in order to highlight the cruelties of Hippolytus' martyrdom. As is well known, the mythological Hippolytus is one of the stock models of chastity and beauty in ancient literature.⁷ In Chariton's novel 'Callirhoe', to take but one example, the narrator compares the hero Chaireas to the tragic Hippolytus, characterizing him in terms of visual art: Χαίρεας γάρ τις ἦν μετράκιον

⁵ Apart from the rather lengthy poem of Prudentius, there are not many other sources extant about the martyrdom of Hippolytus. A search in the BHL indicates the existence of at least three more martyr accounts on Hippolytus (BHL 3963-7). The tradition of these texts is rather complex, since they are all incorporated in other hagiographical *corpora*. Moreover, one of them describes a different version of the story, in which the martyr is boiled in a pit (BHL 3963).

⁶ See Martha A. Malamud, *A Poetics of Transformation: Prudentius and Classical Mythology* (Ithaca and London, 1989); Michael Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs: The Liber Peristephanon of Prudentius* (Michigan, 1993); Christian A. Kaesser, 'Narrating *Disiecta Corpora*: The Rhetoric of Bodily Dismemberment in Prudentius *Peristephanon* 11', in Genevieve Liveley and Patricia Salzman-Mitchell (eds), *Latin Elegy and Narratology: Fragments of Story in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2009).

⁷ There are several instances of the figure of Hippolytus being used as a model of chastity and beauty; see OCD s.v. Hippolytus (1). See also Koen De Temmerman, *Crafting Characters: Heroeas and Heroines in the Ancient Greek Novel* (Oxford, 2014), 47-9.

εὐμορφον, πάντων ὑπερέχον, οἶχον Ἀχιλλέα καὶ Νιρέα καὶ Ἴππόλυτον καὶ Ἀλκιβιάδην πλάσται καὶ γραφεῖς δεικνύουσι... ('He is surpassingly handsome, like Achilles and Nireus and Alcibiades and Hippolytus as sculptors and painters portray them...'; *Char.* 1.3).⁸ Hippolytus is also a popular model of chastity and physical beauty on antique artworks, which usually depict *Phaedra*'s fruitless seduction of Hippolytus as a proof of the hero's chastity.⁹

Remarkably, unlike other literary and artistic traditions, *Perist.* 11 does not use the figure of the mythological Hippolytus as a paradigm of chastity or male beauty. The Christian Hippolytus is presented as an old man (*senior*, *Perist.* 11.78) with grey hair (*caput niveum*, *Perist.* 11.137), while the motif of chastity is left aside altogether. Instead, the figure of the mythological Hippolytus is employed as a model of physical dismemberment for the Christian hero. Interestingly, this focus on bodily fragmentation goes back to an earlier tragedy which recounts the story of the mythological Hippolytus, namely Seneca's *Phaedra*.

2. Adaptation of Seneca's *Phaedra*

Scholars have frequently pointed out narrative similarities between the *Phaedra* and *Perist.* 11.¹⁰ Seneca's tragedy contains a description of Hippolytus' death (*Sen.*, *Phaedr.* 1000-14) whose particular gruesome nature has been characterized as a 'characteristically Senecan touch'.¹¹ Interestingly, precisely the bloody and horrific details of Seneca's description of Hippolytus' death recur in *Perist.* 11. In both texts, the horses are agitated by their own fury (*furor*).¹² They rave unconsciously of their burden (*onus*).¹³ The bodies of both

⁸ Translation taken from *Chariton Aphrodisiensis. De Callirhoe narrationes amatoriae*, ed. Bryan Reardon (Munich, 2004).

⁹ See Jean Ch. Balty (ed.), *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae* 5,1 (Zürich, 1981-1999), 445-64, s.v. 'Hippolytos I'.

¹⁰ See Gustav Sixt, 'Des Prudentius' Abhängigkeit von Seneca und Lucan', *Philologus* 51 (1892), 501-6; Anne-Marie Palmer, *Prudentius on the Martyrs* (Oxford, 1989), 188-93; M.A. Malamud, *A Poetics of Transformation* (1989), 83-93; R. Mayer, *Seneca: Phaedra* (2002); Pierre Y. Fux, *Les sept Passions de Prudence: Peristephanon 2. 5. 9. 11-14. Introduction générale et commentaire* (Freiburg, 2003) and Pierre Y. Fux, *Prudence et les martyrs: hymnes et tragédie (Peristephanon 1.3-4.6-8.10). Commentaire* (Freiburg, 2013) for further discussions of the intertextual connections between *Perist.* 11 and other literary works, such as Seneca's *Phaedra*.

¹¹ Rosanna Lauriola, 'Hippolytus', in Rosanna Lauriola and Kyriakos N. Demetriou (eds), *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Euripides* (Leiden and Boston, 2015), 443-504, 457.

¹² ...feruntur, / qua sonus atque tremor, qua furor exagitant (*Perist.* 11.111-2) and *quacumque rabidos pavidus evexit furor* (*Sen. Phaedr.* 1070). The text and translations from the *Phaedra* are taken from *Seneca: Hercules, Trojan Women, Phoenician women, Medea, Phaedra*, ed. John G. Fitch, Loeb Classical Library 62 (Cambridge and London, 2002).

¹³ *Nec cursus uolucer mobile sentit onus* (*Perist.* 11.114) and *(currus) talis per auras non suum agnoscens onus* (*Sen. Phaedr.* 1090).

victims lie shattered on the bushes (*spinigeris stirpibus hirtus ager/dumi*) and the rocks (*scopulis*).¹⁴ After the death of the heroes, the followers of both victims collect their bodies, simply tracing the bloody track of their bodily remains (*fractum ... iter/longum ... tramitem*).¹⁵

Nevertheless, *Perist.* 11 diverges from its literary model at a crucial point. Seneca mentions that the followers do not collect all remains of the ‘scattered parts of [Hippolytus’] torn body’ (*disiecta ... membra corporis laceri*, Sen., *Phaedr.* 1256), as a result of which the chorus at Hippolytus’ burial laments that a ‘large part is still lacking to our tears’ (*magna lacrimis pars adhuc nostris abest*, Sen., *Phaedr.* 1261).¹⁶ Prudentius, on the other hand, emphasizes the integrity of the body of the martyr:

cumque recensetis constaret partibus ille / corporis integri qui fuerat numerus, / nec purgata aliquid deberent avia toto / ex homine extersis frondibus et scopulis, / metando eligitur tumulo locus. (*Perist.* 11.147-51)

The parts were reviewed and found to make the number belonging to the unmutilated body (*corpus integrum*); the pathless ground being cleared, and the boughs and rocks wiped dry, had nothing of the whole man still to give up; and now a site was chosen on which to set a tomb.

Unlike Seneca’s *Phaedra*, *Perist.* 11 tells that *all* bodily fragments are collected by the followers, including the stains of blood. Consequently, the story of Hippolytus’ martyrdom in *Perist.* 11 is characterized by a movement from bodily fragmentation to corporeal reunion. As we will see in the next paragraph, this movement is mirrored on the level of the narrative construction of the poem.

3. Contents and narrative structure

Perist. 11 is well-known for its painting *ekphrasis*, which meticulously describes how the bodily parts of Hippolytus are scattered and finally collected by his followers (*Perist.* 11.125-51).¹⁷ The *ekphrasis* describes the events in explicitly painterly terms:

¹⁴ *Scissa minuatim labefacto corpore frustra / carpit spinigeris stirpibus hirtus ager. / pars summis pendet scopulis...* (*Perist.* 11.119-21) and *late cruentat arva et inlimum caput scopulis resultat; auferunt dum comas* (Sen., *Phaedr.* 1094-5).

¹⁵ *Addiderat caros gressu lacrimisque sequentes, / devia quo fractum semita monstrat iter. / maerore attoniti atque oculis rimantibus ibant, / inplebantque sinus visceribus laceris* (*Perist.* 11.133-6) and *Errant per agros funebris famuli manus, / per illa qua distractus Hippolytus loca / longum cruenta tramitem signat nota... passim ad supremos ille colligitur rogos / et funeri confertur* (Sen., *Phaedr.* 1105-7, 1113-4).

¹⁶ See Roland Mayer, *Seneca: Phaedra*, Duckworth Companions to Greek and Roman Tragedy (London, 2002), 76-7.

¹⁷ See M. Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs* (1993), 136-7 and P. Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination* (2009), 91-2 on the *ekphrasis* in *Perist.* 11. See for more general information

Rorantes saxorum apices vidi, optime papa, / purpureasque notas vepribus inpositas. / docta manus virides imitando effingere dumos / luserat et minio russeolam saniem. / cernere erat ruptis compagibus ordine nullo / membra per incertos sparsa iacere situs. ... Palliolis etiam bibulae siccantur harenae, / ne quis in infecto pulvere ros maneat. / se quis et in sudibus ... sanguis / insidet, hunc omnem spongia pressit rapit. (Perist. 11.141-4)

I saw the tips of rocks dripping (*rorantes*), most excellent Father, and scarlet stains (*purpeas notas*) imprinted on the briars, where a hand that was skilled in portraying green (*virides*) bushes had also figured the red blood in vermillion (*mineo*). ... One could see the parts (*membra*) torn asunder and lying scattered (*sparsa*) in disorder up and down at random. ... With their garments [the followers, K.S.] wipe dry (*siccantur*) the soaking sand, so that no drop (*ros*) shall remain to dye (*infecto*) the dust; and wherever blood adheres to the spikes ... they press a sponge (*spongia*) on it and carry it all away. (*Perist.* 11.127-33, 141-4)

The *ekphrasis* ends with the passage cited earlier, in which the followers reconstitute the *corpus integrum* of the martyr (*Perist.* 11.147-51).

The painting metaphors in the *ekphrasis* tailor the movement of bodily dismemberment and reunion to the narrative structure of the text. Scholars have often suggested that the *ekphrasis* in *Perist.* 11 does not have a proper ending, but is gradually dissolved in the poem.¹⁸ In my opinion, however, the painting metaphors mark the boundary of the *ekphrasis*, since the narrator stops using painting metaphors at the very moment when the followers have collected all bodily remains of Hippolytus and have reconstituted the *corpus integrum* (*Perist.* 11.148). As a result, the end of the story of bodily dismemberment, as it is told in the *ekphrasis* in all its detail, coincides with the closure of the painting *ekphrasis*. The movement from corporeal fragmentation towards reunion is thus mirrored on a structural level by the insertion of the *ekphrasis* and its closure. This confirms the importance of the theme of fragmentation and reunion in *Perist.* 11.¹⁹ The question is then raised as to *why* this theme is so important in the poem.

about the function of *ekphrasis* in early Christian literature: Liz James and Ruth Webb, 'To understand Ultimate Things and enter Secret Places: Ekphrasis and Art in Byzantium', *Art History* 14 (1991), 1-17; and Ruth Webb, 'Accomplishing the Picture: Ekphrasis, Mimesis and Martyrdom in Asterios of Amaseia', in Liz James (ed.), *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture* (Cambridge, 2007), 13-32.

¹⁸ See M.A. Malamud, *A Poetics of Transformation* (1989), 96; P. Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination* (2009), 70 and Ian Fielding, 'Elegiac memorial and the martyr as medium in Prudentius' *Peristephanon*', *CQ* 62 (2014), 808-20.

¹⁹ See Jill Ross, 'Dynamic Writing and Martyr's Bodies in Prudentius' *Peristephanon*', *J ECS* 3 (1995), 325-55 for a discussion of similar aesthetics in *Perist.* 9, which describes the martyrdom of Cassian.

4. The importance of bodily fragmentation and reunion

Scholars have frequently pointed out the often highly violent contents of late antique martyr accounts²⁰ and considered it as a means to stimulate the Christianization of the late antique world.²¹ This seems also to pertain to *Perist.* 11, in which the movement of bodily fragmentation and reunion is presented as highly significant for the cult of relics.²² After the bodily remains have been put in a shrine, they start to perform miracles: *Mira loci pietas et prompta precantibus ara / spes hominum placida prosperitate iuvat* ('Wonderful is the grace that attaches to the spot, and the altar, ever ready to receive its supplicants, fosters the hopes of men with kindly favour'; *Perist.* 11.175-6). The relics attract large crowds of worshippers, among whom the narrator of the poem who pretends to have visited *in propria persona* the shrine of the martyr during his pilgrimage to Rome.²³ At the end of the poem, the narrator begs the addressee of the poem, Valerianus bishop of Calahorra, to include the martyr on his liturgical calendar, finally guaranteeing the cultic veneration of the martyr:²⁴ *Quem te quoque, sancte magister, / annua festa inter dinumerare velim* ('I should like you too, holy teacher, to count [Hippolytus' feast day, K.S.] among your yearly festivals'; *Perist.* 11.233-4). This gradual converging of the literary world with the contemporary social reality of Prudentius stresses the importance of the discourse of fragmentation and reunion of Hippolytus for the production of his relics and the establishment of his cult.

This discourse seems to have been successful for the promotion of Hippolytus' cult in Spain. Anne-Marie Palmer has drawn attention to the attestation of Hippolytus' feast day in the *Libellus orationum* of Verona, which provides information about the liturgical calendar of Tarragona, the area where Calahorra is located, at the end of the 7th century.²⁵ From a more general perspective, the poem might have appealed a broader Christian readership, as has recently been

²⁰ See Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les Passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires* (Brussels, 1966), 171-3.

²¹ See Lucy Grig, *Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity* (London, 2004), 65-6 and Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York, 2004), 126-32.

²² Inspired by Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 2014/1981), scholars have read the diverse narrative origins of the poem as a symbol of the dispersion of the martyrs' relics; see for example, M. Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs* (1993), 148-67 and P. Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination* (2009), 69-73. See C.A. Kaesser, 'Narrating *Disiecta Corpora*' (2008) and I. Fielding, 'Elegiac memorial' (2014) for the relationship between the fragmented narrative structure of the poem and the shattered body of the martyr. A discussion of the aesthetic dimensions of the rhetoric of fragmentation in late antique literature in general is provided in Marco Formisano, 'Towards an Aesthetic Paradigm of Late Antiquity', *Antiquité Tardive* 15 (2007), 277-84; 282-4.

²³ See *Perist.* 11.174-6, 195-230.

²⁴ See A.M. Palmer, *Prudentius on the Martyrs* (1989), 256-8.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

argued.²⁶ The highly visual descriptions of Hippolytus' martyrdom, as well as the painting *ekphrasis*, create a certain visual aesthetics of bodily dismemberment and reunion which stirs the readers' imagination, making their minds receptive for a proper veneration of the saint's relics.²⁷

Conclusions

To conclude, this article suggests that Prudentius develops an innovative rhetoric of fragmentation in *Perist.* 11, presenting the figure of the mythological Hippolytus as a model of bodily dismemberment and corporeal unity instead of chastity and beauty. The move from dismemberment to bodily integrity is mirrored on a structural level by the painting *ekphrasis*, which confirms the importance of the discourse of fragmentation and reunion. Exploiting the horrific details of the Hippolytus-story in Seneca's *Phaedra*, Prudentius creates a hero whose bodily fragmentation meets the ideal of Christian martyrdom as it is often gruesomely expressed in the late antique martyr accounts. However, Prudentius goes beyond his literary model by developing the concept of corporeal unity. As a result, the fragmented body is invested with crucial potential for the cult of relics. Moreover, the minds of the readers are made receptive for a proper veneration of the saint's relics. The tragic hero Hippolytus has become a Christian martyr after all.

²⁶ See P. Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination* (2009), 72; C.A. Kaesser, 'Narrating *Disiecta Corpora*' (2008) and I. Fielding 'Elegiac memorial' (2014).

²⁷ It has been argued that the emphasis laid on the themes of fragmentation and reunion reflects contemporary debates about the legitimacy of the cult of relics and the complex material and spiritual nature of the saintly remains. See for further discussions C.A. Kaesser, 'Narrating *Disiecta Corpora*' (2008), P. Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination* (2009), 62-73 and I. Fielding, 'Elegiac memorial' (2014).

Witness and Imitation in the Writings of Paulinus of Nola

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ABSTRACT

Paulinus of Nola calls his audiences to imitate the saints, and the notion of witness is central both to his manner of persuasion and to the imitation that he enjoins: Paulinus uses *ekphrasis* and other witness-centered rhetorical maneuvers to persuade his audiences to see, hear, feel, and observe in witness to the saints – a witness which Paulinus hopes will culminate in imitation. And yet, when presenting the exemplary figures he wishes his audience to imitate, Paulinus includes narrative elements that undermine the reliability of witness: his patron saint Felix survives persecution through divinely-instigated unrecognizability; the holy bishop Maximus strives for a death hidden from the eyes of his contemporaries; and Paulinus himself, suffering from spiritual blindness, does not recognize his contemporary Victricius as a ‘living martyr’ until years after their initial meeting. In other words, Paulinus urges imitation of saintly exemplars while subverting the primary vehicle he offers his audience for effecting that imitation. In this essay I investigate Paulinus’ seeming ambivalence about witness and how it relates to the saintly imitation he sought to cultivate in his readers and listeners.

In his poetry and letters, Paulinus of Nola unfolds for his audiences an ethic of imitation, wherein Christians are constantly striving to see the various ways they can make themselves more worthy of salvation and of Christ’s indwelling. Biblical exempla, the natural world, building projects, and, of course, saints, are all held up as fodder for Christian imitation.¹ Saints, in particular, are efficacious to imitate, since, as Paulinus tells Severus, ‘by imitating the imitator of Christ we shall attain imitation of God’.²

¹ Biblical exempla: a near-constant feature of Paulinus’ writing, these interwoven examples are often explicitly held up as models for Christians to imitate. See, for example, *Carm.* 26.55-268. The natural world: often springing from biblical exempla, these imitanda are less frequent in Paulinus’ writing than his calls to imitate people, but they are nonetheless a common feature: Paulinus asks his readers, for example, to imitate the rocks rent at the cross (*Ep.* 31.1), various metals and woods (*Ep.* 32.24), ants and bees (*Ep.* 39.2), fields and plants (*Ep.* 39.3-5), birds (*Ep.* 40.6-8) and trees (21.294-311). Buildings: see *Carm.* 218-326, where the newly built basilica is the object of imitation, and *Ep.* 24.20-2 where Paulinus likens self-cultivation to the process of digging out a foundation (and again in *Ep.* 32.15).

² *Ep.* 11.7 (CSEL 29, 66): *imitando enim imitatore Christi perueniemus ad imitationem dei*. Paulinus is here answering Paul’s plea in *1Cor.* 11:1. Paulinus echoes this sentiment many times in his letters and poems. See, for example, the *Natalicium* of 407, in which Paulinus offers this

To this end, Paulinus offers narrative depictions of particular holy individuals and ensures that his audiences know to imitate them. At times he explicitly calls for imitation, for example asking Nicetas to ‘act the part of Felix’ and pray for him as Felix would do,³ or reminding feast-day participants that to ‘unite with’ Felix one must share his pious poverty.⁴ More often, however, Paulinus works subtly, emphasizing the ways that the saintly figures he is exalting are themselves imitators of earlier holy figures. For example, Paulinus’ ‘invisible companion’⁵ and patron saint Felix, escaping from prison with angelic aid, is identified as a new Peter.⁶ Felix’ elderly bishop Maximus, who retreats to the wilderness during persecution, is explicitly compared to Elijah, Moses, and Isaac⁷; Victricius is likened to Christ the sower who reaps thirty-

instruction to his audience: ‘if we walk in the martyr’s footsteps, we can enjoy rewards equal to [our] forbears’ (*Carm.* 21.136-7 [CSEL 30, 162]: ... *si ambulemus martyrum vestigiis, / paribus parentum perfruamur praemiis*). All Latin text follows Hartel’s 1894 CSEL editions, with emendations from ‘Thesaurus Paulini Nolani, Series A – Formae’ (Turnhout, 2000) as recorded in Brepols’ digital *Library of Latin Texts, Series A*.

³ This imitation is already underway, as Paulinus claims Nicetas matches ‘that same one in pious mind / and you re-present the appearance of his mind and you follow his soul / in love for me’. *Carm.* 27.596-601 (CSEL 30, 288-9): *quod superest ex his, quae facta et picta uideamus, / materiam orandi pro me tibi suggero poscens, / rem Felicis agens ut pro me sedulus ores. / et decet, ut quem mente pia comitaris eundem / et mentis facie referas animoque sequaris / par in amore mei...*

⁴ *Carm.* 21. 534-6 (CSEL 30, 175): *propterea similes tibi niteris efficere omnes / paupertate pia, quos suscipis hospite tecto; / dissimilis nec enim tibi posset forma coire.*

⁵ Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981), 50-68.

⁶ *Carm.* 15.257-65 (CSEL 30, 62): *ueterem remeare recenti / historia uideo speciem, qua iussus abire / bissenno sublimis in agmine discipulorum / Petrus sponte sua uinclis labentibus eque / carcere processit clauso*. Paulinus also compares Felix to other biblical figures and Christ-types: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Daniel, and the three boys in the furnace. Felix is configured as Abraham both when he rescues Maximus *in extremis* with divinely proffered resources and in *Carm.* 15.61-8, having relocated (albeit in the person of his father) from foreign lands to promised ones. This comparison also works as an Isaac comparison, since Paulinus also renders Felix’ father Abraham-like for causing Felix to be born in Italy and ‘[planting] the sacred seed in Canaan’s fields’ (*deposuitque sacrum Chananaeis semen in aruis*) as Abraham had done with Isaac. Paulinus also figures Felix as Isaac in *Carm.* 26.230. Felix is likened to Jacob in *Carm.* 15.89-94 (as the divinely-chosen twin), and again when he is blessed by Maximus as if the latter were Isaac blessing his son (*Carmen* 15.354-361). Felix is compared to Daniel in *Carm.* 26.255-62, 26.294 (in contrast to Daniel, which still calls to mind the comparison), and 26.374-83. The Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego comparison comes in *Carm.* 26.380.

⁷ The Isaac comparison is both an implicit narrative analogy (the sacrificial near-death in the mountainous wilds) and an explicit, positive one (*Carm.* 15.356). The Elijah and Moses comparisons are, by contrast, explicitly negative, highlighting the ways that Maximus’ experience differs from these two earlier figures’ (*Carm.* 15.222-9). The effect is nonetheless one that links re-enactor with exempla, highlighting how similar they are despite minor and divinely ordained differences. This typological playfulness mirrors the methods Catherine Conybeare identifies in Paulinus’ letters, where he relies on ‘complex connections of thought, drawn through symbolically significant images’ to develop the ‘active reading’ required to access the ‘truth that lies beyond

sixty-, one hundred-fold⁸; the monk Theridius both imitates and identifies himself with Felix⁹; and Melania imitates the biblical Hannah ‘as far her situation allowed,’ praying to keep, rather than conceive, her son.¹⁰ In addition, Paulinus routinely describes Felix’ followers as *felices* themselves – wordplay, of course, but indicating, nonetheless, imaginative identification with the saint. In each of these cases, we see an implicit call to imitation – an exhortation to mimic those whose mimicry has proven fruitful, a claim that what is past can be present, that ‘the ancient type’ (to use Paulinus’ words about Felix) ‘returns in recent history’.¹¹

More than this – more subtly and more powerfully – Paulinus does not leave his call to imitation as a matter of simple declaration or narrative suggestion: he tells the stories in such a way as to ensure that his audiences ‘get the picture,’ so to speak, to achieve what Patricia Cox Miller calls ‘visceral seeing’.¹² He uses elements of witness, of visuality and aurality, of *ekphrasis*, to get his audiences to *see* the scenes he depicts, to *hear* the pronouncements being made, and to *feel* alongside his protagonists.¹³

For example, in his account of Maximus’ ‘martyrdom by flight’,¹⁴ Paulinus foregrounds the visual: Maximus runs to the wilderness to escape the executioner’s

the textual’ (*Paulinus Noster: Self and Symbols in the Letters of Paulinus of Nola* [New York, 2000], 115-6).

⁸ *Ep.* 18.10 (CSEL 29, 137): *uere tu beatus tot beatorum parens, tantae messis sator, centenum et sexagesimum ac tricesimum fructum deo fecunditate tuae terrae efferens et mensuram parem de uariis partuum tuorum fructibus recepturus.*

⁹ See *Carm.* 23, and below at note 34.

¹⁰ *Ep.* 29.9 (CSEL 29, 255): *imitata est condicione qua potuit Annae sterilis fidele uotum...*

¹¹ *Carm.* 15.257-65 (CSEL 30, 62): *ueterem remeare recenti / historia uideo speciem, qua iussus abire / bisseño sublimis in agmine discipulorum / Petrus sponte sua uinclis labentibus eque / carcere processit clauso.*

¹² Patricia Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity*, *Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion* (Philadelphia, 2009), 102-15. Visceral seeing is ‘the endowing of the ocular with affect’ (103), ‘a form of interpretation that achieved a transfigured gaze such that saintly bodies emerged in hagiographies as presences both ephemeral and tangible at once’, materializing the ‘invisible but real’ presence of the saints in the world ‘in rhetorically compelling fashion’ (102).

¹³ While it has become commonplace in modern scholarship to define *ekphrasis* as ‘a description of a work of art,’ the ancient definition of the rhetorical tool was based on the effect it created (of bringing the subject before one’s eyes) rather than on its subject. See Michael Roberts, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca, 1989), 38-41, and Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Farnham, England/Burlington, VT, 2009), esp. 61-84. See also Diane Fruchman, ‘Modeling A Martyrial Worldview: Prudentius’ Pedagogical *Ekphrasis* and Christianization’, *Journal of Late Antiquity* 7 (2014), 131-58.

¹⁴ Paulinus is clear that Maximus is undergoing martyrdom ‘with torture different but no lighter than if he had given his neck to the sword and his limbs to torments or fire: a fiercer concern for his flock burned and troubled him ...’ (*Carm.* 15.200-4 [CSEL 30, 60]: *... diuersa at non leuiore ferebat / martyrium cruce, quam si ferro colla dedisset / membraque tormentis aut ignibus; acrior illum / cura sui gregis urit et afficit...*). Paulinus then goes on to describe Maximus’ physical

‘deadly hands and eyes’,¹⁵ but God does not allow him ‘a hidden death’¹⁶ – he looks upon Maximus ‘with a cheerful eye’¹⁷ and sends Felix to rescue him. Felix follows an angel-illuminated¹⁸ path out of prison ‘through secret pathways in rural wilderness’¹⁹ to the place where Maximus lies. When Felix arrives, we see what he sees (and hear what he hears): Felix ‘discerns’ Maximus’ ‘ailing sighs and tenuous breaths’, he ‘recognizes’ the ‘known features’.²⁰ While ‘looking’ at the old man, Felix anxiously ‘discerns’ his bloodless limbs and his ‘face’ (*ora*) ghastly with hunger.²¹ With divine aid, Felix manages to feed the mostly-dead Maximus, and the bishop revives: ‘Feeling returned to his soul, warmth to his bones, and light to his eyes’.²² We then shift to Maximus’ perspective, as he ‘sees’ close before him Felix’ ‘well-known face’ and begins to defend his flight. He tells Felix that he hadn’t run for fear of death, but because he feared his body would be too frail to make a good showing were he to be tortured.²³ This is why, Maximus explains, he didn’t run to a comfortable hiding-place, but instead ‘sought ... barren deserts, / placing my head on the lap of the sweet Lord, / that I might wither away under his witness or be fed by him’.²⁴ So – not only are eyes, sight, recognition, and witness highlighted throughout this passage, now we are also hearing their encounter through direct speech. Paulinus then pans out, describing the conclusion of the rescue from the visual perspective of an omniscient narrator: Felix carries Maximus to safety ‘with such speed as if he were rather borne than bearing, and, truly, Christ himself carried the carrier’.²⁵ The poem concludes with Maximus, as Isaac, bestowing a

suffering as he starves and freezes in the wilderness, and how even these discomforts are overshadowed by mental anguish.

¹⁵ *Carm.* 15.199 (CSEL 30, 60): *manus feraliaque ora.*

¹⁶ *Carm.* 15.220-1 (CSEL 30, 61): *mota patris summi pietas antistite tanto / non tulit obscuro consumi funere corpus.*

¹⁷ *Carm.* 15.230-2 (CSEL 30, 61): *ergo sacerdotem confessorumque sereno / lumine respiciens tacitis tabescere siluis / non tulit ulterius mitis pater...*

¹⁸ *Carm.* 15.266-71.

¹⁹ *Carm.* 15.271-2 (CSEL 30, 63): *et postquam emensus secretos auia saltus / rura...*

²⁰ *Carm.* 15.274-5 (CSEL 30, 63): *et primo ut cari cognouit membra parentis, / fusus in amplexum dat uultibus oscula notis...*

²¹ *Carm.* 15. 282-4 (CSEL 30, 64): *anxius intuitu tali pia pectora Felix, / distrahit exsanguis artus et lurida cernens / ora fame...*

²² *Carm.* 15.303-4 (CSEL 30, 64): *hinc animae sensus, calor ossibus atque oculis lux / uitaque tota redit...*

²³ This is how I understand *non mortis fugisse metu Christoque meam me / praeposuisse animam; fugi non lucis amore, / sed fragile hoc metuens infirmi corporis; atquin / tecta petens alia uixissem tutus in urbe, / si mihi uile fides et carum haec uita fuisset* (*Carm.* 15.314-8 [CSEL 30, 65]), because what else could frailty of body mean when Maximus is afraid of neither death nor pain?

²⁴ *Carm.* 15.321-3 (CSEL 30, 65): *Ignotos montes desertaque nuda petiui / in gremio domini dulcis mea colla reponens, / ipso ut deficerem teste aut ut pascere ipso.*

²⁵ *Carm.* 15.329-33 (CSEL 30, 66): *inpiger optato gauisus munere Felix / carum onus ut Christi pondus leue sumit et adfert / tam uolucer cursu, tamquam magis ipse feratur / nec ferat, et uere Christus fert ipse ferentem / et pedibus pietate citis deus addidit alas.*

blessing on Felix, the fruits of which, Paulinus says, turning to address his congregation directly, ‘we see even now’.²⁶

Thus, not only does Paulinus indicate that his audience should strive to mimic the saints, he actually nudges them into that imitation by allowing them to see and hear the saints’ struggles. But he augments this presentation by embroiling his listeners in the feelings such struggles would entail: the engaged listener would, for example, find that the pacing of the poem aligns with the plot of the story – Paulinus describes Felix’ attempts to feed Maximus in almost tedious ekphrastic detail, with eleven plodding spondee-laden lines²⁷; when Maximus is revived, the meter is tripping and ebullient.²⁸ One can imagine the listener’s heart beating more quickly as Maximus suddenly rushes to life after Felix’ protracted attempt to feed him.²⁹

Paulinus thus uses witness and visuality to persuade his audiences that imitation is both desirable and possible. He contrives for his audiences to see, hear, and feel the reality of the exempla he provides, with the ultimate aim that his audience members are better able to imitate those exempla. In short, imitation is central to Paulinus’ pastoral mission, and witness is central to imitation.

And yet, when presenting these exemplary figures, Paulinus includes narrative elements that undermine the reliability of witness, and thus the possibility

²⁶ *Carm.* 15.354-61 (CSEL 30, 67): *tum deinde sacram Felicis amati / inponit capiti dextram, simul omnia Christi / dona petens, uelut ille patrum uenerabilis Isac / rore poli natum et terrae benedixit opimo; / Felicem Christo sic Maximus ore paterno / ore et apostolico benedicens et locupletans, / inmarcescibilis redimiuit honore coronae / perpetuis que opibus, quas et modo cernimus, auxit.*

²⁷ *Carm.* 15.292-302 (CSEL 30, 64): *diuinitus ergo reffectus / mente pia oblato laetatur munere Felix / demessumque manu morientis ad ora racemum / admouet, et quoniam strictis iam dentibus ille / et sentire negat dulces et sumere uictus, / exprimit umentes acinos succumque liquentem / instillat, digito diducens arida labra, / donec et adspirante deo conatibus aegris / et luctante manu rigidos paulisper hiatus / laxauit tenuem que aditum dedit oris aperti, / quo rorem exiguum resoluta infunderet uua.*

²⁸ *Carm.* 15.303-6 (CSEL 30, 64-5): *hinc animae sensus, calor ossibus atque oculis lux / uitaeque tota redit, quaeque haeserat obsita siccis...* Note the elisions in back-to-back lines.

²⁹ This same tactic of tempo and pacing is visible on a larger scale in the story of Theridius (*Carm.* 23), in which Paulinus sets the stage for Theridius’ gruesome injury and then pauses to offer a disquisition on the properties of oil and water before, ten lines later, returning to the climax of the story. As in a horror film where the audience knows what will happen but not when, listeners to *Carm.* 23 would have to suffer through their suspense. And both scenarios are in line with Paulinus’ attempts at insidiously inculcating virtue in others: he explains that the walls of the basilica at Nola are covered with paintings on sacred themes so as to beguile the feast day crowd away from food and drink, so that ‘integrity, having been introduced through pious examples, insinuates itself in the one reading sacred histories of chaste deeds’ (*Carm.* 27.589-91 [CSEL 30, 288]: *sanctasque legenti / historias castorum operum subrepiit honestas / exemplis inducta piis*). This occurs in part because between reading the captions and contemplating the images (*spec-tacula*), little time is left for feasting. The visuals arrest and act on the viewer, providing an opening and an opportunity for cultivating saintliness, whether or not the viewer is aware of his own improvement.

of imitation. Felix, for example, eludes capture by playing along when God makes him unrecognizable to his pursuers. The soldiers who have come to arrest him are thwarted:

Look! and they are here, seeking him with swords drawn / When suddenly either the hearts of these enemies or the face of [Felix] / is altered; raving, they did not recognize the known one / and they interrogated Felix. Felix, when discerned, is even then not / discerned; he is that man and not that man; although near, he is far. / The same one became unknown and known to his fellow citizens: / He was himself to the believing ones, with faith discerning his face; / To enemies, he was someone else. He himself perceived the plan of the protector / Christ, and, laughing, responded to the questioners: / I do not know the Felix you are looking for.³⁰

Even before Felix is visually concealed by a diaphanous spiderweb,³¹ even before he is miraculously fed while in hiding by a divinely possessed woman who is ignorant of the good she's doing,³² we see him engaging in this identity-eliding subterfuge, where only faith can provide clarity. Recognition of the visual is a measure of faith: belief makes Felix' features visible and intelligible, and through his own strong faith he recognizes the plan of Christ in making him indistinguishable to his enemies. In a presentizing, ekphrastic style ('Look! And they are here!'), Paulinus both foregrounds visuality and problematizes it: we are presented with the paradox of an unseeable image – Felix is himself and not, he is near and far, he is known and unknown, seen and unseen.³³

We encounter the same dynamic – a paradoxical emphasis on sight and blindness, exposure and concealment, in which the visibility that enables imitation is undermined – in Paulinus' descriptions of other exemplary saints: Victricius, despite being a 'light' and a 'beacon' bringing divine illumination to the barbarian West, is unrecognizable as a 'living martyr' to Paulinus because, borne down by sin and the cares of the world, he 'did not know to see' it,³⁴ and Theridius,

³⁰ *Carm.* 16.62-72 (CSEL 30, 70): *ecce et eum strictis quaerentes ensibus adsunt, / cum subito aut illis corda hostibus aut huic ora / uertuntur; notum non agnouere furentes / Felicemque rogant. Felix ubi cernitur, et non / cernitur; ipse nec ipse uir est; cum sit prope, longe est. / ignotus notusque suis fit ciuibus idem, / discernente fide uultum credentibus ipse, / hostibus alter erat. pensensit et ipse fauentis / consilium Christi ridensque rogantibus infit: / nescio Felicem quem quaeritis.*

³¹ *Carm.* 16.95-119.

³² *Carm.* 16.161-91.

³³ Of course, even this is a Christ-parallel, as it mirrors the hiddenness of Christ on the road to Emmaus in *Luke* 24:13-35. It is, additionally, a very good example of the 'ambiguous corporeality' and 'visceral seeing' cultivated by late ancient hagiography more broadly (see again P.C. Miller, *Corporeal Imagination* [2009], 102-15).

³⁴ *Ep.* 18.9 (CSEL 29, 136): *sed lugeo neglegentiam infelicitatis meae, quod occasionem tanti boni ignarus amiserim et contenebrantibus me illo tempore non solum peccatis, quibus etiam nunc premor, sed et curis huius saeculi, quibus nunc propitio deo liber sum, sacerdotem te tantum, quod in medio erat, uiderim et, quod inerat insignius, martyrem uiuum uidere nescierim.* *Ep.* 18.4 is an extended metaphor of Victricius as *lux*, the results of whose beaconry appear in 18.5, as Rouen becomes Jerusalem. We see the importance of visuality once more in 18.7, when Paulinus

the hapless monk whose eye injury and miraculous rescue form the heart of *Carmen* 23, is endangered because he cannot see what Paulinus' listeners can, a spiked lamp dangling low in the hallway, and he is saved from harm by a transformation into Felix himself that cannot be visualized for the audience: Theridius prays to Felix, reminds the saint of how well he has copied him and how long he has been devoted to him, asserts that no one but Felix can extricate the hook from his eye, and then proceeds to remove it himself.³⁵

As a final example, let's return to Maximus. His very visibility to us arises from his attempt to hide, to be invisible to all but God. This is what occasions his martyrdom, this is what prompts Felix' own escape from prison and his vaunted rescue mission. And his martyrdom is brimming with unseeable suffering: mental anguish and internal ailments.³⁶ The only reason we are able to see any of it is because, first, God rejects Maximus' bid for secrecy, and, second, because Paulinus describes it for us as he claims God himself saw it.

And this is where we begin to reconcile Paulinus' ethic of imitation with his ambivalence about witness. First, as we see with Maximus, in Paulinus' view God is the ultimate arbiter of what a Christian's imitation will look like. And second, what it ends up looking like does not really matter: it is, instead, a Christian's willingness and intent that matters. This is how Felix can be a 'martyr without blood':³⁷

For he died a confessor, having escaped punishments unwillingly,
with God accepting the faithful mind in place of blood.

He, who is the examiner of the silent heart, holds those prepared to suffer
on par with those who have, considering that internal things have proven [him].
Martyrdom without slaughter is pleasing, if, ready for suffering,
both mind and faith burn for God. The will for suffering
suffices, and giving testimony of devotion is the height of service.³⁸

describes Victricius' martyrdom: his witness was based on a very public example, as Victricius interrupted a military parade to proclaim himself a Christian.

³⁵ Theridius begs Felix to come to his aid and save his eye, because he does not dare make the attempt himself by his own hand for fear of losing his sight (*Carm.* 23.214-29). After reflecting on his own sin, Theridius enumerates what he has done to overcome that sin and make himself worthy of Felix' intercession, pointing to his imitation of Felix' example in leaving his family and scorning his patrimony (*Carm.* 23.241-47). With one last prayer for Felix' intervention, Theridius concludes his speech and promptly removes the spike from his own eye (*Carm.* 23.255-64). This anticlimactic resolution is only anticlimactic if we miss how Theridius, in removing the spike from his eye as (he says) only Felix could do, is aligning himself with and identifying himself as Felix.

³⁶ *Carm.* 15.198-213.

³⁷ *Carm.* 14.1-4 (CSEL 30, 45-6): *Venit festa dies caelo, celeberrima terris, / natalem Felicis agens, qua corpore terris / occidit, et Christo superis est natus in astris, / caelestem nactus sine sanguine martyr honorem.*

³⁸ *Carm.* 14.5-12 (CSEL 30, 46): *Nam confessor obit poenas non sponte lucratus, / acceptante Deo fidam pro sanguine mentem; / qui cordis taciti scrutator, ferre paratos / aequiparat passis, sat habens interna probasse, / martyrium sine caede placet, si prompta ferendi / mensque fidesque Deo caleant, passura voluntas / sufficit, et summa est meriti, testatio voti.*

God sees Felix' 'silent heart' and deems him worthy not only of the crown, but of continued life on this earth. Intent and willingness are what really matter to God, according to Paulinus – it is, after all Nicetas' interior similarity to Felix that allows him to 'act the part'.³⁹ This 'will for suffering' allows the saints to tap into the one source of saintliness, Christ, and to manifest sanctity in the ways that *tempora* and *mores* demand:

... There is not one task for the holy
 prophets and martyrs, since their times were different,
 and their exploits, differing in causes, did not share signs.
 The heavenly ones stand apart through the gifts of God,
 equals in merit. If Felix did not bear or endure all the same things
 as Daniel and did not have that very pit
 nor did the terrible lions encircle [him],
 neither did Daniel suffer the same dreadful things for the name of the lord –
 floggings, chains, fears, and the night of a black prison –
 which Felix bore.⁴⁰

Paulinus later reiterates this point using the example of Peter and Moses, 'distinct in deed but yoked in honor':

Peter did not intrude upon the sea with a rod, but neither did Moses
 Advance upon the liquid of the sea surface; nonetheless one honor
 Shines on both, since there was one author for both.⁴¹

God requires different manifestations of holiness at different times and in different situations, so the best that any Christian can do, Paulinus indicates, is to aspire to whatever form of sanctity God allows and calls you to. This is not to say that specific examples are not edifying, quite the contrary, only that those *imitanda* must not be taken as literal scripts for achieving saintliness.

Paulinus refuses to offer any easily imitable or even unproblematically visible examples of saints to imitate because he is attempting to thwart any impulse his audience might have to imitate the saints in a simplistic or superficial way. And yet he wants them to aspire to holiness in whatever manifestation God demands. By presenting the productive paradox of invisible visibility and offering himself as the mediating voice to solve that riddle with his privileged access to the mind of God, Paulinus instills both hope and uncertainty in his audiences,

³⁹ See note 3 above.

⁴⁰ *Carm.* 26.290-9 (CSEL 30, 256-7): ... *non una prophetis / martyribusque sacris opera, ut diuersa fuerunt / tempora, nec coeunt signis distantia causis / gesta; dei per dona sibi caelestia distant / aequales meritis. si non eadem omnia Felix / quae Daniel gessit uel pertulit et lacus istum / non habuit nec terribiles cinxere leones: / nec Daniel eadem pro nomine passus / erili est, / uerbera uincla metus et noctem carceris atri, / quae Felix horrenda tulit.*

⁴¹ *Carm.* 26.370, 374-6 (CSEL 30, 259-60): *cernite distinctos actu sed honore iugatos ... non Petrus inrupit uirga mare, sed neque Moyses / aequoris incessit liquido; tamen unus utrique / fulget honos, unus quoniam fuit auctor utrique...*

as well as a sense of Paulinus' own trustworthiness as a navigator of sanctity. Thus, this is not only a philosophical, theological, ideological point, for Paulinus, but also evidence of his pastoral concern: he wants to inspire his audiences to seek sanctity themselves through imitation, and to give them the tools to do so; since he does not want them to seek only outward similarity with the saints, the tools he offers contain the safety mechanism of uncertainty. And to ensure that this uncertainty does not overwhelm the aspiring imitator, Paulinus offers himself and the church (both the institution and the image-laden basilica he's just built at Nola) as guides.

Salvation behind the Web (Paul. Nol., *Carm.* XVI 93-148): Connections and Echoes of a Fairy-tale Theme in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages between West and East

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ABSTRACT

The episode of the miraculous concealment of St. Felix from his persecutors, as narrated by Paulinus of Nola in *carm.* XVI 93-148, presents perhaps the oldest testimony of a delicate and charming legend, destined to spread throughout the Mediterranean in the Middle Ages: a pious hero who is saved by a small spider, a humble but wise instrument of divine Providence. My short communication, based on the comparison of Jewish and Arab sources, intends to draw some lines for further research, highlighting how this legend has been from time to time re-contextualized historically and geographically, so as to be connected to protagonists of the three great monotheistic religions (*i.e.* David, Jesus, Muhammad). The hope is to spur wider investigations and insights not only in the field of Patristics, but also in the study of Jewish and Islamic culture.

In poem XVI, which is the *pars altera* of the diptych dedicated by Paulinus of Nola¹ to the narration of the *Vita Felicis Confessoris*, it is told how the saint miraculously escaped from the hands of his persecutors. A *miraculum* to which Paulinus devotes quite a lot of space (verses 93-148; 56 of the 299 verses in the whole poem: almost a fifth of the total!) is that of the spider who weaves

¹ For Paulinus of Nola's human and literary figure, see the even now excellent essay by Pierre Fabre, *Saint Paulin de Nole et l'amitié chrétienne* (Paris, 1949); for his life, see particularly 7-51. Among the most recent ones, are excellent Dennis Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems*, *The Transformation of the Classical Heritage* 27 (Berkeley, 1999) and Catherine Conybeare, *Paulinus Noster: Self and Symbols in the Letters of Paulinus of Nola*, *Oxford Early Christian Studies* (Oxford, 2000). See finally my own introduction in *Carme 15, (Natalicium IV) di Paolino di Nola*, *Introduzione, Traduzione e Commento a cura di Lorenzo Sciajno*, *Studi sulla Tardoantichità I* (Pisa and Rome, 2008), especially 9-30. In particular on the *carm.* XVI, see Willy Evenepoel, 'The *Vita Felicis* of Paulinus Nolanus and the Beginnings of Latin Hagiography', in Anton A. Bastiaensen (ed.), *Fructus Centesimus. Mélanges offerts à G.J.M. Bartelink à l'occasion de son 65^e anniversaire*, *Instrumenta Patristica* 19 (Steenbrugge, 1989), 167-76; *id.*, 'The *Vita Felicis* of Paulinus Nolanus', in M. Van Uytfanghe and R. Demeulenaere (eds), *Aeuum inter utrumque – Mélanges offerts à Gabriel Sanders, professeur émérite à l'Université de Gand*, *Instrumenta Patristica* 23 (Steenbrugge, 1991), 143-52; Gennaro Luongo, *Lo specchio dell'agiografo. S. Felice nei carmi XV e XVI di Paolino da Nola*, *Parua Hagiographica* 3 (Napoli, 1992).

his web on the hole through which Felix has just passed, because he had gone into hiding in a crumbling building. When the persecutors arrive, as they see the spider-web, they believe that the place has been uninhabited for a long time and go away humiliated. This provides an opportunity for Paulinus to make a rhetoric *amplificatio* about a famous New Testament subject (see *1Cor.* 1:27), *i.e.* the fact that divine wisdom makes the weak triumph over the strong; mighty fortifications have been razed, while a slender spider thread restrains the swords of the executioners; Paulinus gives the Biblical negative *exempla* of Goliath (*1Sam.* 17:49-51), of Pharaoh who was Moses' enemy (*Ex.* 14:1-15:21), of Jericho (*Ios.* 6:1-27); Paulinus then concludes the section of the spider's *miraculum* with a couplet that serves as $\gamma\nu\acute{\omega}\mu\eta$ and has a Christological and parenthetical content: if Christ is with us, even a spider's web is a wall; but if Christ is far away, even a wall becomes a web.²

This undoubtedly sensitive and poetic legend appears here probably for the first time in a literary work; however, its history and its spread, *mutatis mutandis*, are much wider and are in my opinion of great interest for the history of religions and for comparative literature.

In his scholarly encyclopedia *Hierozoicon*, the learned Samuel Bochart³ already in 1663 had observed that the same *miraculum* was found in the Aramaic paraphrase (*Targum*) of *Psalms*, related to King David:

But the Aramaic translator went above and beyond with the additions, he who thus paraphrases these words of David:

אצלי קדם אלהא עילאה ותקיפא דומין (די זמין) עכוביתא למגמר (די גמר) בפום
אספלידא עיולא אמטולתי

[*ešlī qdam elaha 'illay u-taqqipa di-zmin 'akh(w)bītha di-gmar b-pum esplida 'ezla metṭulthī*]. 'I will openly pray to God, the exalted and strong one, who sent the spider to make his web for me on the opening of the cave'.

It seems that the opportunity to create this legend has been twofold. First we read that David wrote this *Psalms* when he escaped from Saul hiding in a cave (*1Sam.* 24:4). Second, Christians were telling a similar story which had happened to the priest Felix of Nola. He in fact, sought by a tyrant to be tortured, hid while fleeing in the narrow partition of two walls. The access suddenly appeared laced with cobwebs, so not to lead to any suspicion of a recent flight; and so Felix was delivered from danger, as described

² *Sic ubi Christus adest nobis, et aranea muro est; / at cui Christus abest, et murus aranea fiet* in Paul. Nol., *carm.* XVI 147-8.

³ French Protestant Biblist, scholar and humanist (1599-1667), he also studied at Oxford and was for many years the pastor of a Protestant church at Caen. His work *Hierozoicon sive bipartitum opus de animalibus sacrae scripturae* (London, 1663) is a treatise of zoology about the animals in the Bible. He fell back on Arabic naturalists as al-Qazwīnī (1203-1283) and al-Damīrī (1344-1405), whose works had never appeared in Europe before. Bochart had a thorough understanding of the major Eastern languages, including Hebrew, Syriac and Arabic. Bochart's examples and quotes demanded daring challenges to his printers in London, so that they had to create typefaces to print his works.

by Paulinus, Adonis⁴ and Bede⁵ in Felix' *Vita*. And therefore the Aramaic translator claimed that the same miracle had happened to David when he was hiding in the cave.⁶

In fact the text of the *Targum of Psalms* (Ps. 57:3) is, in spite of some variations in manuscripts, essentially the one cited by Bochart. Although we cannot assert with any certainty that Paulinus' story served as a model for the *Chaldaeus interpres*, we can likely date the *Targum of Psalms* to a time which is at least contemporary to poem XVI;⁷ this would rule out most probably *a fortiori* that the Jewish source was the reference for Paulinus.

The tradition, however, appears very much alive in Jewish culture: in a famous midrash (*Alphabet of Ben Sira* 9) it is said that David could understand the purpose of everything in creation, with very few exceptions: among them, the spider. But when, fleeing from Saul, David hid in a cave, a spider saved him by weaving its web onto the opening. Saul thought that there was no one inside and walked away. Then David, realizing the event, humbly took back his former prejudice.

The *Alphabet of Ben Sira* (ספר אלפא ביתא דבן סירא, *Sefer Alfa Beta d-Ben Sira*) is a small book which contains a double list of proverbs, 22 in Aramaic and 22 in Hebrew, in alphabetical order, and also contains a commentary where fables and legends are reported, just like the one related to David.

Most Aramaic proverbs follow a tradition which is independent from the Talmudic literature and the Midrash, and could contain materials from Late Antiquity, from oral and popular traditions.

The commentary in Hebrew is much more recent, because it can be shown to tap into the Talmud and Midrashim, revising them; however, it is possible

⁴ Archbishop of Vienne († 875), author of historical and hagiographic writings, which present many markedly legendary elements and sometimes actual forgeries. His works are in PL 123.

⁵ Bede wrote a *Vita Felicis Confessoris*, which is a prose paraphrase of Paulinus' poems XV, XVI and XVIII, in PL 94, 789-98B, see Thomas W. Mackay, 'Bede's Hagiographical Method: His Knowledge and Use of Paulinus of Nola', in *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede* (London, 1976), 77-92.

⁶ 'Sed longe aliud supplevit *Chaldaeus* interpres, qui *Davidis* verba quae diximus, sic παραφράζει, אצלי קדם אלהא עלאה ותקיפא דומין (די זמין) (i.e. עכביתא למגמר (די גמר) בפורם אספלידא עזלא אמטולתי *Rogabo coram Deo excelso, et forti, qui destinavit araneam, ut perficeret propter me telam in ore speluncae*. Cujus fabulae confingendae duplex videtur fuisse occasio. Una, quod in titulo legitur *David Psalmum* istum scripsisse, cum in speluncam fugit a facie *Saulis*, *ISam. XXIV. 4*. Altera, quod *Felici Nolano* Presbytero *Christiani* tale aliquid accidisse narrabant. Is enim, cum a Tyranno ad necem quaereretur, fugiens in angusto duorum parietum intervallo se occultavit, cujus aditus cum repente araneorum telis praetextus visus esset, nemini recentis latebrae suspicionem reliquit; atque ita ereptus a periculo est. Vide *Paulinum, Adonem, & Bedam* in illius vita. Idem accidisse *Davidi* in spelunca latenti voluit *Chaldaeus* interpres', Bochart, *Hieroicoicon* (1663), II, IV, 23, 611.

⁷ The probable dating of the *Targum of Psalms* (*TgPss*) fluctuates between the fourth and the sixth century; its oldest quotes date back to the Middle Ages (XIth century): see *The Targum of Psalms. Translated, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes* by David M. Stec, The Aramaic Bible 16 (Minnesota, 2004), 1-2.

that its editor has drawn on midrashic sources now lost. Its dating is supposed to be the Xth or XIth century, while the place of composition is probably an Islamic country, on the basis of clear evidence, both in style and content.⁸

The fact that this legendary theme circulated in an Islamic context is proved by its use in Arab sources.⁹ The first author who mentions it is the great scholar and historian Ṭabarī (839-923), who, in his *History of the Prophets and Kings*¹⁰ (I 556) takes up the story about Saul and David. But two centuries later, the Persian theologian Zamakhsharī (about 1074-1144) in his *al-Kashshāf*, an extended commentary (*tafsīr*) to the Qur'an, relates (I 523) the spider's *miraculum* to an episode to which the verse 40 of *Sura* 9 alludes. This is a crucial episode in Muhammad's life. Threatened by Meccan polytheists, Muhammad runs away from home and with his faithful friend Abū Bakr leaves for Medina. Escaping the pressing investigations of their enemies, the two friends take refuge in a cave and, at that instance, the Prophet reassures his companion who has been seized by sadness, reminding him of the constant presence of God.¹¹

Concerning the same episode of the flight of Muhammad and his refuge in the cave, an even older source, namely Ibn Sa'd (784-845), reports in his *Life of Muhammad*¹² a very interesting story: when Muhammad runs away from his house, his persecutors (the Quraysh) are lying in wait at the door. Then he takes a handful of earth and throws it in their eyes, reciting two verses of the Qur'an that attest that he is the authentic Envoy and the disbelief of his opponents. A passerby saw the Quraysh stopped at the door and asked them who they were waiting for. As they answered 'Muhammad', the other said that he had just passed under their nose. And then they exclaimed astonished that they had not really seen him. Well, in poem XVI of Paulinus, just before the 'section of the spider', we find a similar situation: the persecutors find Felix but do not

⁸ Among them: the emphasis on not omitting the formula *אם גזור השם* (*im gozer hashem*, 'if God disposes'), a use that the Jews resumed by Muslims; the quotation of an Arab proverb; the reference to disputes between the Arabs and their Jewish farmers. For the *Alphabet of Ben Sira*, see the *Jewish Encyclopedia* under the term *Ben Sira*, *alphabet of*.

⁹ Detected by Oskar Dähnhardt in his *Natursagen. Eine Sammlung naturdeutender Sagen und Märchen Fabeln Legenden. Band II. Sagen zum Neuen Testament* (Leipzig und Berlin, 1909), 66. Dähnhardt's work is mentioned just dealing with Paulinus by Juan José García Cienfuegos in Paulino de Nola, *Poemas, Introducción, traducción y notas de J.J.C.G.* (Madrid, 2005), 145 note 290.

¹⁰ Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ al-rusul wa l-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1960-1969).

¹¹ 'If you do not help him, Allah already helped him the day when those who disbelieve had banished him, the second of two, when they were in the cave and he said to his friend: "Do not grieve, Allah is with us". Then Allah sent down His peace upon him, supported him with troops that you did not see, and made lowest the word of the unbelievers, while the Word of Allah is the highest. Allah is Mighty, Wise'.

¹² The biography of Muhammad by Ibn Sa'd is contained in the first two books of *Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* (*The excelling classes*), a compendium of information about 4250 of the most famous Islamic personalities, including 600 women. It is composed of eight volumes. The episode which we refer to is in I, 227-8.

recognize him, even if they fully knew him before; he then realizes God's plan and moves away from them. The persecutors, that have just let him escape under their eyes, ask about him and someone replies, amazed that they did not recognize the man close to them, to whom they had even spoken.¹³ The resemblances are obvious.

In a much later Islamic source, the Egyptian Suyūfī (1445-1505),¹⁴ we find instead that more details are quoted about the miraculous salvation of Muhammad and Abū Bakr in the cave: God orders a tree to grow to hide the mouth of the cave, a spider to weave his web and two wild pigeons to get to the entrance. Two armed persecutors arise; one of them sees the pigeons and the spider and concludes that there is no one inside. Muhammad hears his words and understands that God has been the one to protect him.

All these elements, apparently accumulated chaotically, if we compare and value them, produce some considerations and offer us more questions. If the three stories (the Christian one about Felix of Nola, the Jewish one about David and the Muslim one about Muhammad and Abū Bakr) present undoubtedly folkloric characters, easily recurring in traditions even among themselves distant in time and space, it is equally clear that at the basis of all of them there is a common theme (salvation by a spider) which in our opinion must presuppose a common origin. The *terminus ante quem* – at any rate at the time of study – must be fixed in 398 or 399 AD (when the poem XVI was written by Paulinus).¹⁵ The dating to the end of the fourth century would fit, with due caution, even to the *Targum of Psalms*, where, as we have seen, the same subject occurs, but with reference to David. And given its reproposal in Islamic sources, a Jewish origin currently seems the most likely hypothesis. Or at least, a source which is geographically and culturally identifiable in the middle-eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, and also beyond the eastern *limes*: within the Sassanid Empire (which had welcomed many Jews – just think about the ancient Babylonian community – and had begun to accommodate many Christian 'dissidents');

¹³ *Ecce et eum strictis quaerentes ensibus adsunt, / cum subito aut cum illis corda hostibus aut huic ora / uertuntur; notum non agnouere furentes / Felicemque rogant. Felix ubi cernitur, et non / cernitur; ipse nec ipse uir est; cum sit prope, longe est. / Ignotus notusque suis fit ciuibus idem / discernente fide uultum credentibus ipse, / hostibus alter erat. Persensit et ipse fauentis / consilium Christi ridensque rogantibus infit: / 'nescio Felicem quem queritis'. Ilicet illi / praetereunt ipsum; discedit at ille platea / inludente canes domino frustratus hiantes. / Nec longum emensis spatium et scitantibus omnes, / qua Felix regione foret, quidam increpat et dat / indicium, ignarus causae credensque furore / dementes, qui non uidissent comminus ipsum, / ad quem contiguus fecissent uerba loquellis* (Paul. Nol., *carm.* XVI 63-79).

¹⁴ In his *al-Khaṣā'is al-kubrā* (*The sublime qualities*, in two parts), he recounts many miracles and extraordinary events related to Muhammad or assigned to him. The *miraculum* of the spider is in I 186.

¹⁵ For the vagueness about the date of composition, see Pierre Fabre, *Essai sur la chronologie de l'œuvre de Saint Paulin de Nole* (Paris, 1948), 113-5 and Janine Desmulliez, 'Paulin de Nole. Études chronologiques (393-397)', *Recherches augustiniennes et patristiques* 20 (1985), 35-64.

and in the 'grey areas' in southern Mesopotamia, where the rule of tribal Arabic states started and where trade relations, but also cultural and religious ones, among polytheists, Christians, and Jews were daily and fertile.¹⁶

How did this interesting subject arrive to Paulinus, as an ideal starting point for a delicate and edifying story about his patron, so ideal for inclusion in his poems? At this point, even the most labile clues, unfortunately, are lacking. We can only conclude with a pure hypothesis.

We have the details concerning Paulinus' last hours of life. The priest Uranius, his faithful disciple, was next to him at the end of his life and testified his pious passing in a short writing, as requested by a Gallic nobleman, Pacatus.¹⁷ In *De obitu Sancti Paulini* many hagiographic themes are certainly present, but one in particular attracts our attention: Paulinus' departure is cause for unanimous mourning not only for Christians but also for Jews and *Gentiles*, because he had been appreciated by all of them and for all of them he had been a defender and a protector.¹⁸ Although we can detect conventional features here, it is significant that Uranius witnesses friendly relations between Paulinus and representatives of the Jewish community. Maybe it was just from conversations with one of these *Iudaei* (maybe a rabbi, about topics of biblical exegesis) that Paulinus has learned the legend about David and the spider that he later used for his poem. Then again, of course, it could be the opposite, and St. Felix' legend might well be the authentic source and the primary subject for this fairytale, destined for such ample circulation in time and space.

¹⁶ See Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity – Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge, 2007). See also Averil Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity: AD 395-700*, The Routledge History of the Ancient World, 2nd ed. (London and New York, 2012); Olivia Remie Constable, *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World. Lodging, Trade, and Travel in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2009).

¹⁷ The text of Uranius' *De obitu S. Paulini ad Pacatum* is in PL 53, 859-66. An Italian translation (with a short introduction) is in Cipriano, *Paolino di Nola, Uranio: poesia e teologia della morte*, a cura di Andrea Ruggiero (Roma, 1984), 111-27. See also Agostino Pastorino, 'Il *De obitu Sancti Paulini* di Uranio', *Augustinianum* 24 (1984), 115-41.

¹⁸ *Denique non solum Christiani, sed etiam Iudaei atque pagani, ingenti fletu, scissis etiam vestibus ad domini Paulini exsequias convenerunt: ereptum sibi patronum, defensorem, tutorem una omnes nobiscum voce planxerunt. Et vere talis erat ut omnibus amaretur: vixit enim cunctis in exemplum acquirendae salutis, et in refrigerium consolationis* (Uranii *De obitu S. Paulini*, 9 = PL 53, 863 D).

Politician, Theologian, Tutor. Luciferi Calaritanis' Use of Holy Scripture

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ABSTRACT

In one of his letters to Lucifer, the Bishop of Calaris, St. Athanasius wrote: 'It came to us namely, that your holiness resides in the nest of scorpions, however still enjoys the freedom of spirit, enabling the bringing of all erring to the light of truth; whether exhorting, whether teaching, or rebuking' (CSEL 14, 323). With these words he pointed towards a wide range of Lucifer's works. When writing his works against the Arians and Constantius the Second, Lucifer tried in fact, according to the rules of ancient rhetoric, to support all his arguments with examples drawn from the Holy Scripture. Analyzing his usage of quotations, either from the New or the Old Testament, we can categorize them (following the words of Athanasius) by three different purposes: theological political, and educational. There is no doubt that Lucifer's intentions are not all driven by identical priorities. In examining the writings of the Bishop of Calaris we should pay special attention to the goals that he intended to achieve by means of the used examples. Through the analysis of the quoted passages of Holy Scripture we can clearly identify Lucifer's beliefs about the imperial power as such, as well as how, in his opinion, the relations between State and Church should develop. Finally, what is equally important, those quotations stand proof of how the translations of Holy Scripture were formed before Jerome's translation, known as Vulgate.

I. Introduction

After the death of Constantine the Great in 337 the situation of Christians had changed significantly. This period was marked in history by the strong dispute between the followers of the Arian doctrine, who had been favored by the emperor himself, and the orthodox Christians of the council in Nicaea.¹ Lucifer of Calaris was well known as one of the emperor's most adamant opponents.

¹ For more on the policies of Constantine The Great and his son Constantius, see Timothy Barnes, *Constantine. Dynasty, Religion and Power in the later Roman Empire* (Oxford, 2014); T. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius. Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Harvard, 2001).

The subject of his writing was often a polemic against imperial policy, but his writings were not deprived of a strong didactic element. Among Lucifer's works, *De non conveniendo cum haereticis* should be mentioned first, as it was probably written shortly after the synod of Milan and stayed strongly influenced by contemporary events. It has been written between 355 and 356, as the first of his known treatises. The Bishop of Calaris addressed his letter directly against the agreement with the Aryans who were described as 'sons of darkness'. He condemned the emperor's policy set on establishing peace and the reconciliation of the various parts of the Church. Lucifer's next treaty *De regibus apostaticis* was probably written in the year 356 or 357, after the emperor Constantius II had described his own decisions as pleasing to God. This statement has outraged Lucifer and he protested against such an interpretation using the fate of different kings from the Old Testament as a parallel. He argued that although the punishment for their sinful deeds has been postponed, it did not mean that they have escaped it. In his letter to the Emperor, Lucifer presented arguments for the ruler's return to the Church and for his rejection of the Arian heresy, as means to receive the grace and forgiveness of God. The third analyzed work is *De non praecendo in Deum delinquentibus*. As in *De regibus apostaticis*, its creation was spurred by a statement of Constantius II. In fact, the emperor has directly reprimanded the bishop for his insolent behavior towards the imperial power. Lucifer retorted by reminding Constantius that it was the duty of any ruler to preach the truth to the heretics. This work is dated to the year 359. In *De sancto Athanasio*, written in 358, Lucifer referred to the events of the synod of Milan (where Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, had been condemned by the emperor). The author considered this event as overt injustice. On this he wrote two books in which he defended the cause of the bishop. Finally, this article contains a commentary on the last work of Lucifer: *Moriendum esse pro dei filio*, written in 361. It is a pseudocyprian treaty based on *De laude martyrii*. All Lucifer's works were written in folk Latin, which was in common use both in North Africa and on Sardinia.²

II. Rhetoric and its argumentation

Analyzing the works of Lucifer of Calaris, it is important to consider the basic principles of rhetoric. The Bishop from Sardinia has based his writings on the well-known early Christian education scheme, which was often used by the Church Fathers, and in turn derived directly from the principles of (broadly defined) Roman rhetoric. Early Christian didactic often contained the elements of rhetoric, because they allowed the authors to effectively reach out towards

² M. Schanz, C. Hosius, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur* (Munich, 1970), 302-3; see also R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search of Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburg, 1988), 510.

the listener, who was posed as a pupil. In the case of Lucifer of Calaris, that pupil was the emperor Constantius II himself.

The first work to name is Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. Aristotle mentioned only three points of any speech: means of producing persuasion, the style (or language) to use, and the proper arrangement of the various parts of the speech.³ He identified three types of speech: deliberative or political, legal or forensic, and epideictic or ceremonial. Political rhetoric aimed at establishing the expediency or harmfulness of a proposed course of action. Forensic speech aimed at establishing the justice or injustice of an action that has taken place.⁴

We can assume that deliberative oratory was linked to politics. Twentieth century scholars focused on politics in judicial oratory and downplayed the political import of deliberative speeches. However, recent historians started to stress the political importance of deliberative oratory.⁵

In Lucifer's writings we can also distinguish a historical narrative, because of the frequent argumentation drawn from the Bible. This type of narrative very often used a method consistent with the rhetorical *genus deliberativum*, and also set to achieve similar goals. The historical narrative, in a similar way as the historical exempla, 'explained' principles, or 'laws', of combination and coherence which existed in the world. It also 'explained' the ideology of relevant behavior in that world. Historical narratives were representational depictions of the world composed for the purpose of conveying 'meaning' to one's audience. The historians wished to persuade the audience to accept their story as the truth – in other words to accept it with its inherent presuppositions, world-view and ideology.⁶ The easiest way to accomplish this is to give or cite commonly known examples and stories.

In both cases it has been assumed that the audience needed first to judge a past act (to assess praise or blame, to accept certain laws of coherence among events) to believe in a certain course of history, as written. To achieve this, every writer had to find a strategy of communication. Involved in this strategy were the decisions about the types of arguments, models of persuasion, kinds of material, arrangement of material and choice of words.⁷

Persuasion can be achieved through πίστεις. They are variously rendered as 'proofs', 'appeals' and 'models of persuasion'.⁸ On the other hand, Aristotle mentioned the so-called common areas, called τοπικά. They were derived directly

³ Rodney K. Duke, *The Persuasive Appeal of the Chronicler. A Rhetorical Analysis*, Bible and Literature Series 25 (Worcester, 1990), 40-1.

⁴ *Ibid.* 45-6.

⁵ Michael C. Alexander, 'Oratory, Rhetoric, and Politics in the Republic', in William Dominic and John Hall (eds), *A Companion to Roman Rhetoric* (Malden and Oxford, 2007), 98-108, 99.

⁶ R.K. Duke, *The Persuasive Appeal of the Chronicler* (1990), 31-3.

⁷ *Ibid.* 33-4.

⁸ *Ibid.* 43-4.

from the principles of persuasion.⁹ *Exemplum*, about which Aristotle wrote, played particular roles in rhetoric, because it replaced the abstract. It could refer to different, concrete areas. The first was the *fabula*, which is characteristic of poetry. The second area was *historia*, that was the far more popular exemplum, due to its credibility.¹⁰

In early Christian writings quotations of the Old Testament were very commonly used as external proofs. Thanks to quoting, the authors had the possibility to add to their words more credibility. In quotations or historical exempla we can see basic rhetorical devices. Through the quoted words or historical example the author can use not only the allusion for making the reference to an event or person. He can show certain regularities ruling the world and a kind of repetitive nature of certain schemes, so that the listener knows which of them he should follow or avoid. Like other orators or writers, Lucifer had also known those basic rules of rhetoric. He knew exactly how to use the examples within his own argumentation, however he used them not only for political, but also for theological purposes. After all, the most significant use of examples can be ascribed to the didactic purpose.

III. Lucifer's style and rhetoric

Lucifer's writings are characterized by extensive invective. He presented one of the most vehement styles of writing of the 4th century. All letters have been written in folk Latin, which was known in North Africa and Sardinia. An indicator of this is the frequent use of periphrastic structure, expressed in the *participium praesentis activi*, and the use of the verb *esse*.¹¹ These works are characterized by many mistakes in declination and conjugation, disorderly construction of sentences and by the number of common expressions. To express his indignation towards the emperor, the bishop of Calaris used numerous insults and name-calling taken from oral and colloquial invective.¹² Lucifer's way of conducting discourse made his writings highly original and interesting compared to his contemporaries.

The works of Lucifer have a strong didactic character achieved by the use of appropriate rhetorical style. These works were kept in a *genus deliberativum*, which is an advisory style. It is characterized by the fact that the speaker

⁹ Aristotle, *Rhetorica* II 20, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Complete Works of Aristotle. The revised Oxford Translation 2 (Princeton 1984).

¹⁰ Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric: A Foundation for Literary Study* (Leiden, Boston and Köln, 1998), 196-7.

¹¹ Jakielaszek Jarosław, 'Peryfrazja progresywna i strategie tekstowe na podstawie 'Moriundum esse pro Dei Filio' Lucyferiusza z Calaris', *Vox Patrum* 46-7 (2004), 461-8, 462.

¹² Stanisław Longosz, 'Inwektywa Lucyferiusza z Calaris', *Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne* 19 (1972), 181-94, 183-4.

recommends or discourages an action relating to the future. Structure of this kind was targeted to a particular person, other than the speaker himself. The model of speech concerned a specific issue. In its course, the speaker raised the question of determining the action that has taken place. In the *genus deliberativum* there is no person to negotiate with the opponent, the author as the discouraging side assumes the role of the prosecutor, while assuming the convincing side – the role of the defender. In terms of the complexity of the case at hand, we can determine the *quaestio simplex*, that is the simple question, and the *quaestio comparativa*, that is a comparison. The issue always relate to the past, because it was believed that to acquire knowledge about matters of the future, one must first understand the past and present issues.¹³ To achieve these goals, Lucifer used primarily biblical didactics, which is another important issue in the study of the activities of the Bishop from Sardinia.

It is reflected in the numerous appeals and petitions addressed to the Emperor and his followers. The bishop of Calaris earnestly asked and begged for the Emperor's conversion. A rich biblical tone is characteristic for his work, as well as the inclusion of verbal attacks. In fact, Lucifer Calaris quoted the Holy Scripture with high frequency. Furthermore, the passages he cited came from a translation made before Jerome's version that we use today. It seems that is the passages were based on the Septuagint, or, going after Gustav Krüger, it can also be stated that in his work, Lucifer used a version called Itala.¹⁴ In the works of Lucifer of Calais the use of examples and arguments for pedagogical purposes deserves special attention. According to its creators, rhetoric had a clear pedagogical aim. Its task was to benefit the reader/listener, help him realize his needs and responsibilities, and what is most important: to instill in him the love of goodness and justice, to teach and to moralize. These goals stemmed in fact from the Greek idea of education, which were defined by the term *παιδεία*.

IV. Examples

Lucifer's work had primarily a didactic purpose. For the arguments and attacks presented in his writings he typically adopted a rich biblical tone. The main theme introduced by Lucifer in his works, was the policy of the Emperor Constantius II.

¹³ H. Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric* (1998), 97-112.

¹⁴ Gustav Krüger, *Lucifer, Bischof von Calaris, und das Schisma der Luciferianer* (Leipzig, 1886), 28. To see more about the version of Scripture, which was used by Lucifer, see Anna Theresa Cibis, *Lucifer von Calaris. Studien zur Rezeption und Tradierung der Heiligen Schrift im 4. Jahrhundert*, Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums 28 (Paderborn, 2014).

Lucifer in his works quoted with a surprisingly high frequency. For each of these writings, the ratio of volume of citations, relative to the entire text, is around 40%.

In *De non conveniendo cum haereticis*, which is composed of 15 chapters, he quoted 75 times, which is approximately 43% of the entire text. In *De regibus apostaticis*, which is composed of 12 chapters, he quoted 42 times, which is approx. 39% of the entire text. In *De non praecendo in deum delinquentibus*, which is composed of 35 chapters, he quoted 103 times, approx. 44% of the whole text. In *De sancto Athanasio*, which consists of two books with respectively 43 and 34 chapters, he quoted 192 times in book one (40% of the text), and 128 times in book two (37% of the text). It is important to point out that throughout all his works, Lucifer never cited the same passage twice.

Lucifer used the citations for three different purposes: theological, didactic and political. When we analyze passages we can observe each of these purposes, although, Lucifer often cites one passage to achieve two or even three goals.

Lucifer, when citing passage from *1Kings (1Samuel) [24:2-16]* in *De sancto Athanasio*, indicated that Constantius II, in his decisions, constitutes a complete analogy to Saul. Additionally, Lucifer did not force his listener into a deep analysis of the motives that guided him in the selection of text. The truth, which is authenticated by the quoted story, is presented directly:

So we can't be surprised, even if You persecutes us. When we see Saul. Why they didn't send away into his hands the Servant of God David, because he had destroyed not only 305 priests, but also the entire town. Saul has persecuting David, while he was in his grace and as so often happens David forgave him [...] followers of God have such a habit that they devote all to God, knowing that everything what is great is derived from Him.¹⁵

Lucifer quoted the part of the story in which Saul met David in the cave. On the one hand, we have the words of one of David's companions: 'Behold, the day that the Lord said to you, "Behold, I am giving your enemy into your hand, and you can do to him whatever is good in your eyes!"' (*1Sam. 24:5*). Saul's unexpected appearance is deemed to be God's plan. It is also claimed that the God's previous words are a justification of regicide. On the other hand, David had never named Saul his enemy, and God is recorded as having said no such thing.¹⁶ This part is very important for understanding Lucifer's purpose of using this particular episode. The reason why Constantius II had persecuted Athanasius and other Nicene bishops was mostly politics, which had its roots

¹⁵ *Non itaque mirari poterimus, si tu nos persequaris. quando uideamus Saul. Cur non seruum domini Daud in manus tradiderint eius, non solum trecentos quinque sacerdotes, sed et totam perdidisse ciuitatem. Persequabatur Saul Daud eum. in cuius ditione cum fuerit, saepe tamen ei ignouerit. [...] talis mos est dei cultoribiis totum reseruare deo, scientes esse magnum uindicari ab eo.* Lucifer of Calaris, *De sancto Athanasio liber I*, XIV 14-24, CSEL 14, 90-1.

¹⁶ Keith Bodner, *1 Samuel. A Narrative Commentary* (Sheffield, 2009), 215.

in the importance of Alexandria at the time. In this story we can see the striking differences between David and Saul. The first one is the person who has been chosen by God to be a king, the second one was chosen by the people. However, the point is that after all David accepted Saul as his king and chosen one, even if Saul actually was unpleasant to God. It is also important to show, that David's succession came as a result of Saul's disobedience. That was the main reason for replacing him.¹⁷ These specific factors contributed to the story being used so often in Lucifer's writings. Further, when Saul and David met in the cave, David begun with these words: 'Why do you listen to the words of man, saying, "Behold, David is seeking your evil?"' (1*Sam.* 24:10). Using this quotation, Lucifer displayed to the emperor a clear analogy. David asked Saul, why is he listening to those urging him to persecute David, since he himself has not listened to people touting him for homicidal acts.¹⁸ Lucifer referred this to the conflict between Constantius II and Athanasius. The next quote is David's words: 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for the Lord's anointed is he' (1*Sam.* 24:11), which is an obvious emphasis that there is no 'evil or rebellion' in David's hand.¹⁹ Neither has Athanasius ever spoken against emperor Constantius.

When Lucifer quoted *1Kings* (1*Samuel*), he used the story of David and Saul to emphasize three different aspects: 1. Theological: the king is the anointed of God, and therefore nobody has the right to harm him; 2. Political: revealing the story from the Old Testament, Lucifer has the ability to indicate that none of the bishops loyal to Nicea, especially Athanasius, desired to act to the detriment of the emperor; 3. Didactic: according to the rules of rhetoric, the author tries to include in his letter a widely known example to lend credibility to his position on the matter. In addition, letters of Lucifer, even *De sancto Athanasio*, from which is the passage in question derives, are clearly advisory.

In a very similar way the case is presented when Lucifer quoted *3Kings* (*1Kings*) (13:10-28) in *De non conveniendo cum haereticis*. Perhaps his contemporaries made the connections with the two prophets and the conflict between North and South, Judea and Israel. However, Lucifer's point in this instance was quite different. He joins 'the man of God' with the bishops who were misled, and 'the old prophet' with the Arians. The man of God has been unable to continue his mission because of false prophecy from the 'old prophet'. This is emphasized by the clear indications that the 'old prophet' was not 'authorized by Yahweh', even if he invoked divine authority.²⁰ That leads us

¹⁷ Joseph Lozovyy, *Saul, Doeg, Nabal, and the 'Son of Jesse'.* *Readings in Samuel 16-25* (New York and London, 2009), 126-8.

¹⁸ K. Bodner, *1 Samuel* (2009), 253-4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 255.

²⁰ Walter Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings. A Commentary*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary 8 (Georgia, 2000), 169.

to the final conclusion that the old prophet was presented as a dishonorable man, which in Lucifer's writings is a common accusation against Arian. In this first example we may divide those purposes in this way: The theological aspect is joined with the didactic one – disobedience to God always results in disaster. This in turn leads to the political aspect. As presented by Lucifer in this example, the prophet was killed, because he allowed himself to be fooled by a swindler, who also claimed to be a prophet of the Lord.

The most interesting parts seem to be those passages in which the quote was used expressly for political purposes. As such, we can mention the use of *Deut.* 19:11-3 and 15-20 in *De sancto Athanasio*. These two passages describe the course of the trial and Lucifer used them to directly refer to the trials of the bishop of Alexandria. The author of this apology therefore marked his stance on the course of these processes and gave a clear guidance, taken directly from Scripture, how they should have taken place. He used *Deuteronomy's* vision of the Judaeian policy regulating matters of every single part of human life – not only theology, but also problems such as political, social or economic administration and judiciary issues.²¹ We must however notice that in ancient Israel the kings never authored laws as such. In their understanding, law had a divine origin. The monarch only represented the supreme legal authority.²²

The first passage of used in *De sancto Athanasio* (*Deut.* 19:11-3) is concerned with the trial of a murderer. The second one, deals with the question of the trial and testimony. Lucifer wanted to remind the emperor of this writings, beginning with:

What do you have in this type if not only contradiction, if not all that opposes to the house of God? First of all, you are a heretic, then you are persecutor of God's people. You tried and you are trying to lose Athanasius, just like this man, whom you did not noticed in the Scripture.²³

In order to get a better understanding of Lucifer's goals, we need to look into the events connected with the trial of Athanasius. We have a few testimonies about them, given by Sozomen and Theodoret. We can highlight a few minor calumnies like a complaint in writing that Athanasius imposed on the people of Egypt a tax on linen chitons or that he was plotting against the king, and sent a casket full of gold to someone named Filumenos. In the first case Athanasius had two witnesses to his own advantage, the Alexandrian presbyters

²¹ Bernard M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (New York and Oxford, 1997), 20.

²² *Ibid.* 138.

²³ *Quid tu huiusmodi habes nisi omnia contraria, nisi cuncta quae dei impugnent domum? primo es haereticus, deinde persecutor dei domesticorum; conatus es ac conaris ad Athanasium iugulandum, tamquam is homo, qui non memineras scriptum.* Lucifer of Calaris, *De sancto Athanasio Liber I*, VII 8-12, CSEL 14, 77.

Apis and Macarius. In the second case, the emperor Constantine had guessed that the accusations were false and he punished the slanderers.

From all of the accusations, three were the most serious. The first was the prosecution of the murder of Arsenius. The gravity of the accusations was increased by the allegations that Athanasius had cut Arsenius' hand off and was using it for practicing witchcraft. During the investigation, it turned out that Arsenius was still alive, so the emperor threatened accusers of serious criminal penalties, none of which, however, are explained.²⁴

Two next indictments were raised during the synod in Tyre in 335. According to the Sozomen and Theodoret, Athanasius was accused of a number of serious acts. First, of breaking a chalice and then overthrowing the bishop's throne, second, depriving Callinicus of priestly functions and third, the unjust accusation that Ischyrius has been throwing stones at the imperial portraits. The case of alleged murder of Arsenius was also examined again. In the meantime some woman emerged claiming that Athanasius had raped her. Athanasius was able to disprove only some of those accusations, because of the judges' disapproval. The trial was the reason that he left Tyre.²⁵

Lucifer mentions those trials not without a reason. Even though all of these have taken place during the reign of Constantine the Great, and they were conducted according to some rules, Constantius was reminded of them and their relevance to his actions.

There is also another purpose in showing this particular part of *Deuteronomy*. According to Steven Kaufman, chapters 12 to 26 of *Deuteronomy* can be connected with the Ten Commandments. *Deut.* 19:1 to 22:8, a part of Deuteronomy on the respect for human life corresponds with the sixth commandment: 'thou shalt not kill'. The application for the Ten Commandments by John Walton is quite similar and refers these particular chapters to the one of the general topical issue: dignity.²⁶ We can see it in detail in *De sancto Athanasio*, where the quotation is preceded by Lucifer's words: 'You have made efforts and you are still trying to kill Athanasius, like a man who does not remember the Scripture'.²⁷ This quoted part of *Deuteronomy* about the respect for life (*Deut.* 19:1-22:8) is the longest one and takes seventy-two verses. The nineteenth chapter falls into three parts: a law on cities of refuge (*Deut.* 19:1-13), the law of the landmark (19:14) and the law concerning witnesses (19:15-21).²⁸

²⁴ Sozomen, *Hist. eccl.* II 23, SC 418; T. Barnes, *Constantine* (2014), 164; T. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantinus* (2001), 22.

²⁵ Sozomen, *Hist. eccl.* II 25; Theodoretus, *Hist. eccl.* I 28, SC 501; T. Barnes, *Constantine* (2014), 164; T. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantinus* (2001), 22.

²⁶ Edward J. Woods, *Deuteronomy*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 5 (Nottingham and Illinois, 2011), 50-1.

²⁷ Lucifer of Calaris, *De sancto Athanasio Liber I*, VII 8-12, CSEL 14, 77.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 226.

That part, which has been chosen by Lucifer, focuses not only on witnesses, but also on the judicial process and its regulations. First, *Deut.* 19:11-3 is a clear warning that there was no abuse of right of asylum. In case of homicide, the elders always have had the right for extradition. Second, *Deut.* 19:15-20 focuses on the issue of the numbers of witnesses. Two or three testimonies were needed to convict a man. This is followed by the 'malicious witness' example. In case of only one witness, it can be assumed that he is a liar, and that kind of testimony law was recognized as having been abused. The issue of the false testimony has also been discussed. If evidence for false testimony was found, the witness received the same punishment as the one previously intended for the accused.²⁹

For the same political purpose, in both books *De sancto Athanasio* Lucifer quotes *2Chronicles* 19:4-11 and *Daniel* 13:28-41 and then 13:51-62. Especially deserving of attention is also one of the passages quoted in the *De non praecendo in deum delinquentibus*. Lucifer uses the *4Kings* (*2Kings*) 22:11-23:16. In this passage we are told about the reign of Josiah and his religious reforms. We can focus here on two basic questions.

The first one is the finding of the Book containing the law. Josiah is frequently compared to David. Moreover, with his acts, he fulfills the words of the prophet, the 'man of God' (*1Kings* 13:2).³⁰ According to this Book, Josiah speaks about the past: 'our ancestors have not obeyed the words of this book' (22:13). This judgment resembles a prophecy about Judah, however here the king is not, despite the appearances, a prophet, but (on the contrary) the figure of history and someone who seeks a consultation.³¹ What is interesting, when Josiah (the good king) hears the reading of the scroll, he tears his garment in a dramatic act of repentance. In *Jer.* 36:23, Josiah's son Jehoiakim, in quite similar circumstances 'cuts' the scroll instead of his own garments, by this action seeking to dispose of the inconvenient scroll.³² Those characters of the two of the Kings we can refer consecutively to Constantine the Great (the good king) and Constantius II, who acts in matters of faith unlike his father.

Second are the reforms mentioned above. In chapter 23 Josiah is portrayed as a militant reformist, in contrast to the members of the royal line who have financed and sponsored foreign cults.³³ Thanks to those actions and because of the return to the nation's roots, Josiah receives a promise from God, that Judah will not be destroyed until after the king's death.³⁴

²⁹ *Ibid.* 229.

³⁰ Alice L. Laffey, *First Kings, Second Kings* (Collegeville, 1985), 101-3.

³¹ Françoise Smyth, 'When Josiah has done his work or the king is properly buried: A synchronic reading of Kings 22.1-23.28', in Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer and Jean-Daniel Macchi (eds), *Israel Constructs its History. Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*, Journal for Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series 306 (Sheffield, 2000), 343-59, 345.

³² W. Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings. A Commentary* (2000), 545.

³³ *Ibid.* 555.

³⁴ A.L. Laffey, *First Kings, Second Kings* (1985), 102.

There is a possibility that this purgation is only rhetoric, not an actual political program. However in this case the text highlights the true characterization of Yahweh's community, and Lucifer probably chose this passage for the same reason.³⁵ By means of religious reforms of Josiah, he did not only teach Constantius that by favoring the Arians, the emperor made the wrong choice. Lucifer gave direct advice and guidance, which the emperor should take to make his actions right.

V. Conclusion

In the writings of Lucifer of Calaris, the level of citations is far beyond the norm typical for ancient writings. Lucifer cited not only extensive passages, but in some cases the entire books. We can also conclude that the way in which Lucifer used the Scripture is an interesting procedure, deviating somewhat from the rules of rhetoric. In general, the usage of examples to reinforce an argument is a well-known assumption, named among the basic principles of rhetoric. However, the specificities of such procedures make Lucifer's writings interesting. He can be classified as one of the early Christian writers most frequently quoting Holy Scripture. Because of the high number of citations in Lucifer writings, it is impossible to consider them all in a short article. An additional difficulty is the complexity of the matter: the use of one fragment from the Scripture to achieve two or even three goals. However, it can be summarized that Lucifer's intentions were mostly didactic and very often connected to contemporary political issues.

³⁵ W. Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings. A Commentary* (2000), 556.

Massimino ariano e la Sicilia: il dibattito storiografico negli ultimi decenni su una *vexata quaestio*

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ABSTRACT

Key points of the article: 1. the complex historical context of Sicily, decidedly affected by the Vandal event, by the *depraedationes* of Genseric and by the 440 A.D. siege of Palermo (details from Prosper Aquitanus to Victor Vitensis, from Cassiodorus to Beda, *etc.*; important information in *Novella* 9 and, especially, in *Novella* 1 of Valentinian III); 2. the matter of whether the Sicilian Church was harmed and had suffered in these situations; 3. the peculiar recount by Hydatius of Genseric's siege of Palermo and of the deed of the Arian bishop Maximinus; 4. the animated historiographical debate about the identity of Maximinus Arian and his relation with Sicily, and the different views and hypotheses of scholars in recent decades with regard to specific aspects of the intricate *vexata quaestio*: from Francesco Giunta to Vito A. Sirago, from Alberto Pincherle to Manlio Simonetti, from Roger Gryson to Luis A. García Moreno, from Mario Mazza to Salvatore Pricoco, from Lellia Cracco Ruggini to Francesco P. Rizzo, *etc.*

Nel corso degli ultimi decenni le risultanze della ricerca sulla storia del periodo gensericiano, delle vicende vandale in Sicilia e nel Mediterraneo¹ – al

¹ Indicazioni bibliografiche in: Vincenzo Messina, 'Storia e cultura della Sicilia tardoantica e preislamica. Percorso bibliografico orientativo', *Guttadauro* 2 (2002), 7-106; Francesco P. Rizzo, *Sicilia cristiana dal I al V secolo*, 1, Istituto Siciliano per la Storia Antica. Testimonia Siciliae Antiqua 1.14 (Roma, 2005), 167-261; Vincenzo Messina, 'Linee del dibattito storiografico sul cristianesimo nella Sicilia tardoantica: la "svolta" del Convegno di Caltanissetta del 1985 e oltre', in Vincenzo Messina *et al.* (eds), *Vescovi, Sicilia, Mediterraneo nella tarda antichità. Atti del I Convegno di Studi organizzato dalla Pontificia Facoltà Teologica di Sicilia "S. Giovanni Evangelista" e dall'Istituto Siciliano di Studi Patristici e Tardoantichi "J. H. Newman"*, Palermo, 29-30 ottobre 2010, Storia e Cultura di Sicilia. Collana del Centro per lo studio della storia e della cultura di Sicilia della Facoltà Teologica di Sicilia 28 (Caltanissetta – Roma, 2012), 13-87; segnalò parimenti: *Ruolo mediterraneo della Sicilia nella Tarda Antichità. Atti del IX Congresso Internazionale di Studi sulla Sicilia antica, Palermo, 9-13 aprile 1997, Kokalos* 43-44 (1997-1998); *Pagani e cristiani in Sicilia. Quattro secoli di storia (secc. II-V). Atti del X Congresso Internazionale di Studi sulla Sicilia antica, Palermo – Siracusa, 22-27 aprile 2001, Kokalos* 47-48 (2008-2009). Ivi, fra l'altro, richiami ai dati forniti dalle fonti sulle vicende vandale (prevalentemente da cronografi): da Idazio (*Chron.* 120) a Cassiodoro (*Chron.* 1234-1235), da Prospero di

cui fondamento rimangono fra l'altro le indagini di Christian Courtois² e di Francesco Giunta³ di oltre mezzo secolo fa – appaiono contraddistinte da due punti, come in un suo saggio ha sostenuto Mario Mazza (mettendo in valore fra l'altro la portata storica della *Nov.* 1.2 e della *Nov.* 9 di Valentiniano III), due punti che a suo avviso debbono 'tenersi saldi, nel quadro non sempre chiaro e ordinato delle varie interpretazioni: 1) l'effettiva esistenza di una strategia mediterranea di Genserico (Geiserico), riconoscibile e coerente, pur nella frammentarietà dei vari episodi; 2) l'importanza, nel quadro di questa strategia, del controllo della Sicilia, delle isole, ed in genere del Mediterraneo centrale. Se non fu un programma di conquiste – né tanto meno il fanatismo religioso – a guidare l'azione politico-militare di Genserico e dei Vandali, ci fu sicuramente coerenza, e continuità di indirizzo strategico'.⁴ Basti a tal riguardo tener presente il giudizio, espresso da Salviano di Marsiglia in *De gubernatione Dei* 6.12.67-68, 'sorprendentemente perspicace, e sorprendentemente attendibile dal punto di vista storico, sulla politica dei Vandali'.⁵

* * *

Aquitania (*Chron.* 1342) a Isidoro di Siviglia (*Hist. Vandal.* 75), da Vittore di Vita (*Hist. persec. Africanae prov.* 1.13-4; 1.51; 2.23) a Beda (*Chron.* 481), ecc., per i cui testi, insieme a molti altri, puntualmente e ordinatamente riportati, rinvio a Francesco P. Rizzo, *Sicilia cristiana dal I al V secolo*, 2.2, Istituto Siciliano per la Storia Antica. Testimonia Siciliae Antiqua 1.14 (Roma, 2006).

² Christian Courtois, *Les Vandales et l'Afrique* (Paris, 1955).

³ Francesco Giunta, *Genserico et la Sicilia* (Palermo, 1958), che 'ha individuato l'area dell'azione vandala del 440-441 nella zona di Lilibeo-Panormo, implicitamente in contrasto con l'allora consueta interpretazione di *Novella* 1,2 di Valentiniano III – secondo la quale tutta la Sicilia avrebbe sofferto le conseguenze dell'invasione di Genserico –, ma la cui puntuale e corretta interpretazione proposta in questi ultimi anni è risultata sintonica con la tesi del Giunta' (V. Messina, 'Linee', 36, nota 73). In tal senso si vedano, fra gli altri: Mario Mazza, 'I Vandali, la Sicilia e il Mediterraneo nella tarda antichità', in *Ruolo mediterraneo* (1997-1998), 107-38; Lellia Cracco Ruggini, *La Sicilia nel V secolo e Pascasino di Lilibeo*, in Mariano Crociata et al. (eds), *Pascasino di Lilibeo e il suo tempo a 1550 anni dal Concilio di Calcedonia. Atti del Convegno di Studi, Marsala, 5-6 ottobre 2001*, Storia e Cultura di Sicilia. Collana del Centro per lo studio della storia e della cultura di Sicilia della Facoltà Teologica di Sicilia 11 (Caltanissetta – Roma, 2002), 29-47, che ha fra l'altro scritto, *ibid.* 30: 'Ci è giunto peraltro guasto – e quindi d'interpretazione non del tutto perspicua – il testo della *Novella* 1,2, con la quale Valentiniano III [...] dispose lo sgravio di sei settimi delle imposte a favore delle aree isolate devastate dalle prime incursioni di Genserico: in tale contesto segue l'enumerazione dei territori siracusano, catanese, etneo, lilibetano, termitano, soluntino, introdotta da un *vero*, che potrebbe avere valore tanto rafforzativo quanto avversativo'; Francesco P. Rizzo, 'Il *latinus* Pascasino inviato a Calcedonia, ossia il ribaltamento di una tradizione consolidata', in M. Crociata et al. (eds), *Pascasino* (2002), 49-65.

⁴ M. Mazza, 'I Vandali' (1997-1998), 114.

⁵ *Ibid.* 115; inoltre Salvatore Costanza, 'Romani e barbari, cristiani e pagani nella concezione salviana della storia (2ª parte: *De gubernatione Dei*)', *Guttadauro* 6 (2006), 75-139, 106-7 e *passim*.

Al centro della *vexata quaestio* di cui al titolo del presente contributo c'è soprattutto il segnalato passo idaziano,⁶ ove Massimino è detto *apud Siciliam Arrianorum dux*.

Entrando in *medias res*, segnalo che – presto invecchiato il giudizio di Vito A. Sirago⁷ del 1961 ‘sui “torbidi interni” al collegio episcopale isolano, di cui avrebbe fatto parte l’ariano Massimino’ –⁸ ha volto l’attenzione al passo idaziano Alberto Pincherle relazionando al I Congresso Internazionale di Studi sulla Sicilia antica, tenutosi a Palermo nel 1964: ‘Che, in Africa, l’arianesimo fosse penetrato minaccioso anche prima dell’invasione vandala, dimostrano le polemiche sostenute, nei suoi ultimi anni, da S. Agostino. Quando, contro Bonifacio, venne mandato in Africa Sigisvulto, il goto, questo nuovo *comes Africae* ebbe al suo fianco un vescovo ariano, Massimino, che si dedicò prontamente a svolgere un’attiva propaganda; quando egli giunse ad Ippona, Agostino ebbe con lui una disputa, cui fece seguire uno scritto. [...] Ora, quando Genserico assediò Palermo, nel 440, troviamo un Massimino, capo degli ariani in Sicilia e condannato dai vescovi cattolici, per istigazione del quale lo stesso Genserico si diede a perseguire i cattolici cercando in ogni modo di convertirli; e vi furono dei martiri. Genserico dovette togliere l’assedio, ma delle sofferenze causate dai Vandali, specie in Lilibeo dove riuscirono a mantenersi, v’è un’eco in una lettera inviata a S. Leone Magno da [...] Pascasio, [...] suo legato al concilio di Calcedonia. Si è pensato che il Massimino confutato da S. Agostino (e da lui chiamato vescovo) sia lo stesso di cui parla Idazio dicendolo, forse volutamente, capo, *dux*. L’identificazione non parrebbe assurda e si potrebbe supporre che Massimino arrivasse nell’isola quando Sigisvulto, come *comes utriusque militiae* fu incaricato di difendere le coste contro i Vandali e poi vi rimanesse; dandosi a un’attiva opera di propaganda religiosa, egli si sarebbe poi rivolto ai suoi correligionari invasori. Non ebbe fortuna, appunto perché i Vandali non riuscirono nel loro tentativo di conquista. A questo punto, possiamo anche domandarci se egli sia anche lo stesso col quale polemizzò un vescovo cattolico, Cerealis. Qualcuno lo ha pensato; contro, si è addotta un’argomentazione tratta dalla cronologia. Tuttavia, questa non pare decisiva’.⁹

⁶ Hydatius, *Chron.* 120: ‘*Gaisericus Siciliam depraedatus Panormum diu obsedit: qui dam-nati a catholicis episcopis Maximini, apud Siciliam Arrianorum ducis, aduersum catholicos praecipitatur instinctu, ut eos quoquo pacto in impietatem cogeret Arrianam. Nonnullis declinantibus, aliquanti durantes in catholica fide consummauere martyrium.*’ (F.P. Rizzo, *Sicilia*, 2.2 [2006], 275).

⁷ Vito A. Sirago, *Galla Placidia e la trasformazione politica dell’Occidente* (Louvain, 1961).

⁸ F.P. Rizzo, *Sicilia*, 1 (2005), 22.

⁹ Alberto Pincherle, ‘Sulle origini del cristianesimo in Sicilia’, *Kokalos* 10-11 (1964-1965), 547-62, 560-1.

E passo, guardando ai decenni più recenti, allo studio di Roger Gryson, editore nel 1980 degli *Scolies ariennes sur le Concile d'Aquilée*,¹⁰ ai quali è legato il nome del vescovo Massimino. Per Gryson, questi era 'un arien, très certainement, étant donné l'ardeur avec laquelle il prend fait et cause dans ses commentaires pour les ariens condamnés au concile d'Aquilée. Or, nous connaissons précisément un évêque arien de ce nom, vivant à l'époque qui a suivi le concile d'Aquilée. Il accompagna en Afrique, en qualité d'aumônier général, si l'on peut dire, les régiments goths de Sigisvult, qui avaient été envoyés à la fin de 427 pour combattre Boniface, et il eut à cette occasion une discussion publique avec saint Augustin, dont le procès-verbal a été conservé parmi les œuvres de celui-ci: c'est la *Collatio cum Maximino arianorum episcopo* [...]. Maximinus indique dans cette discussion qu'il était plus jeune qu'Augustin, mais sans préciser si la différence d'âge était grande ou pas. Sa naissance se situe donc au plus tôt dans les années 360. D'autre part, comme il était évêque en 427, il devait être alors au moins dans la trentaine, de sorte qu'il est né au plus tard dans les années 390. Quoiqu'on le trouve en compagnie d'une armée de Goths, il n'est pas goth lui-même, contrairement à ce qu'on a souvent répété. [...] il était de culture latine et citoyen de l'Empire romain. En dehors de son voyage en Afrique, nous ne savons rien de sa carrière. Il pourrait être le même que ce Maximinus, chef des ariens de Palerme, qui appuya de l'intérieur l'action du roi vandale Geiséric assiégeant cette ville en 440; mais rien ne prouve l'identité des deux personnages'; è inoltre 'peu vraisemblable' che egli sia stato il vescovo ariano di nome Massimino che circa 40 anni dopo sfidò Cerealis, vescovo di Castellum Ripense, nella Mauritania Caesariensis, a fornire testimonianze scritturistiche a sostegno della fede cattolica, poiché sarebbe stato 'au moins octogénaire', ma 'ce n'est pas tout à fait impossible'.¹¹

Non pochi sono gli elementi per la nostra *vexata quaestio* forniti da Pincherle e da Gryson, dopo la cui edizione degli *Scolies* André Mandouze ha pubblicato, nel 1982, la *Prosopographie de l'Afrique chrétienne (303-533)*,¹² ove figurano due profili di vescovi ariani – ciascuno dei quali porta il nome di Maximinus:¹³

*MAXIMINUS 10, (...427/428...)
Arrianorum episcop(us),
 évêque arien,

a beau être venu en Afrique¹ et avoir d'abord débattu à Hippone avec Augustin², puis s'être vu adresser et opposer par celui-ci un ouvrage en deux livres destiné à compléter

¹⁰ Roger Gryson (ed.), *Scolies ariennes sur le Concile d'Aquilée*, Sources Chrétiennes 267 (Paris, 1980), 23-201 ('Introduction').

¹¹ *Ibid.* 66-8.

¹² André Mandouze (ed.), *Prosopographie de l'Afrique chrétienne (303-533)*, Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire 1 (Paris, 1982).

¹³ *Ibid.* 731 (*Maximinus 10; Maximinus 11*).

le débat³, doit être cependant identifié avec l'auteur homonyme de la *Dissertatio contra Ambrosium*⁴ (ainsi d'ailleurs qu'avec l'auteur anonyme de l'homiliaire LI de Verone⁵) et relève par conséquent de la prosopographie de l'Illyricum.

¹ POSSIDIUS CALAM., *Vita Aug.*, XVII, 7-9, éd. Pellegrino, p. 100-102.

² AUG., *Conl. cum Maximino*, P.L. 42, 709-742. (Voir ERACLIUS, in fine). Il n'est d'ailleurs pas totalement exclu que M. soit à identifier avec l'arien Maximus (variante: Maximinus) destinataire d'une lettre (perdue) d'Augustin (cf. POSSIDIUS CALAM., *Operum S. Augustini elenchus*, [VIII.], 10, éd. Wilmart, *Miscellanea Agostiniana*, 2, p. 173).

³ AUG., *C. Maximinum haereticum*, P.L. 42, 743-814.

⁴ MAXIMINUS ARIANUS, P.L.S. 1, 693-728.

⁵ Cf. B. CAPELLE, *Un homiliaire de l'évêque arien Maximin*, dans *R.B.*, 34, 1922, p. 80-108.

MAXIMINUS¹ 11, (seconde moitié V^e s.)
Arianorum episcop(us),
 évêque arien,

est incidemment mentionné, dans les *De uiris illustribus* respectifs de Gennade² et d'Isidore de Séville³ (ou plus exactement de son interpolation africaine⁴), comme ayant mis ironiquement au défi l'évêque catholique Cerealis⁵ de fournir à l'appui de sa foi et de sa doctrine trinitaire des arguments scripturaires dont la solidité, sinon le nombre, puisse convaincre.

Qualifié polémiquement d'«évêque des fanatiques d'Arius» (*Ariomanitarum*⁶ *episcop(us)*), M. apparaît de fait comme l'auteur des diverses questions posées à Cerealis sur ce problème, au début d'une controverse carthaginoise dont le compte rendu a été conservé⁷ et qui se clôt sur le silence opposé par M. aux réponses détaillées de son adversaire⁸.

¹ Le texte de l'interpolation africaine d'Isidore (cf. *infra* n. 4) donne la graphie *Maximianus*.

² GENNADIUS, *De uiris illust.*, 97, éd. Richardson, *Texte und Untersuchungen*, 14, 1a, p. 97.

³ ISIDORUS HISPAL., *De uiris illustribus*, 11, P.L. 83, 1089.

⁴ Cf. Carmen CODONER MERINO, *El «De uiris illustribus» de Isidoro de Sevilla. Estudio y edición crítica*, Salamanca, 1964, p. 21 (voir p. 31-32 et p. 40).

⁵ Voir CEREALIS.

⁶ Le même terme se retrouve dans l'interpolation africaine d'Isidore de Séville non sans diverses variantes selon le mss. (*Ammonitarum*, *Africanorum* ou *Arianorum*).

⁷ CEREALIS, *C. Maximinum Arianum libellus*, P.L. 58, 757-768, en particulier 757.

⁸ *Id.*, 768.

Come si sarà notato, né l'uno, né l'altro Maximinus, secondo la suddetta *Prosopographie* – che per entrambi mai rinvia a Idazio –, hanno avuto un ruolo nella vicenda vandala in Sicilia. Per l'economia del presente contributo va tuttavia sottolineata, quanto a Maximinus 10, l'espressione che ne chiude il profilo.

Nel 1986 Francesco P. Rizzo, durante il Colloquio su *Palermo in età imperiale romana*,¹⁴ intervenendo sulla prima delle due relazioni ivi tenute da Andrea Giardina, ha affermato che il Massimino chiamato 'vescovo degli ariani' da Idazio

¹⁴ *Palermo in età imperiale romana. Atti del Colloquio, Palermo, 1°-3 dicembre 1986, Kokalos* 33 (1987), 223-337.

‘probabilmente’ è ‘da identificare con il Massimino, veramente vescovo degli ariani, non però in Sicilia, ma in Africa, alla corte di Genserico: questo Massimino d’Africa è conosciuto per i suoi scritti; suppone un omonimo in Sicilia di pari dignità, o magari pensare che quello d’Africa vi si fosse trasferito come pastore della chiesa ariana, non si può, giacché non esiste alcuna traccia di tale chiesa in Sicilia, né Massimino stesso avrebbe avuto il tempo di fondarla; appunto questo doveva essere il cruccio di Genserico; quest’ultimo, avendo concepito il piano di conquistare la Sicilia, manda avanti allora proprio Massimino, forse durante una delle scorrerie che si pensa fondatamente abbiano avuto luogo prima del 440: l’azione avrebbe dovuto tendere a mettere fuori giuoco i vescovi cattolici [...]. Quali fossero poi questi vescovi, e che cosa in particolare occorra pensare di quello di Palermo, di nome Mamiliano, è un’altra questione’.¹⁵

Nella terza edizione della *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*, apparsa nel 1995,¹⁶ si distingue il Maximinus Arianus contro il quale Cerealis scrisse un *libellus* – e per ciò essa rinvia unicamente alla voce Cerealis della *Prosopographie de l’Afrique chrétienne* –¹⁷ dal Maximinus Arianus vescovo dei Goti – contro il quale scrisse Agostino –, autore fra l’altro della *Dissertatio contra Ambrosium*, e per i suoi *opuscula*¹⁸ la medesima *Clavis* rinvia, ‘*praesertim*’, alla sopra segnalata opera di Gryson.

A quest’ultimo Maximinus si è riferito, nel medesimo 1995, Giovanni M. Vian in un suo articolo sulla cristologia dei testi ariani di Verona,¹⁹ dicendolo ‘nato intorno al 360, di origine forse latina e vescovo di una comunità ariana probabilmente da collocare nell’Illirico, autore degli scoli al concilio di Aquileia [...] e protagonista a Ippona nel 427 o 428 di un pubblico dibattito con Agostino’.²⁰

¹⁵ Francesco P. Rizzo, ‘Intervento’, in *Palermo in età imperiale* (1987), 249-51, 250-1, sulla relazione di Andrea Giardina, ‘Il quadro storico: Panormo da Augusto a Gregorio Magno’, *ibid.* 225-49. In tale relazione, 244-5, leggiamo: ‘Nel 440 i Vandali di Genserico portarono un violento attacco alla Sicilia: il *Chronicon* di Idazio [...] ne ricorda brevemente gli effetti devastanti [...]. A questa si aggiungono le notizie, dal contenuto sostanzialmente identico, date da altri storici e cronisti. In ambedue i resoconti si contrappone la *depraedatio* della Sicilia intera all’assedio della sola Palermo. Gli studiosi dubitano tuttavia, con varie accentuazioni, se i Vandali riuscirono veramente, alla fine, a impadronirsi della città. Il punto chiave è la credibilità storica di personaggi come Mamilianus vescovo di Panormo e dei suoi seguaci [...], che secondo la tradizione agiografica sarebbero stati catturati e deportati in Africa. [...] In ogni caso, il fatto importante è l’eccezionale resistenza di Panormo, sottolineata dalle fonti (*diu obsedit*), che ne fa un caso unico nel quadro complessivo delle operazioni vandaliche in Sicilia’.

¹⁶ Eligius Dekkers (ed.), *Clavis Patrum Latinorum* (3rd ed.; Steenbrugge, 1995).

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 274 (n. 813).

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 241-3 (nn. 692-702); inoltre 84 (n. 222), 96 (n. 245), 240 (nn. 688 e 691).

¹⁹ Giovanni M. Vian, ‘Ortodossia ed eresia nel IV secolo: la cristologia dei testi ariani di Verona’, *Augustinianum* 35 (1995), 847-58.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 849-50 e nota 16, ove Vian ha rinviato opportunamente alla voce ‘Massimino ariano’, curata da Manlio Simonetti, in Angelo Di Berardino (ed.), *Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane* (Casale Monferrato, 1984), 2165-6. Di seguito a quanto sopra riportato, il medesimo Vian

In questi ultimi tre lustri il dibattito storiografico su Massimino ariano e la Sicilia è apparso particolarmente vivace, a motivo di frequenti congressi e convegni sulla Sicilia tardoantica.

Al nostro enigmatico personaggio ha prestato nel 1999 attenzione Luis A. García Moreno in un suo saggio sull'arianesimo vandalo e gotico in Sicilia.²¹ Dopo aver sottolineato l'ortodossia del cristianesimo siciliano pur a fronte delle ripercussioni nell'Isola delle grandi discussioni dogmatiche di IV e V secolo – basti pensare alla condanna del pelagianesimo nel sinodo siciliano del 419 –, a proposito delle incursioni vandale in Sicilia egli ha scritto, citando Idazio, che Genserico 'a instigación de Maximino, jefe en Sicilia de los arrianos, que había sido condenado por obispos católicos, hostigó a los católicos para forzarles a la herejía arriana de cualquier manera. Aunque alguno cede, unos cuantos sufrieron el martirio manteniéndose firmes en la fe católica': benché su invasióne e saccheggi dei Vandali in Sicilia vi siano vari *testimonia*, 'es Hidacio el único que transmite la noticia de la persecución y proselitismo arrianos de Genserico bajo la actividad misionera de Maximino'.²²

Di qui per la critica storica il problema dell'identità di Massimino ariano,²³ intorno al quale García Moreno ha prospettato un ventaglio di considerazioni e ipotesi che qui tento di riassumere in otto punti: 1. l'affermazione idaziana secondo la quale Massimino 'era el jefe de los arrianos en Sicilia' suppone la sua 'dignidad episcopal'; 2. questo Massimino 'sería el obispo arriano que vino a Sicilia acompañando al ejército vándalo en la invasión del 440'; 3. poiché Idazio dice che 'este arriano ya había sido condenado por obispos católicos', ciò 'supone que había estado en contacto durante un tiempo con la Iglesia católica, en Africa sin duda, habiendo allí tenido controversias teológicas de las que habría salido efectivamente *damnatus*'; 4. invero 'conocemos un Maximino obispo arriano que mantuvo un famoso debate teológico con el obispo

ha scritto: 'Non è ora possibile approfondire la questione delle opere riconducibili a Massimino; il vescovo ariano è infatti stato considerato da un lato autore non solo della raccolta di Verona ma anche di molta parte della superstite letteratura ariana latina (compresi l'*Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum* e un commento a Giobbe) secondo una tesi di Michel Meslin che tuttavia è stata fortemente criticata, mentre dall'altro è stata messa in dubbio da Gryson anche la paternità massimiana della raccolta di Verona, che sarebbe invece di autori diversi, in parte anche non ariani'.

²¹ Luis A. García Moreno, 'El Arrianismo vándalo y gótico en Sicilia', in Rossana Barcellona *et al.* (eds), *La Sicilia nella tarda antichità e nell'alto medioevo. Religione e società. Atti del Convegno di Studi, Catania – Paternò, 24-27 settembre 1997* (Soveria Mannelli [Catanzaro], 1999), 33-52.

²² *Ibid.* 38.

²³ *Ibid.* 38-9: 'La identidad del arriano Maximino ha planteado problemas a la crítica histórica. No obstante lo afirmado por algunos del texto de Hidacio no se desprende precisamente que Maximino fuera el jefe de los sicilianos que pertenecían a la herejía arriana, sino de los arrianos que había en Sicilia, que en ese momento serían principalmente las tropas vándalas invasoras y aquellos católicos sicilianos que por la obra misionera de Maximino y la más coactiva de Genserico se fueron pasando a la herejía. Suponer lo contrario estaría en contradicción con la afirmación de las fuentes de la total adhesión del episcopado siciliano de la segunda mitad del siglo IV a la ortodoxia nicena'.

católico Cereal', il quale 'despectivamente denomina a su contrincante "obispo de los locos por Arrio"', ma 'no sabemos con seguridad la fecha de esta controversia y del episcopado de Cereal', e tuttavia 'la fama que esta disputa tuvo entre la literatura antiarriana [...] presupone que el contrincante de Cereal no era un cualquiera'; 5. in quest'ottica non è trascurabile l'ipotesi di Lancia di Brolo 'de identificarle con un Maximino que en el 427 vino a Africa como obispo arriano de las tropas del conde Sigisvulto en su campaña contra el rebelde Bonifacio', ma 'importa señalar' che 'el general imperial confiaba grandemente en las capacidades dialécticas de su obispo arriano, pues envió a Maximino nada menos que a disputar con el gran, pero ya viejo, Agustín, que no conseguiría el abandono del campo por su rival'; 6. è stata proposta 'acertadamente la autoría de este Maximino para una serie de tratados', e fu lui che 'tomó la pluma para escribir contra San Ambrosio, queriendo dar la vuelta a lo sucedido en el sínodo de Aquileya del 381, para lo que, además de comentar extractos de sus *Acta*, copió la "Apología" de Paladio y una carta sobre la vida y la obra de Ulfila, escrita por Auxentio, con un comentario suyo'; 7. identificare questo Massimino 'con el inductor de la política arriana de Genserico en Sicilia en el 440 explicaría muy bien el prestigio del ya anciano prelado' e pure 'que Hidacio juzgara digno de figurar en las muy pocas entradas de su crónica el protagonismo de Maximino': se 'éste era el que en otro tiempo había disputado con San Agustín, y asta con los Manes del gran antiarriano San Ambrosio, bien sabía el obispo galaico que había sido "condenado" por obispos católicos'; 8. la veridicità della testimonianza idaziana che 'entre los católicos de Sicilia hubo persecución, y asta algún martirio', fortunatamente 'se puede confirmar a través de una carta enviada por el obispo Pascasio de Lilibeo al Papa León': l'importante testimonianza di Pascasio 'vendría así a demostrar la realidad de la persecución arriana de Genserico, y cómo ésta se ejecutó precisamente sobre la Sicilia occidental, y más concretamente Lilibeo, que había sido la base desde la que los vándalos habrían intentado en vano una dominación más amplia de la isla'.²⁴

Un anno dopo la pubblicazione del saggio di García Moreno, è apparso nel 2000 il secondo volume della *Prosopographie de l'Italie chrétienne*,²⁵ ove figura il profilo del Massimino idaziano:²⁶

MAXIMINUS 4

(... 440 ...)

apud Siciliam arianorum dux,

chef des ariens en Sicile, est condamné par les évêques catholiques. Après le débarquement des Vandales dans l'île en 440, il excite Genséric contre les catholiques pour qu'il les amène par tous les moyens à embrasser la foi arienne¹.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 39-42.

²⁵ Charles Pietri *et al.* (eds), *Prosopographie de l'Italie chrétienne (313-604)*, 2, *Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire 2* (Roma, 2000).

²⁶ *Ibid.* 1462 (*Maximinus 4*).

Il est exclu d'identifier M. avec l'un des évêques ariens homonymes attestés en Afrique vers la même époque².

¹ HYDACIUS, *Chron.*, 120, ann. 440, *MGH aa* 11, *Chronica minora* 2, p. 23.

² Voir *PCBE, Afrique*, p. 731, MAXIMINUS 10 et 11.

È appena il caso di osservare che specialmente l'ultima parte di tale profilo rende ancor più complessa la nostra *vexata quaestio*.

Il dibattito storiografico su Massimino ariano si è ulteriormente vivacizzato nel 2001 in occasione del Convegno tenutosi a Marsala su Pascasino di Lilibeo,²⁷ ove perspicue sono risultate le riflessioni e le ipotesi circa il *testimonium* idaziano e l'evento vandalo in Sicilia, l'assedio di Genserico a Palermo nel 440 e l'identità di Massimino ariano: l'intricata questione è stata dibattuta peculiarmente da Salvatore Pricoco, Lellia Cracco Ruggini e Francesco P. Rizzo.

Facendone una stringata sintesi, e astenendosi dall'avanzare ipotesi, Pricoco ha osservato: 'La storia della presenza vandala in Sicilia non è facilmente ricostruibile. Le testimonianze sono esigue e incerte, le interpretazioni sul programma politico di Genserico, sempre che ne avesse uno, sono necessariamente prudenti. Non è possibile dire se e fino a che punto anche in Sicilia sia stato instaurato il clima di intolleranza religiosa creato dai Vandali in Africa né collegare a un progetto del governo vandalo l'opera del vescovo ariano Massimino, che, secondo una notizia di Idazio, fu presente in Sicilia in quel periodo. Anche Pascasino fu vittima della persecuzione vandala, pur se ignoriamo quali siano stati i motivi, religiosi o politici, che gli fruttarono la prigionia. Appare difficile che in Sicilia, nelle zone nelle quali esercitarono più a lungo il loro dominio, i Vandali abbiano applicato una politica religiosa diversa da quella esercitata in Africa'.²⁸

Di altro taglio l'orientamento di Cracco Ruggini, che ha puntualizzato: 'Deportazioni verso l'Africa dalla Sicilia occupata dai Vandali dovettero essere probabilmente davvero (membri del clero inclusi), così come dovettero essere vietate per qualche tempo le cerimonie pubbliche del culto celebrate da sacerdoti cattolici, accanto ad altre manifestazioni d'intolleranza; ma non si hanno prove di confische, da parte dei Vandali ariani, né di chiese né di beni a queste appartenenti. Dovette certo influire negativamente la presenza, sia in Africa sia in Sicilia, di quel Massimino ariano che è probabilmente da identificare con l'omonimo, giovane seguace di Palladio di *Ratiaria*, acerrimo denigratore di Ambrogio (il quale aveva fatto condannare per arianesimo il suo maestro al concilio di Aquileia del 381) nella *Dissertatio contra Ambrosium*, a quanto sembra composta in Africa dopo il 438'.²⁹ La medesima studiosa ha

²⁷ *Supra* nota 3.

²⁸ Salvatore Pricoco, 'Per un'introduzione all'età di Pascasino: popoli e culture nella prima Sicilia cristiana', in M. Crociata et al. (eds), *Pascasino* (2002), 11-28, 26-7.

²⁹ L. Cracco Ruggini, 'La Sicilia' (2002), 33-4.

continuato pertanto ad attestarsi su una linea da lei già tracciata durante il Convegno sul cristianesimo in Sicilia dalle origini a Gregorio Magno svoltosi a Caltanissetta nel 1985,³⁰ ove aveva precisato: ‘Le rilevanti influenze dall’Oriente e dall’Africa non comportarono [...], sul piano religioso, l’importazione nell’isola delle roventi dispute ereticali che scossero tali province fra il III e il V secolo. Montanisti, novaziani, donatisti, pelagiani, ariani, manichei, monofisiti – al pari dei monoteliti e degli iconoclasti fra VII e VIII secolo – non presero mai stabilmente piede in Sicilia (anche se, fra VII e VIII secolo, la tradizione relativa a Pancrazio di Taormina e a Marciano di Siracusa parla delle loro battaglie contro montanisti, ebrei e idolatri). Qualche segno di dissidenza religiosa, nel V-VI secolo, può riconoscersi soltanto in aree rurali periferiche, ove più allentate dovettero essere le maglie del controllo ecclesiastico. [...] La propaganda ariana s’incanalò forse nell’alveo della lotta politica ma per breve momento, solo alcuni anni prima che Genserico raggiungesse le coste sicule (nel 440), in evidente collegamento con queste mire vandaliche. Sembra infatti da rivalutare la notizia di Idazio Lemico circa l’azione in Sicilia del vescovo ariano Massimino – già rifugiato in Africa – in questo torno di tempo. Il vescovo di Lilibeo Pascasio ebbe certo a subire maltrattamenti; è tuttavia degno di nota il fatto che quasi nulle siano le tracce di queste pretese “persecuzioni” vandaliche nell’agiografia siciliana [...]. Non pare che si possa in ogni caso stabilire alcun legame fra la presenza di Massimino ariano e la nobiltà pagana con possedimenti nell’isola, anche se decenni prima proprio questa aristocrazia aveva guardato con simpatia a Palladio di *Ratiaria* e al suo discepolo Massimino in opposizione ad Ambrogio e a papa Damaso, al tempo del concilio antiariano di Aquileia del 381. Ma nel 440 la nobiltà senatoria proprietaria di latifondi nelle province siculo-calabresi si stava coalizzando efficacemente contro la minaccia vandala, armando eserciti privati fra i propri coloni’.³¹

Diversamente connotato il quadro storico prospettato da Rizzo: ‘Certo, è eccessivo il peso che recentemente si è attribuito alle azioni dei Vandali, sì da affermarsi avere esse dissolto, già a metà del V secolo, la posizione di centralità mediterranea dell’isola. Erano state, tutto sommato, vicende dovute ad una strategia di difesa del *regnum* africano, e peraltro frammentarie. Ma è significativo l’essersi rilevato il fatto che, in una strategia tesa al predominio marittimo, Genserico si assicurava il blocco delle città della Sicilia che gravitavano sul Mediterraneo; fra queste – come è dato ricavare da una *Novella* (I, 2) di Valentiniano III, che le soccorse – hanno rilevanza le città del nord-ovest dell’isola: l’epicentro della vita siciliana si spostava in questa direzione; giungeva a

³⁰ Vincenzo Messina *et al.* (eds), *Il cristianesimo in Sicilia dalle origini a Gregorio Magno. Atti del Convegno di Studi organizzato dall’Istituto Teologico “Mons. G. Guttadauro”, Caltanissetta, 28-29 ottobre 1985*, Quaderni di Presenza Culturale 26 (Caltanissetta, 1987).

³¹ Lellia Cracco Ruggini, *Il primo cristianesimo in Sicilia (III-VII secolo)*, in V. Messina *et al.* (eds), *Il cristianesimo* (1987), 85-125, 100-2.

compimento quel processo di “trasformazione geopolitica” della Sicilia, che per il Mazarino aveva caratterizzato l’intero periodo romano. [...] quelle città vollero le proprie potenzialità a tutto vantaggio dell’isola, intente a salvaguardare le realtà che più si trovavano esposte al pericolo: la sicurezza economica, in primo luogo, a difesa della quale i Siciliani impegnarono ogni loro risorsa; la sicurezza religiosa, in secondo luogo, a tutela della quale la Chiesa contrappose tutta la propria energia all’arianesimo dei Vandali. Nella vicenda vandalica, peraltro, e più precisamente a seguito della occupazione del 440, si trovò direttamente coinvolto il nostro Pascasino. [...] liberato ormai (pare nel 443) e versando in precarie condizioni (specialmente economiche), aveva ricevuto soccorso e conforto da Leone Magno [...]. Il riguardo manifestato dal grande pontefice per i bisogni dell’isola all’indomani della *vastatio vandalica* fa significativamente il paio con quello mostrato dall’imperatore con il provvedimento della citata *Novella*. Non sporadico, peraltro, è il rapporto che viene a stabilirsi tra papa Leone e la Sicilia. [...] Due testimonianze al riguardo risultano assai indicative. L’una è costituita da due versi con cui Prospero d’Aquitania dichiara che la Sicilia si era liberata dell’*agmen vipereum*: il poeta allude all’eresia predicata da Pelagio e Celestio e al totale insuccesso da costoro riportato nell’isola. L’altra consiste nella cursoria annotazione di Idazio circa la parte che l’ariano Massimino ebbe nell’assedio posto da Genserico a Palermo in quell’anno 440. *Arrianorum dux* è detto questo Massimino, e di lui si afferma che sarebbe stato *damnatus a catholicis episcopis*: il riferimento allo zelo manifestato dai vescovi siciliani nel tutelare l’integrità della fede nell’isola è esplicito. Qualche dubbio può sorgere invece sull’identità del personaggio. Generalmente si crede che egli fosse un vescovo ariano della Sicilia e che la sua condanna venisse pronunciata da un concilio isolano. Ma è più semplice intendere l’*Arrianorum dux* nel senso che Massimino fosse a capo di un’avanguardia da Genserico spedita nell’isola per preparare il terreno alla sua impresa, e che l’episcopato locale si fosse trovato nella necessità di contrastare un’azione dalle conseguenze religiose e politiche ad un tempo. Forse, proprio l’episcopato occidentale dovette avere gran parte in questo serrare le file: certo, esso era in quel frangente più direttamente minacciato dallo sbarco vandalico in Sicilia e dall’assedio posto a Palermo, e può supporre che il vescovo di Lilibeo sia stato in prima linea nel condurre l’energica opposizione. Se così, la reazione dell’ariano non poté farsi attendere: fu per sua istigazione (*instinctu*) – il testo di Idazio è esplicito al riguardo – che Genserico furoreggiò contro i cattolici (*adversus catholicos praecipitatur*).³²

Rizzo ha in tale direzione ripreso la questione su Massimino ariano e la Sicilia nella sua opera *Sicilia cristiana nei secoli I-V*, pubblicata in due volumi rispettivamente nel 2005-2006.³³

³² F.P. Rizzo, ‘Il *latinus* Pascasino’ (2002), 55-9.

³³ *Supra* nota 1.

Dopo avere constatato che le fonti di cui disponiamo ‘segnalano insistentemente le *depraedationes* messe in atto a più riprese da Genserico a danno della Sicilia’, egli ha avvertito che non vanno prese ‘alla lettera quelle espressioni di Prisco che sembrerebbero alludere ad una occupazione totale della Sicilia’, e che, ‘quanto ai presunti contraccolpi negativi per la Chiesa, il pessimistico giudizio dei moderni [...] non trova riscontro nelle fonti. [...] Dispiace constatare con quanta disinvoltura alcuni moderni abbiano esteso alla storia della Sicilia il noto passo di Isidoro sulle malversazioni inferte da Genserico ai sacerdoti cattolici dell’Africa’. A giudizio di Rizzo, ‘l’unico episodio avverso è quello segnalato da Idazio, secondo cui Genserico avrebbe tentato di portare i Siciliani alla fede ariana, suscitando anche dei martiri. Ma tale annotazione si riferisce al momento del primo impatto che Genserico ebbe con la realtà siciliana. Il capo vandalo aveva tratto dall’esperienza africana la convinzione che il maggiore ostacolo ai propri interessi economici derivasse dall’appoggio solidale che la Chiesa cattolica assicurava all’aristocrazia possidente di Roma. Non per niente, probabilmente nel 438, si era fatto precedere in Sicilia da Massimino, accanito vescovo di fede ariana. Forse sarebbe stato costui quel Massimino giunto in Africa nel 427 al seguito del conte Sigisvulto e misuratosi in una disputa con Agostino d’Ippona; è questa una recente ipotesi, che certo ingigantisce la figura del personaggio, e per riflesso anche quella dei vescovi dell’isola, che lo avrebbero affrontato sul piano teologico. La missione di Massimino in Sicilia comunque, per quanto è dato giudicare, era andata incontro al più umiliante insuccesso (di “condanna” da parte dell’episcopato siciliano parla il citato *testimonium* di Idazio); ma proprio per questo – e certo per istigazione (*instinctu*) del vendicativo ecclesiastico – Genserico ritenne urgente adottare la misura forte. Sappiamo che ne ebbe a soffrire il vescovo di Lilibeo, Pascasio, imprigionato in quell’occasione. Ma sappiamo pure che presto questi venne liberato e che la Chiesa di Sicilia riprese tranquilla il suo cammino, tanto da essere ritenuta da lì a pochi anni una tra le più “sicure” da papa Leone’.³⁴ In definitiva, secondo Rizzo, per spiegare le espressioni idaziane *Arrianorum dux e damnatus a catholicis episcopis*, ‘basterebbe supporre che Massimino facesse parte dell’avanguardia gensericiano e che l’episcopato locale – forse quello occidentale, più direttamente minacciato in quel momento – si fosse trovato nella necessità di contrastarne l’azione. La tesi di un Massimino vescovo ariano della Sicilia e di un concilio celebrato per condannarne la dottrina è quanto meno non necessaria: eppure, sulle orme del Savagnone, continua a far testo’.³⁵

³⁴ F.P. Rizzo, *Sicilia*, 2.1 (2006), 159-61.

³⁵ *Id.*, *Sicilia*, 1 (2005), 17. Quanto alla testimonianza di Idazio sulla vicenda di Genserico e di Massimino ariano, per il medesimo Rizzo, *ibid.* 45, nota 88, nella quale si è espressamente richiamato all’indagine di Concetta Molé, *Uno storico del V secolo. Il vescovo Idazio* (Catania, 1978), quel cronografo ‘era affetto – ben risultava dalla citata indagine – da una duplice viscerale avversione

A dare la misura di quanto la *vexata quaestio* su Massimino ariano e la Sicilia sia lontana dall'essere risolta è ulteriormente la voce *Massimino ariano* firmata da Manlio Simonetti per il *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane* del 2007³⁶ (tal quale – bibliografia a parte – era stata da lui pubblicata nel 1984 in *Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane*)³⁷: in essa leggiamo che Massimino, “nato intorno al 360-365, di origine romana piuttosto che gotica, vescovo di una comunità ariana forse dell'Ilirico, fu nel 427 in Africa al seguito di truppe barbariche là inviate al servizio di Roma, e in questa occasione ebbe una pubblica disputa a Ippona con Agostino (427 o 428). Difficilmente può essere identificato con un omonimo capoparte ariano attivo in Sicilia nel 440”.³⁸

* * *

Mi fermo qui. Chi ha avuto la pazienza di seguirmi finora avrà certamente colto sia affinità sia differenze tra le posizioni assunte dagli studiosi menzionati sulla *vexata quaestio* intorno a Massimino ariano e la Sicilia, e pertanto mi par bene non ribadirle: posizioni, tuttavia, che mi sembrano non ancorate a preconcetti riguardo alle fonti, né appiattite sulle proposte della bibliografia secondaria; esse sono, sì, segnate da svariate ipotesi (talora l'una – anche ciò si sarà colto – agli antipodi di un'altra), ma tutte indicative degli intendimenti storiografici e dell'approccio metodologico ai *testimonia* da parte di ciascuno studioso nell'ambito della libertà d'indagine. Sicché l'ampio ventaglio di tali ipotesi sulla *vexata quaestio* in questa sede rapidamente presentata attraverso alcune sue tappe (e pertanto senza pretesa di esaustività!) – formulate intorno a un grumo di storia quale quello della fonte idaziana, su un groviglio d'intreccio storico –, mentre ci rende sempre più consapevoli che sono molteplici le facce della verità storica, mai totalmente contrastanti e in varia misura convergenti, non ci induce, parimenti, a una sempre più rinnovata comprensione del noto principio difeso da Theodor Mommsen di fronte a Barthold G. Niebuhr che tutta la *historia* è *hypothetica*?

nei riguardi della stirpe barbarica e dell'eresia ariana, due sentimenti che avrebbero potuto indurlo ad attribuire alla vicenda più peso di quanto essa non meritasse’.

³⁶ Manlio Simonetti, ‘Massimino ariano’, in Angelo Di Berardino (ed.), *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane* (Genova – Milano, 2007), 3113-4.

³⁷ *Supra* nota 20.

³⁸ M. Simonetti, ‘Massimino ariano’ (2007), 3113.

Il variegato panorama di accezioni dei termini *Romanus e barbarus, Christianus e paganus* negli scritti di Salviano

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ABSTRACT

The article belongs to the increasingly promising line of the lexical studies pursuing a historical interpretation of the ancient world and particularly of the late Roman Empire. It explores the kaleidoscopic and varied range of acceptations of the terms *Romanus* and *barbarus*, *Christianus* and *paganus*, which are diffusely present in the *corpus* of the historiographer Salvianus, at whom we look with growing interest especially since the last decades of the twentieth century. The more careful grasping than in the past of the meanings and the meaning's nuances, the valences and the peculiarities of such terms, concur to: 1. a more fully understanding of the *res* that the historiographer of Marseille narrates and also his ideological and mental attitudes that accompany such *res*; 2. capturing more clearly the historical and social, anthropological and religious horizons of Salvianus; 3. averring more precisely robust continuity of his conception of history, from the *Epistulae*, through the *Ad Ecclesiam*, to the *De gubernatione Dei*.

Il presente contributo si inserisce nel sempre più promettente ‘filone di studi che si propone, secondo una prospettiva storico-sociale piuttosto che linguistica’, di guardare con specifica attenzione al ‘significato che parole o espressioni verbali “rilevanti per l’interpretazione storica” assumono nelle loro trasformazioni nel tempo e nei diversi autori’.¹ La prospettiva, appunto, storico-sociale e,

¹ Alfredina Storchi Marino, ‘Introduzione’, in *ead.* (ed.), *Economia, amministrazione e fiscalità nel mondo romano. Ricerche lessicali* (Bari, 2004), 7. Nel campo della storia antica è nota la crescita degli studi lessicali ai fini dell’interpretazione storica, giunti a un raffinato livello di analisi in diversi settori, da quello del lessico politico a quello dell’ideologia – come mostrano, ad esempio, i lavori di lessicografia politica della scuola di Italo Lana, di quella di Mario Pani, o di quella di Claude Nicolet –, e pure sul piano del dibattito metodologico – sviluppatosi soprattutto in Francia, con Lucien Febvre, e in Germania, con Reinhart Koselleck –: vd., fra gli altri, Lucien Febvre, *Problemi di metodo storico* (Torino, 1971, dall’ed. Paris, 1930); Reinhart Koselleck, ‘Begriffsgeschichte und Sozialgeschichte’, *Kölner Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte* 16 (1971), 116-31; *id.*, ‘Einleitung’, in Otto Brunner *et al.* (eds), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Bd. 1/A-D (Stuttgart, 1973); Hans Kloft, ‘Einleitung’, in *id.* (ed.), *Ideologie und Herrschaft in der Antike* (Darmstadt, 1979); Claude Nicolet, ‘Lexicographie politique et histoire romaine. Problèmes de méthode et directions de recherches’, in Italo Lana *et al.* (eds), *Atti del Convegno sulla lessicografia politica e giuridica nel campo delle*

insieme, antropologica e religiosa, da cui mi pongo per illustrare i quattro termini di cui al titolo del mio contributo nei loro contesti del *corpus* salviano – al quale volgo la mia attenzione da un decennio a questa parte² –, consente infatti di capire in maniera meno generica e più puntuale, attraverso l'impiego che di essi fa Salviano, non soltanto le *res* che egli narra, ma anche, e direi soprattutto, gli atteggiamenti mentali e ideologici che alle medesime *res* si accompagnano: tenendo sempre presente – è appena il caso di ribadirlo – che per lo storiografo di Marsiglia, come per altri storiografi cristiani, nella storia si attua attraverso i secoli il disegno provvidenziale di Dio per la salvezza degli uomini, e che pertanto il suo *De gubernatione Dei*, al pari di ogni altra opera storiografica cristiana antica, si fonda sull'autorità della Scrittura³ e in questa

scienze dell'antichità, Torino, 28-29 apr. 1978 (Torino, 1980), 19-46; Irmeline Veit-Brause, 'A note on Begriffsgeschichte', *History and Theory* 20 (1981), 61-7; Claude Nicolet, 'Du pouvoir dans l'antiquité: les mots et les réalités', *Cahiers du Centre G. Glotz* 1 (1990), 3-11. Proprio sul piano del metodo, la convergenza tra filologia e storia, finalizzata a una corretta comprensione delle strutture politiche, economiche e sociali, rimane ineludibile nella ricerca storica, specie quando le mutazioni di significato o accezioni di un termine, che si riscontra in un autore dell'antichità e in particolare modo della tarda antichità, risultano importanti perché concorrono a far cogliere adeguatamente le trasformazioni della società di cui ai suoi scritti, e forniscono anche apporti non marginali alla storia delle idee e delle mentalità: vd., oltre a I. Veit-Brause, 'A note', 62; Volker Sellin, 'Mentalität und Mentalitätsgeschichte', *Historische Zeitschrift* 241 (1983), 555-98.

² Salvatore Costanza, 'Romani e barbari, cristiani e pagani nella concezione salviana della storia (1ª parte: *Epistulae* e *Ad Ecclesiam*)', *Guttadauro* 4 (2004), 31-51; *id.*, *Aspetti e problemi della fiscalità nel tardo impero romano. Normativa imperiale, fonti pagane e fonti cristiane a confronto*, Sintesi e proposte 42 (S. Cataldo-Caltanissetta, 2005), specialmente 74-85, con relative note; *id.*, 'Romani e barbari, cristiani e pagani nella concezione salviana della storia (2ª parte: *De gubernatione Dei*)', *Guttadauro* 6 (2006), 75-139; *id.*, 'Poveri e altri marginali: dall'orizzonte biblico e patristico agli itinerari di studi tardoantichi recenti (e meno)', *Guttadauro* 8 (2008), 292-322, 309-13 e 319-22; *id.*, 'Cartagine in Salviano di Marsiglia: alcune puntualizzazioni', *SP* 69 (2013), 175-86. Fra le indicazioni bibliografiche che corredano tali miei studi mi limito a segnalare qui in particolare: Adalbert-Gautier Hamman, 'L'actualité de Salvien de Marseille. Idées sociales et politiques', *Augustinianum* 17 (1977), 381-93; José María Blázquez Martínez, *La sociedad del Bajo Imperio en la obra de Salviano de Marsella* (Madrid, 1990); Vincenzo Messina, 'Salviano di Marsiglia', in Guido Bosio *et al.* (eds), *Introduzione ai Padri della Chiesa. Secoli IV e V*, Strumenti della Corona Patrum 4 (Torino, 1995), 303-31; Francesco Paolo Rizzo, 'Il *De gubernatione Dei* di Salviano nel quadro della problematica di fine impero', *Quaderni Catanesi di Cultura Classica e Medievale* 4-5 (1992-1993) [1997], 71-108; Vincenzo Messina, 'Fenomeni degenerativi e crisi morale nella società tardoimperiale. La testimonianza di Salviano di Marsiglia', in Per orbem peregrinus. *Studi per il 25° anniversario di episcopato di A.M. Garsia* (Caltanissetta, 1999), 183-240; *id.*, 'Christianorum morbi e miseria temporis in Salviano', in Serena Bianchetti *et al.* (eds), Poikilma. *Studi in onore di M.R. Cataudella in occasione del 60° compleanno*, 2 (La Spezia, 2001), 865-89; *id.*, 'Aspetti istituzionali e riferimenti normativi in Salviano di Marsiglia', *SP* 44 (2010), 111-7.

³ Arnaldo Momigliano, 'Pagan and Christian Historiography in the Fourth Century A.D.', in *id.* (ed.), *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (Oxford, 1963), 92-3.

trova i mezzi necessari e sufficienti per stabilire la verità *de temporibus*,⁴ correlando agli accadimenti della *historia salutis* quelli della storia profana; e tenendo parimenti presente, in modo del tutto peculiare, che Salviano sembra scrivere in un tempo, per così dire, di ‘transizione’ e di ‘attesa’,⁵ idoneo – secondo la sua concezione cristiana della storia e la sua mentalità d’asceta – ad essere vissuto dai Romani-cristiani in funzione della resipiscenza, del ravvedimento e del pentimento, ossia come salutare e vitale *kairós*,⁶ che ai suoi occhi, infine, risulta un *kairós* da essi mancato,⁷ sicché, ‘passato inutilmente il tempo della clemenza, ritorna quello della collera’.⁸

In tal senso la lettura di passi e contesti del *corpus* salviano nei quali, più incisivamente che in altri, figurano i termini *Romanus* e *barbarus*, *Christianus* e *paganus*, consente a questo punto sia di lumeggiarne alcuni significati e valenze, peculiari accezioni e sfumature, sia di cogliere linee di continuità della concezione salviana della storia che dalle *Epistulae*, attraverso l’*Ad Ecclesiam*, giungono al *De gubernatione Dei*.

* * *

Il cosiddetto nocciolo duro del concetto salviano di autentico *Christianus* e della sua deontologia, che si lascia cogliere nelle *Epistulae* I, IV e VI,⁹ contiene invero uno spaccato peculiare e, direi, d’eccezione, del laicato cristiano, ma di certo esso non sembra essere largamente rappresentativo della società al tempo dello storico di Marsiglia. Tant’è che nell’*Epistula* IX e nell’*Ad Ecclesiam* non soltanto non vi sono profili di laici cristiani simili a quelli di cui alle suddette tre *Epistulae*, ma il laicato cristiano presenta in entrambi gli scritti ben diversi contrassegni: si sottolineano fortemente nell’*Epistula* IX i *graves atque multiplices morbi* in cui esso versa (dai quali, peraltro, non sono esenti neppure esponenti del presbiterato e dell’episcopato), e nell’*Ad Ecclesiam* la *miseria temporis et ecclesiasticae plebis*.¹⁰

⁴ Santo Mazzarino, *Il pensiero storico classico*, 2/1 (Bari, 1966), 472-3.

⁵ In Salvianus, *Gub.* 7.1.5 (d’ora in poi *Gub.*), quantunque Salviano lamenti che la *pax* non regna in alcuna parte del mondo romano, l’espressione *in omni ferme orbe Romano et pax et securitas non sunt* sembra forse celare ‘l’attesa che la pace medesima s’instauri’ (F.P. Rizzo, ‘Il *De gubernatione Dei*’, [1992-1993], 84). D’altronde, le espressioni *in medio rei publicae sinu positos* e *possessores ac dominos soli Romani*, indicanti ‘non dunque popoli in movimento, non dunque per allora in azione contro i Romani’, ma popoli il cui ‘stanziamiento’ in seno all’impero ‘sembra un fatto definitivo’, appaiono riferirsi ‘ad un tempo che potremmo dire di “transizione”’ (*ibid.*), ossia al periodo fra il 439 (pace con i Goti) e il 445 (liberazione da parte di Ezio di Colonia e Treviri): e ‘un tempo in qualche modo di attesa’ era ‘quello in cui Salviano scriveva’ (*ibid.* 85).

⁶ *Gub.* 6.15.82; F.P. Rizzo, ‘Il *De gubernatione Dei*’ (1992-1993), 85-6.

⁷ *Gub.* 7.11.49.

⁸ F.P. Rizzo, ‘Il *De gubernatione Dei*’ (1992-1993), 86.

⁹ S. Costanza, ‘Romani e barbari, cristiani e pagani’ (2004), 37-40.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 40-3.

Il suddetto spaccato peculiare, se non anche d'eccezione, va tuttavia tenuto in debito conto, perché quasi paradigmatico della dinamica tensione alla santità avvivante l'intero *corpus* salviano: ¹¹ non mi sembra infatti di marginale rilievo che, in particolare, dell'*Epistula* I, indirizzata a una comunità monastica, verosimilmente quella di Lerino, ¹² il fulcro sia costituito dalla figura della virtuosa madre del *propinquus* di Salviano, e che nell'*Epistula* IV appaia in posizione eminentemente propositiva la *conversiuncula* di Salviano e della moglie Palladia. Affiora insomma da queste due *Epistulae*, come pure dalla VI indirizzata a Limenio, in maniera più o meno velata, un *exemplum sequendum* di *Christianus* laico, e con esso un ideale di vita cristiana, ivi compresa quella coniugale, ispirati entrambi all'equilibrata asceti che Salviano dovette sperimentare nel suo settennato lerinese. ¹³ In tali *Epistulae* si intravede, parimenti, la figura positiva del *Christianus* monaco, appena appena invero e priva di contorni, ma messa a fuoco nell'*Ad Ecclesiam*, ove sicuro punto di riferimento suggerito da Salviano per l'ortoprassi cristiana sono appunto gli autentici *religiosi* del suo tempo, pur maltrattati da *multi parentes*, e con essi gli altrettanto autentici *Christiani* della Chiesa primitiva da lui vagheggiata, vitalmente saldi nella *fidei perfectio*. ¹⁴

Così caratterizzato, il suddetto nocciolo duro dell'idea salviana del vero cristiano risulta funzionale alla comprensione della poliedrica nozione di *Christianus* che si trova nel *De gubernatione Dei*. Qui, già nel I libro, Salviano chiama infatti *veri ac fideles Christiani* i *sancti* (detti anche, fra l'altro, *religiosi*, *monachi*, *Dei cultores* o *servi*), che nel suo tempo vivono *beati* con specchiata esemplarità la povertà, non solo affettiva ma anche effettiva, secondo la dinamica circolarità della *coniugatio virtutum*. ¹⁵ E a partire dal medesimo libro, fino all'ultimo, il profilo del vero *Christianus*, che egli ravvisa nell'atteggiamento mentale e nel vissuto quotidiano sia dell'autentico *religiosus*, sia di qualche *laicus* a questi *par* o *consimilis* ¹⁶ – dalla *credulitas* o *fides* all'*ambulare* come

¹¹ *Ibid.* 37.

¹² Salvatore Pricoco, *L'isola dei santi. Il cenobio di Lerino e le origini del monachesimo gallico* (Roma, 1978).

¹³ *Id.*, 'Una nota biografica su Salviano di Marsiglia', *Siculorum Gymnasium* 29 (1976), 351-68, 360-1 e 368.

¹⁴ S. Costanza, 'Romani e barbari, cristiani e pagani' (2004), 44-6 e *passim*.

¹⁵ *Gub.* 1.2.8-9. Si pensi, in tal senso, ai diversi spaccati di vita monastica di cui, fra l'altro, al *De institutis coenobiorum et de octo vitiorum principalium remediis* e alle *Conlationes Patrum* di Giovanni Cassiano, che, com'è noto, fondò proprio a Marsiglia due monasteri. Quanto all'espressione salviana *nulli [...] beatiore sunt quam qui ex sententia sua atque ex voto agunt* (*Gub.* 1.2.8), che sembra riecheggiare un adagio già consolidato nella paideia classica, vd., ad esempio, Seneca, *Rem. fort.* 16.10 (*Felix est non qui aliis videtur, sed qui sibi*), e il noto studio del Rochus sui proverbi e le espressioni proverbiali in Salviano.

¹⁶ *Gub.* 4.13.61-2. Di *saeculares pares* o *consimiles* ai *religiosi* parla anche, ad esempio, Giovanni Cassiano (Vincenzo Messina, *Povertà e lavoro nella paideia ascetica di Giovanni Cassiano* [Caltanissetta, 1985], 57-8 e note relative).

il Cristo, dal *Christo fideliter credere* al *Christi mandata servare*,¹⁷ dalla *honestorum actuum probitas* al *fidei religiosae ardor* manifestantesi in *fervore spiritus*¹⁸ –, si connota di sempre nuovi dati peculiari attraverso l'articolata riflessione che lo storico di Marsiglia fa sulla società romana tardoimperiale e, in specie, sui sedicenti cristiani del suo tempo.

Come la *credulitas* o *fides* qualifica l'autentico *Christianus*, così l'*incredulitas* e l'*infidelitas* contrassegnano quanti, pur dicendosi cristiani, dubitano del governo di Dio nella storia.¹⁹ A causa delle loro *calumniae* essi sono chiamati da Salviano *impii*²⁰ e, ancora, *falsi* e *impostores Christiani*, gioiosi delle loro *nequitiae* e pure pronti in ogni circostanza a strumentalizzare il *nomen religionis* o il *titulum sanctitatis*,²¹ con siffatta mentalità collocandosi manifestamente *extra omnes Christianos*.²²

Senonché l'*incredulitas* e l'*infidelitas* sono rispettivamente dette da Salviano *paganica* e *impia ac paganica*: espressioni che, come altre simili registrate nell'*Ad Ecclesiam*,²³ segnalano l'accezione fortemente negativa di *Christianus* anche nel *De gubernatione Dei*, qui ulteriormente sottolineata da *quaedam paganica ac prodigiosa* contro Dio,²⁴ ossia da frasi sacrileghe e blasfeme pronunciate dagli pseudo-cristiani, e in modo del tutto peculiare dalla *sacrilega superstitione* connotante la più alta aristocrazia romana d'Africa,²⁵ adoratrice della dea *Caelestis* e pure votata a Cristo.²⁶

Ma mentre l'*incredulitas* e l'*infidelitas*, per Salviano proprie dei pagani di per sé *frigidi* in quanto privi di *fidei religiosae ardor*, sono da lui dichiarate altrettanto proprie dei falsi cristiani *tepidi*²⁷ – sicché il concetto di *paganus* non differisce, ma coincide con quello di *Christianus* incredulo e infedele (come

¹⁷ *Gub.* 2.2.7; 3.2.7-9; 3.3.14; 4.1.1; S. Costanza, 'Romani e barbari, cristiani e pagani' (2006), 79-85.

¹⁸ *Gub.* 4.13.61-2; 4.19.91-2; S. Costanza, 'Romani e barbari, cristiani e pagani' (2006), 93 e 96.

¹⁹ *Gub.* 1.1.1; 3.1.5; 5.3.14.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 1.2.6.

²¹ *Ibid.* 1.2.7; 5.10.52; 5.10.55. Sull'abietta strumentalizzazione del *nomen religionis* e del *titulum sanctitatis*, un male d'antica data e assai diffuso ai tempi di Salviano, vd. Cyprianus, *Laps.* 6; Concilium Eliberitanum, *can.* 19; Johannes Cassianus, *Conl.* 18.7-8; Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epist.* 2.2.3-15.

²² *Gub.* 2.2.7.

²³ S. Costanza, 'Romani e barbari, cristiani e pagani' (2004), *passim*.

²⁴ *Gub.* 4.11.53.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 8.3.14; inoltre 6.11.59-61.

²⁶ S. Costanza, 'Cartagine in Salviano di Marsiglia' (2013), 183-5.

²⁷ *Gub.* 4.19.91-4; 5.1.1. Mi sembra in tal senso paradigmatico quanto afferma Giovanni Cassiano, per il quale il *tepidus status*, di mezzo fra lo *status carnalis* e lo *status spiritalis* (*Conl.* 4.19), è davvero detestabile, in quanto assolutamente privo di *perfectionis fervor* (*Conl.* 4.16). Sicché, per lui, un secolare o un pagano che si pongono alla *sequela Christi*, pur partendo da posizioni diverse, potranno procedere per la via della perfezione molto più agevolmente di un monaco *tepidus* (*Conl.* 4.19; 18.7-8).

del resto mostra la soluzione di Salviano di fronte all'apparente dilemma se appellare cristiani o pagani i suoi interlocutori nel *De gubernatione Dei*²⁸ –, gli attributi *impia ac paganica*, invece, qualificanti l'*infidelitas*, non pertengono in modo univoco alle nozioni salviane di pagano e di sedicente cristiano. Non si può infatti passare qui sotto silenzio che nel II libro del medesimo scritto *impia* è detta da Salviano una *natio inimica* degli Ebrei, ossia la *gens* cui apparteneva il *barbarus* Uria l'Ittita: che qui *impius* abbia però, diversamente che nell'espressione *incredulitas impia ac paganica*, un'accezione negativa attenuata, è suggerito dall'intero suo contesto e in particolare dal fatto che fu il profeta Davide, per aver colpito di spada quel *barbarus*, a indurre colpevolmente alla blasfemia la *gens* di Uria.²⁹

Benché poi l'accostamento e/o l'equivalenza del concetto di sedicente *Christianus* a quello di *paganus* si trovino, come nell'*Ad Ecclesiam*, anche nel *De gubernatione Dei*, in tale opera tuttavia, a differenza che nell'*Ad Ecclesiam*, l'accezione negativa di *Christianus* sopravanza quella, pur essa evidentemente negativa, di *paganus*. L'*incredulitas paganica* che Salviano denuncia in moltissimi sedicenti cristiani del suo tempo, egli non la ravvisa infatti neppure in diversi autorevoli esponenti della sapienza pagana – da Pitagora a Platone, ai filosofi stoici, a Cicerone, a Virgilio –,³⁰ collocandosi su una linea di pensiero che, incisivamente messa in valore da un Giustino e in vario modo intercettata dai Padri seriori, ha attraversato la paideia cristiana nei secoli della tarda antichità.

La stessa accezione negativa di *Christianus* nel *De gubernatione Dei* appare, altresì, graduata secondo la gravità dei misfatti compiuti dagli pseudo-cristiani, la quale è a sua volta direttamente proporzionale tanto al prestigio del ruolo ricoperto da ogni individuo in qualsivoglia ambito della società, nella vita pubblica come in quella privata, quanto – *pour cause* – alla responsabilità morale connessa al medesimo ruolo: per Salviano un misfatto è più grave se consumato, ad esempio, da un senatore o da un chierico anziché da una persona per così dire comune, da un ricco padrone anziché da un povero servo (ancorché malvagio e detestabile), giacché la criminalità della colpa commessa è per il

²⁸ *Gub.* 3.1.5, ove si coglie un grano di saggezza antica che sembra risuonare nell'odierna locuzione proverbiale 'non c'è peggior sordo di chi non vuol sentire'; S. Costanza, 'Romani e barbari, cristiani e pagani' (2006), 81: 'Nel libro III Salviano, con la sua consueta abilità nell'uso dei mezzi retorici, risolve subito l'apparente dilemma se parlare con i *Christiani* o con i *pagani*, ossia se indirizzarsi ai suoi interlocutori appellandoli *Christiani* (nessuno dei quali vuole non passare per *Christianus*) o *pagani*: nell'un caso – quasi una sorta di apertura di credito nei confronti dei sedicenti *Christiani* per quanto minima – non dubita di poter provare la sua tesi, mentre nell'altro sa già che il tentativo sarebbe infruttuoso e vano non perché egli manca di prove, ma perché ha consapevolezza che il *pravus auditor*, appunto perché tale, rifiuta qualsiasi prova'.

²⁹ *Gub.* 2.2.8; 2.4.15; 2.4.16 e *passim*.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 1.1.1-5.

nostro storico tanto maggiore quanto più elevato è, appunto, lo *status* sociale – insieme alla connessa responsabilità morale – della *persona peccantis*.³¹

In tal senso un passo fra i più significativi del *De gubernatione Dei* – nel quale si coglie per di più un efficace *glissement* da *Christianus* a *Romanus* – è quello in cui Salviano esplicitamente giudica peggiori dei *barbari* i *Romani* che, pur sotto l’etichetta di una grande *professio* qual è quella della *philosophia Christiana*, non cessano tuttavia di peccare, e ne stigmatizza il comportamento con l’espressione sentenziosa *ubi sublimior est praerogativa, maior est culpa*.³² Tale passo, ove si coglie facilmente una nozione di *barbarus* – alla quale guarderò *in recto* più avanti – non certo positiva, ma senza dubbio meno negativa di quanto non lo sia quella di *Romanus* / *Christianus*, mi offre qui il destro per osservare che le accezioni positive o negative dei termini da me presi in esame veicolano la concezione salviana della storia su binari che spesso s’incontrano: nella loro vasta gamma esse appaiono infatti, d’ordinario, una sorta di variabili prevalentemente dipendenti dal tipo e dal taglio di comparazioni che di volta in volta il Nostro attua, in diversi modi incrociandole, fra Romani, barbari, cristiani e pagani.

Paradigmatico a questo riguardo quanto si legge, ad esempio – scelgo un passo a caso ma non troppo –, in *Gub.* 4.14.67: il *Romanus populus* è quasi tutto più colpevole dei popoli *barbari* poiché, se anche i *vitia* dei *Romani* sono *paria* a quelli dei *barbari*, i *Romani* peccano *maiore offensione*.³³ Non par dubbio che qui Salviano giudichi infatti la *vitiositas* dei barbari *pagani* – o della *paganica barbaries* (ove *paganica* non sembra avere l’accezione pienamente negativa sopra registrata) – meno grave di quella dei Romani *Christiani*, poiché i barbari *pagani*, o *paganae ac ferae gentes*, non conoscono alcun *praeceptum Domini*, né si fregiano del *nomen Christianitatis*, e se – pur avendo *quaedam bona* – *mala pro bona diligunt*, ciò fanno per ignoranza della Legge.

Si tratta, come finora constatato, di un complesso di nozioni e di relative accezioni, marcate o sfumate talora più talaltra meno, che nel suo aggrovigliato intreccio risalta massimamente alla vivida luce dei due forti riflettori principali accesi da Salviano sulla realtà sociale e politica dell’impero di Valentiniano III, destinataria con i suoi singoli individui e le sue istituzioni del discorso del *De gubernatione Dei* come, parimenti, di quello dell’*Ad Ecclesiam*. Entrambi i riflettori sono orientati, in particolare, sulla ricca *nobilitas* del suo tempo, nella stragrande maggioranza cristiana a parole, ma non, di fatto, nel comportamento: l’uno è puntato sul suo corrotto potere politico-economico e amministrativo avvitato su una ‘perversa spirale involutiva’³⁴ e vessatorio nei confronti di

³¹ *Ibid.* 4.12.57-9.

³² *Ibid.* 4.12.58.

³³ *Ibid.* 4.14.67; *Salvien de Marseille. Œuvres*, 2, ed. Georges Lagarrigue, SC 220 (Paris, 1975), 288, nota 1.

³⁴ V. Messana, ‘*Christianorum morbi e miseria temporis* in Salviano’ (2001), 875.

intere masse di poveri cristi – il peggior ladro per i *pauperculi* –,³⁵ l'altro sullo *scelus maximum* commesso dalla medesima *nobilitas*³⁶ – ma non dai *servi* pur inclini alle *malae cupiditates* –³⁷ con la violazione della santità del matrimonio per via dell'adulterio e del concubinato: un duplice desolante e tormentato scenario della degradata realtà umana di quell'epoca, che motiva fortemente la prospettiva storica salviana sulla fine imminente della *Romana res publica*, strangolata dai tributi – a loro volta rovinosi per i ceti più deboli – e abbattuta dai propri costumi immorali più che dalle invasioni barbariche.³⁸

In entrambi gli scenari, in stretta connessione interfacciale, i concetti di *Christianus* e di *Romanus* spesso si sottendono l'un l'altro, e i relativi termini sono altrettanto spesso impiegati in accezione nettamente negativa, quantunque il primo, più del secondo, solitamente attenga in modo diretto alla sfera etico-religiosa dell'uomo tardoromano. I due concetti si sottendono parimenti l'un l'altro anche negli isolati casi in cui i rispettivi termini hanno un'accezione pienamente positiva. Ne sono un esempio nel *De gubernatione Dei* non solo il riferimento di Salviano – già occorso nell'*Ad Ecclesiam* –³⁹ al *Christianus populus* di età apostolica del quale egli esalta la *puritas*,⁴⁰ ma anche quello, unico nell'intero *corpus* salviano, ai *principes Christiani*, che – chiusasi l'epoca dei *pagani principes*, dei *tyranni persecutores*, segnata dalle persecuzioni e dall'effusione del sangue dei martiri – hanno garantito la pace nell'impero: senza impedire ai Romani 'con atteggiamenti intransigenti e totalitari di vivere la novità di vita sul fondamento del Kerygma' e senza coartarne 'la libertà di coscienza largamente protestata dai Padri',⁴¹ anche se la vita della maggior

³⁵ *Gub.* 4.4.20-1; vd. Julianus Imperator, *Mis.* 41-2; Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epist.* 13; *Salvien de Marseille. Œuvres*, 2 (Paris, 1975), 249, nota 3; S. Costanza, 'Romani e barbari, cristiani e pagani' (2006), 87-8 e *passim*.

³⁶ *Gub.* 4.6.28.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 4.6.29.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 4.6.30. 'Potremmo chiederci: come mai una società opulenta in uno Stato decadente? È davvero questa la visione di Salviano? Oppure per Salviano quella società opulenta contiene dentro di sé il germe della morte? Certo, *sub specie morali* essa *putrefacit*. Ma, appunto, solo *sub specie morali*? Oppure per Salviano i comportamenti morali hanno un intrinseco rapporto con la buona o la cattiva salute della società? A questo riguardo, Salviano coglie un aspetto della massima concretezza: per lui infatti quell'opulenza in mezzo a cui pullulano i vizi è un'opulenza che deriva da un accumulo malvagio (perciò immorale) e distorto (dunque ad un tempo illegale) delle fortune economiche. Ciò si verifica per il fatto che il denaro viene sottratto con violenza alla sua naturale destinazione: "deviazione del denaro" dallo Stato verso i *possessores*, "deviazione del denaro" dai cittadini comuni di nuovo verso i *possessores*' (F.P. Rizzo, 'Il *De gubernatione Dei*' [1992-1993], 87-8). Varie interpretazioni della fine dell'impero romano sono state raccolte, ordinate e analizzate, fra gli altri, da Alexander Demandt, *Der Fall Roms. Die Auflösung des römischen Reiches im Urteil der Nachwelt* (München, 1984).

³⁹ S. Costanza, 'Romani e barbari, cristiani e pagani' (2004), 46 e nota 84.

⁴⁰ *Gub.* 6.1.5.

⁴¹ Vincenzo Messina, 'Uno sguardo retrospettivo ai secoli di Roma imperiale. A margine del dibattito sulle radici cristiane dell'Europa (per la storia della mentalità)', *Guttadauro* 4 (2004), 7-30, 12.

parte dei cristiani, neppur minimamente ligi ai comandamenti divini, è diventata tutt'altro che *pura*, quale invece quella dei *Christiani* che durante le persecuzioni avevano patito sofferenze e supplizi.⁴² Nel secondo caso or ora segnalato riguardante gli imperatori romani, *Christianus* da un lato coincide col sotteso *Romanus*, entrambi evidentemente intesi in accezione pienamente positiva, e dall'altro si contrappone a *paganus*, della cui valenza – certo non altrettanto positiva – partecipa *Romanus* ad esso sotteso.

Che la contrapposizione fra *Romanus-Christianus* e *Romanus-paganus*, pur netta in tale secondo caso, costituisca in Salviano uno schema non rigidamente univoco e perciò suscettibile di varianti alternative, si evince, ancora, dal fatto che *paganus*, come *Christianus*, quantunque da lui impiegato spessissimo in accezione negativa, riveste in certi *loci* del *De gubernatione Dei* un significato pienamente positivo.

Perspicuo risulta in tal senso il parallelismo tra i *sancti* di fine impero e i *veteres Romani*:⁴³ qui la povertà, anche effettiva, vissuta dagli uni nel convinto abbraccio dell'originario radicalismo evangelico e nella sicura prospettiva del Regno, appare a Salviano far il paio, senza forzatura alcuna, con la *privata paupertas* vissuta volontariamente dagli antichi Romani nella continua tensione della loro *prisca virtus* a rendere *opulenta* la *res publica*. Un esplicito parallelismo, questo, ove se ne ravvisa a sua volta un altro, implicito: il quale, oltre a sottendere la contrapposizione / distinzione fra i veri e i falsi cristiani dell'età salviana, e a suggerire la duplice accezione positiva e negativa di *Christianus*, pone su un piano di dignità accanto al cristianesimo dei *sancti* il paganesimo dei *veteres Romani*. Non è infatti agli antichi Romani che Salviano rimprovera l'*incredulitas* e l'*infidelitas paganica* di cui dicevo sopra, ma ai Romani dell'epoca successiva – più simili, egli afferma, specie per la *mollities* dei *nobiles*, ai *Graeci* che ai *Romani* (questi intesi evidentemente come *antiqui, veteres Romani*)⁴⁴ –, corrotti e dissoluti già prima dell'avvento del cristianesimo e, fatto che egli giudica ancor più grave, rimasti tali anche dopo la predicazione dei Vangeli. Tant'è che i *veteres Romani* sono dallo storico di Marsiglia ammirati per la loro coerenza nel praticare le virtù morali propuginate e nell'osservare i principi della religione professata: essi erano convinti di compiacere ai propri *idola* frequentando i circhi e i teatri,⁴⁵ saldi nelle loro credenze (di peculiare

⁴² *Gub.* 3.5.20-1; 3.6.22; 3.6.26; 3.8.30; 3.8.38.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 1.2.10-1. I *Fabii*, i *Fabricii*, i *Cincinnati*, di cui fa ivi menzione il Nostro, sono emblematici *exempla virtutis* tradizionalmente noti attraverso compilazioni, liste, raccolte in genere sistematicamente rubricate, come quella di un Valerio Massimo in epoca tiberiana che vasta eco avrebbe avuto nelle età successive e in quella di Salviano (Valerius Maximus, 4.3.9; 4.8.1; 2.9.4; 4.3.6; 4.4.7; inoltre, ad es., Augustinus, *Civ.* 5.18). Con *parca* e *agrestis vita* Salviano sembra alludere a Curio Dentato (Valerius Maximus, 4.3.5; Florus, *Epit.* 1.13.22; Cicero, *Cato M.* 56; Columella, *R. r.*, 1, *praef.* 14).

⁴⁴ *Gub.* 7.20.87-8.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 6.4.20; 6.4.22.

interesse a tal riguardo il riferimento salviano al culto degli *Afri* pagani per la dea *Caelestis*)⁴⁶ vincevano regnavano ed erano temuti dai barbari – dai quali per di più ricevevano tributi –⁴⁷, e avevano costumi alieni da ogni mollezza.⁴⁸

Analogamente alle nozioni di *Christianus*, di *Romanus*, di *paganus* – delle cui accezioni, positive e negative, insieme a diverse loro valenze ho in questa sede presentato soltanto alcuni *specimina* –, anche quella di *barbarus* ricorre fittamente, e con molteplici sfaccettature di significato, nel *De gubernatione Dei*.

Sembra del tutto agevole indovinare di primo acchito la cifra negativa di *barbarus* laddove essa si contrappone, esplicitamente o implicitamente, a quella positiva di *Romanus* carica di autentici valori culturali e affettivi legati al patrimonio della civiltà di Roma, e affioranti già nell'*Ad Ecclesiam*.⁴⁹ Valori che Salviano tiene pure nel *De gubernatione Dei* in altissima considerazione – dalla *Romana eruditio* che per lui è l'*humana eruditio*,⁵⁰ all'*honor Romani nominis*,⁵¹ al *ius Romanae libertatis*,⁵² agli *statuta legum*,⁵³ ai *beneficia legum* quali quelli delle XII Tavole –,⁵⁴ mostrandosi anche per ciò orgoglioso fin nelle midolla di essere *civis Romanus*: egli lo lascia intuire persino, benché fra le righe e con struggente rimpianto per il glorioso passato di Roma, quando, ad esempio, riferisce che i Romani fuggitivi presso i barbari non vogliono più essere Romani a causa della *Romanae iniquitatis crudelitas*,⁵⁵ e nemmeno ricadere in *ius Romanum*,⁵⁶ o quando afferma che i Bagaudi, non potendo per la rovinosa *exactio*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 8.2.9-11; S. Costanza, 'Romani e barbari, cristiani e pagani' (2006), 126, nota 216 (mia proposta di correzione riguardante il paragrafo 10 di tale testo).

⁴⁷ *Gub.* 6.18.98-9. Commentando alcuni tratti di tali paragrafi, F.P. Rizzo, 'Il *De gubernatione Dei*' (1992-1993), 104, nota 95, ha scritto: 'A proposito dello stanziarsi dei popoli germanici dentro l'impero, Salviano mostra di possedere un notevole senso della realtà politica, cogliendo la vera natura dei *foedera*'.

⁴⁸ *Gub.* 7.20.87-8.

⁴⁹ S. Costanza, 'Romani e barbari, cristiani e pagani' (2004), 49.

⁵⁰ *Gub.* 5.2.8-9.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 5.5.24.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.* 7.21.93.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 8.5.24.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 5.5.22-3. Nell'espressione *nomen [...] magno emptum* di *Gub.* 5.5.22 c'è forse un'allusione ad *Act.* 23:28. Quanto alla ben nota affermazione salviana nel medesimo paragrafo che numerosi cittadini romani preferiscono *sub specie captivitatis vivere liberi*, anziché *sub specie libertatis esse captivi*, essa appare nel suo contesto ben più convincente di una simile di Orosio, secondo il quale – si legge in *Hist.* 7.41.7 – certi *Romani* giudicano la *inter barbaros pauper libertas* migliore della *inter Romanos tributaria sollicitudo*. Vd. anche Paulinus Pellaeus, 285 e 430-1; Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epist.* 5.7; Michele Pellegrino, *Salviano di Marsiglia. Studio critico* (Roma, 1940), 220-1; Pierre Courcelle, *Histoire littéraire des grandes invasions germaniques* (3rd ed.; Paris, 1964), 160; François Paschoud, 'Le mythe de Rome à la fin de l'Empire et dans les royaumes romano-barbares', in *Passaggio dal Mondo Antico al Medio Evo. Da Teodosio a Gregorio Magno. Atti del Convegno Int. dei Lincei, Roma, 25-28 mag. 1977* (Roma, 1980), 123-38, 135-6.

⁵⁶ *Gub.* 5.8.37.

publica più continuare ad essere *Romani*, sono divenuti *quasi barbari*;⁵⁷ oppure quando racconta che la *civitas Romana* di Cartagine, quasi un'altra Roma in territorio africano, era diventata per la colluvie dei suoi vizi il *dedecus* dell'*imperium Romanum*.⁵⁸

Circa l'accezione genericamente negativa di *barbarus* basterà qui segnalare alcuni dati (accezione, peraltro, che talora si contrappone, similmente a quanto appena detto, a quella positiva di *Romanus*): i *barbari*, segnatamente i *Wandali* e i *Gothi*, sono estranei alla *Romana eruditio*;⁵⁹ i *barbari* si sono impadroniti del *solum Romanum*;⁶⁰ i Vandali sono *infirmisissimi* e *ignavisissimi hostes*;⁶¹ le *barbarae gentes* sono assetate del *Romanus sanguis*;⁶² la Germania Prima è *barbara* di nome ma *Romana* per l'obbedienza.⁶³

Frequenti sono tuttavia i casi in cui l'accezione negativa di *barbarus*, a confronto con quella pur essa negativa di *Romanus*, mostra un risvolto che il Nostro non può non apprezzare, come nel passo in cui si legge che i *barbari* sono sì *hostes*, ma *leniores* se paragonati agli *exactores Romani*.⁶⁴ Né sono pochi i casi in cui l'accezione negativa di *barbarus*, alla luce del relativo contesto, risulta in effetti notevolmente attenuata da un'accezione di *Romanus* inizialmente positiva, ma viepiù sbiadita tanto da diventare negativa. Valga per tutti quello, poco sopra richiamato, riguardante *Wandali* e *Gothi* estranei alla *Romana eruditio*. Salviano giudica scriteriato – è mio convincimento – che i sedicenti *Romani Christiani / catholici* chiamino, secondo il loro punto di vista peraltro deformato, *haeretici* i Vandali e i Goti, se questi non sanno neppure di esserlo. Che tali barbari praticino ciò che per ignoranza essi credono retto deriva, per di più, non dall'autentica *Romana eruditio* che ha genuinamente trasmesso le Scritture, *plenaevi inviolatae* e *integrae* – nei cui confronti i presunti

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 5.5.24-6; 5.5.28. Sul tema, fra gli altri, Domenico Lassandro, 'Exhaustae provinciae... praesidentium rapinis. Corruzione e rivolta morale nella Gallia tardoantica (nei *Panegyrici* e in Salviano)', *Vetera Christianorum* 34 (1997), 251-62; Concetta Molé Ventura, 'Rivolta morale e rivolta sociale nella tarda antichità', in Rosario Soraci (ed.), *Corruzione, repressione e rivolta morale nella tarda antichità. Atti del Convegno, Catania, 11-13 dic. 1995* (Catania, 1999), 147-80, la quale rileva che 'rivolta morale del presbitero e rivolta armata dei Bagaudi appaiono come le due facce dello stesso dittico, manifestazioni diverse ma collegate di uno stesso fenomeno, la ribellione contro uno Stato le cui funzioni risultano alterate dalla corruzione' (148); V. Messina, 'Christianorum morbi e miseria temporis in Salviano' (2001), 874 e nota 82.

⁵⁸ *Gub.* 7.16.67; 7.19.83; Lellia Cracco Ruggini, 'Il Tardoantico: per una tipologia dei punti critici', in Andrea Carandini et al. (eds), *Storia di Roma*, 3/1 (Torino, 1993), XLIII, nota 35; S. Costanza, 'Cartagine in Salviano di Marsiglia' (2013), *passim*.

⁵⁹ *Gub.* 5.2.5-9.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 7.2.7.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 7.7.26-8.

⁶² *Ibid.* 7.8.29.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 7.12.50. Sulla Germania Prima, *barbara* e *Romana*, si legge in Ammianus Marcellinus, 15.11.8: *Dein prima Germania, ubi praeter alia municipia Magontiacus est et Vangiones et Nemetae et Argentoratus barbaricis cladibus nota.*

⁶⁴ *Gub.* 5.5.28.

Romani Christiani / catholici danno prova della loro infedeltà –, ma da una *Romana eruditio* contraffatta dalla *Romana magisterii pravitas*, ossia dal *pravum magisterium* di *doctores Romani*, per il cui crimine – scrive Salviano – le medesime Scritture sono state *male interpolatae* e *male traditae*, e appunto per ciò i *barbari* hanno cominciato ad essere *haeretici*.⁶⁵ Ciononostante il loro modo di vivere, *conversatio*, è da lui stimato migliore di quello dei Romani grazie al fatto che essi praticano le virtù dell'*affectus* scambievolmente e della *caritas* vicendevolmente – entrambe le virtù appaiono rilevanti anche nel *De gubernatione Dei*, come già nell'*Epistula VI* –,⁶⁶ mentre i Romani per la loro *impietas* si perseguitano e si rovinano l'un l'altro con l'iniqua esazione delle imposte.⁶⁷

Il giudizio di Salviano sui *barbari haeretici* risulta ulteriormente ridimensionato se confrontato con quello sui *Romani haeretici* i quali, presumendo di essere *catholici* e rinfacciando a *Gothi* e *Wandali* di essere *haeretici* mentre essi stessi vivono nell'*haeretica pravitas*,⁶⁸ sono peggiori, a suo dire, per *infidelitas* rispetto agli altri Romani infedeli (più infedeli, dunque, di questi ultimi), e per *foeditas vitae* rispetto ai barbari.⁶⁹

* * *

I dati che ho in questa sede raccolti, spigolando fra quelli selezionati attraverso la mia lettura del *corpus* salviano e in parte già confluiti nei miei studi sul Nostro – studi qui largamente tenuti presenti –, oso sperare abbiano concorso a dipanare 'il groviglio di considerazioni e puntualizzazioni, distinzioni e accezioni salvianee sottese soprattutto ai concetti di *Romanus* e *barbarus*, *Christianus* e *paganus*, tutt'altro che univoci nello storiografo di Marsiglia', e parimenti a chiarire 'con quali intenti e finalità Salviano li impiega nel descrivere e valutare specifici aspetti e momenti della poliedrica realtà del suo tempo'.⁷⁰ Analogamente auspico che il mio itinerario attraverso le accezioni delle quattro suddette nozioni giovi a riprospettare un più preciso profilo del fine indagatore dell'anima romana e barbarica, cristiana e pagana, sulla linea di quanto è stato affermato in due studi da me già sopra segnalati, e dei quali mi piace ora, in conclusione, proporre alcune puntualizzazioni, che faccio mie: Salviano intuisce 'la direzione fondamentale degli avvenimenti storici', 'sa cogliere senza esitazione gli aspetti decisivi della svolta epocale', percepisce con nettezza che 'Goti, Vandali, Burgundi, Alani, non costituiscono più un pericolo, perché essi sono stanziati definitivamente dentro l'impero', e 'se presso

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 5.2.5-9; 5.2.11; 5.3.14.

⁶⁶ S. Costanza, 'Romani e barbari, cristiani e pagani' (2004), 39-40.

⁶⁷ *Gub.* 5.4.15; 5.4.17; S. Costanza, *Aspetti e problemi della fiscalità nel tardo impero romano* (2005), 80-3 e *passim*.

⁶⁸ *Gub.* 7.11.47-8.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 5.3.14.

⁷⁰ S. Costanza, 'Romani e barbari, cristiani e pagani' (2004), 37.

di essi si rifugiano le popolazioni romane, è perché la buona convivenza tra i due popoli è già un dato sperimentato'.⁷¹ Sicché il Nostro, 'col suo singolare metodo di lettura degli avvenimenti di quella travagliata fase della storia dell'umanità che è stata anche storia di continui spostamenti di popoli, prefigura la formazione di società multiethniche e denuncia il fenomeno dell'emigrazione che comporti l'autospoliazione della propria cultura, induce alla riflessione antropologica sulla dignità delle culture, tutte egualmente motivate nella storia, e sfida al rispetto per l'alterità che pone le basi della tolleranza, suggerendo persino l'idea – *in nuce* – del dialogo interreligioso: secondo un'ottica aliena dalla tentazione sia di irrigidire in una forma "pura" la dinamica della storia, sia di perseguire l'illusione di un'antistorica fissità'.⁷²

⁷¹ F.P. Rizzo, 'Il *De gubernatione Dei*' (1992-1993), 104 e 108.

⁷² V. Messana, '*Christianorum morbi e miseria temporis* in Salviano' (2001), 889.

The Intertextual Tradition of Prosper's *De vocatione omnium gentium*

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ABSTRACT

Upon relocating to Rome, Prosper of Aquitaine composed the treatise *De vocatione omnium gentium* (ca. 450), therein offering his mature and fullest teachings on the economy of salvation. In *De vocatione*, Prosper comported himself as the dispassionate theologian, who was prepared to moderate over the incessant controversies concerning the relationship between divine grace and human free will. Prosper's rhetorical movements within *De vocatione* created space, wherein he reinterpreted and coalesced Augustine of Hippo, Pope Leo and John Cassian into a singular tradition that proclaimed the depths of divine grace. From the outset of *De vocatione*, Prosper rehearsed the trope, which called for observing limits to theological enquiry, but thereafter, he advanced the speculative doctrine of universal salvation. Upon establishing the facts of the Scriptures, which are, according to Prosper, that God wills for all humanity to be saved, that salvation is completely gratuitous, and that God does not save all people, he then selectively integrates Augustine, Leo and Cassian's teachings into a singular articulation of salvation. On the one hand, in *De vocatione*, Prosper establishes boundaries for theological enquiry; then, on the other hand, he inserts the thorny teaching of universal salvation, thereby inviting the faithful to a life of prayer for those who have not been saved because God wills to save everyone (even though not all will be saved). Prosper establishes an intertextual tradition, wherein he rereads Augustine, Cassian and Leo into a singular framework that affirms God's will to save everyone, the absolute gratuitous nature of salvation, and the role of human virtue in the economy of salvation. Prosper's reframing of Augustine, Leo and Cassian into a unified teaching on salvation is emblematic of late antique theologians, who often positioned themselves as the conservators of the Christian faith, then only to emerge as virtuosos who reconfigured their antecedents in order to advance their particular theological commitments. These teachings, such as the divine will to save all humanity, were often grounded in the biblical witness, but were ignored by theologians because of their paradoxical nature. Late antique theologians, such as Prosper, who insisted on championing difficult doctrines, often interweaved together their antecedents in order to create an intertextual tradition that ostensibly supported their theological statements.

Introduction – tradition and doctrine in *De vocatione omnium gentium*

In his lifetime, Prosper was regarded as a faithful and erudite theologian in his own right;¹ however, soon after his death up to contemporary scholarship, he has been placed under the long shadows of Augustine of Hippo and the Roman Church. The standard narrative recounts that upon relocating to Rome, Prosper shifted from an Augustinian to a catholic position regarding the doctrine of divine grace.² In his early years of involvement in the controversy up to 432, Prosper was a strict Augustinian, who wholeheartedly affirmed predestination, thereafter, he began to shift emphasis to divine foreknowledge as an alternative to predestination, which led to his final phase,³ where he believed that the Roman Church, through the pronouncements of the papacy and the liturgy had rightly framed the mystery of salvation. Prosper's *De vocatione omnium gentium* belongs to this third stage of development.⁴ *De vocatione* was

¹ In *De viris illustribus* (ca. 490), Gennadius praises Prosper's theological erudition without any reference to Augustine. See Gennadius, *De viris illustribus* 85, TU 14/1, 90.

² In his valuable reassessment of Prosper, Hwang argues that Prosper's theological development, whereby his doctrine of divine grace was refined in correlation to his growing understanding of ecclesiology. Initially, Prosper believed that Augustine's teachings on predestination stood in agreement with the Roman Church. Upon realizing the real differences between Augustine and the Roman Church, Prosper synthesized his former teacher with the latter tradition. In the final stage of development, Prosper was convinced that the papacy and liturgy of the Roman Church determined his understanding of the doctrine of divine grace. Alexander Y. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover of Perfect Grace: The Life and Thought of Prosper of Aquitaine* (Washington, D.C., 2009), 1-2.

³ Regarding Prosper's movement from Augustine to the Roman Church, Hwang notes: 'Toward the end of his participation in the defense of Augustine in Marseilles, Prosper began to move away from strict adherence to Augustine's doctrine of predestination as Prosper's appreciation of the Roman Church underwent further and significant changes shortly before joining Leo's papal staff in 440. During his second period of reflection and literary inactivity, Prosper concluded that Augustine's doctrine of grace was not the doctrine of the catholic Church, which he now understood to be the Roman Church'. A. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover* (2009), 9.

⁴ From the middle of the 18th century onwards, the authorship of *De vocatione* was questioned until the 1920s, when Cappuyens convincingly reaffirmed Prosper's authorship. Cappuyens argument rests on several points. First, the majority of the manuscript tradition (save a few references to Ambrose of Milan, which need not be taken seriously because of anachronisms) attribute authorship to Prosper. Second, the teachings of *De vocatione* are very similar with Prosper's other writings. Third, the expressions and development of thought is consistent with Prosper. Fourth, the citation of the Scriptures from the Vulgate and older versions in *De vocatione* match Prosper's other writings. Cappuyen concluded his case for Prosper's authorship by addressing the counter-claims of Quesnel, who argued that Pope Leo was the author of *De vocatione*. Dom M. Cappuyens, 'L'auteur du *De vocatione omnium gentium*', *RBen* 39 (1927), 198-226. Unless indicated otherwise, all quotations of *De vocatione gentium* are borrowed from De Letter's volume. See St. Prosper of Aquitaine, *The Call of All Nations*, tr. P. De Letter, *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation* (New York, 1952). The Latin text of *De vocatione*, referenced throughout this study, is located in PL 51, 647-722.

one of his final contributions to the contentious debates over human free will and divine grace.⁵

Prosper composed *De vocatione* in the cradle of the Roman Church. In this present reassessment of *De vocatione*, it will be argued that Prosper was at the height of his powers after diligently learning at the feet of Augustine, furiously debating with Cassian in Marseilles, and now faithfully serving for nearly a decade on Leo's papal staff in Rome, the once lay theologian of Aquitaine was now ready to serve as the adjudicator of the discourse on divine grace and human free will. In *De vocatione*, Prosper placed Augustine, Leo and Cassian in conversation with one another, creating an intertextual tradition, which was grounded in selectivity, interpretation and the consolidation of these interlocutors into a single vision of the mystery of salvation.

The interrelated issues of influence, power and authority are central concerns in this assessment of *De vocatione*. On the one hand, under the gaze of contemporary scholarship, *De vocatione* is often framed as a mediating and passive treatise. De Letter highlights a penchant for compromise, asserting that Prosper made 'great concessions' in *De vocatione* when drawing distinctions between Augustine and the Roman Church.⁶ In addition to these concessions, Weaver concludes that *De vocatione* reveals a 'conciliatory approach' that strived for a solution to the teaching on universal salvation.⁷ In one of the more nuanced assessments, Hwang characterizes Prosper as 'impressionable but able to abandon those influences, and whose life revolved around the insatiable and fanatical desire to know the deepest mysteries of grace'.⁸ Of course, Prosper never abandons Augustine; rather in *De vocatione* Prosper further aligns himself with the Roman Church even as the treatise contains 'reminiscences in nearly every chapter' of Augustine.⁹

In this present assessment, it will be argued that in *De vocatione*, Prosper does not entirely abandon Augustine for the Roman Church.¹⁰ Prosper reinterpreted Augustine by placing him in conversation with Leo and Cassian his final

⁵ Harden believes that *De vocatione* is 'probably Prosper's final contribution' to the debates over free will and divine grace. Rebecca Harden Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency: A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy* (Macon, 1996), 142. However, Hwang asserts that *Auctoritates* was written after *De vocatione* between the years 450 and 455. See A. Hwang (2009), *Intrepid Lover*, 220.

⁶ P. De Letter, *Call of Nations* (1952), 11.

⁷ In her initial comments on *De vocatione*, Weaver asserts: 'This more conciliatory approach continued in the *De vocatione omnium gentium*, in which Prosper attempted to find a satisfactory Augustinian resolution to the thorny issue of the divine will for universal salvation'. Rebecca Harden Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency* (1996), 117.

⁸ A. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover* (2009), 7.

⁹ P. De Letter, *Call of Nations* (1952), 10.

¹⁰ Hwang concludes that, 'though Augustine represents a profound influence upon his life, once he becomes aware that Augustine did not represent the catholic view on grace, he first attempts to synthesis Augustine's theology to conform along acceptable catholic limits, and then abandons him, along with the supporters of Augustine'. A. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover* (2009), 7-8.

attempt at apprehending the mystery of salvation. Prosper would never admit as much, indeed, like many of his contemporaries, he claimed that he was a faithful preserver of the tradition, an evenhanded theologian, who only wanted to provide a straightforward summation of the biblical witness of salvation within the established bounds of the Roman tradition. However, in fact, Prosper's relationship to his contemporaries was rather complex and fluid, marked with shifts in power and influence that were without a stable center. On occasion, Augustine, Leo and Cassian indelibly shaped Prosper from within and without, then at other times, especially in his later years in Rome, Prosper reconfigured these interlocutors for his own doctrinal aims. In addition to reframing Augustine, Leo and Cassian within *De vocatione*, Prosper challenged his readers to affirm the divine will for universal salvation.

Once settled in Rome, Prosper relished the role of the detached observer, who stood above the ecclesiastical politics of his day. From the outset of *De vocatione*,¹¹ Prosper comports himself as a moderate, who only wished to offer an objective account of the divine mystery of salvation. Referencing his earlier contests against Cassian from 430-435, Prosper begins *De vocatione* by recounting the debates between the defenders of free will and the advocates of divine grace.¹² Prosper recounts the conflicts in Marseilles in a manner that created distance between himself and Cassian.¹³ After reimagining his past involvement in the controversy, Prosper explains that the issue is whether 'God wills all men to be saved; and since this cannot be denied, the question arises, why the will of the Almighty is not realized'.¹⁴ Thus, in the opening two sentences of *De vocatione*, Prosper accomplishes two things, which when juxtaposed, reveals the subtlety of his rhetoric. First, Prosper distances himself from his conflicts with Cassian by taking on the tone of detached historian then he affirms that God wills to save all humanity,¹⁵ which is a provocative claim that

¹¹ Prosper divided *De vocatione* into two parts. The first part focuses on the human will, whereas the second book focuses on the divine will. For a brief summary of the contents of the two books of *De vocatione*, see A. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover* (2009), 209-12.

¹² *Materiam hoc libro tractandam proponit, ostenditque gratiae Dei, magna et difficilis dudum vertitur quaestio*. Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.1; PL 51, 649; *Call of Nations* (1952), 26.

¹³ Hwang recognizes the craftiness of Prosper's rhetorical distancing of himself from Cassian and the past controversies, when he notes: 'He, unashamedly, writes of the conflict as if he had been a mere observer, not a pivotal figure in it. Prosper is careful to distance himself from the two camps, who are hopelessly deadlocked in their discussions, before he offers his own personal view'. A. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover* (2009), 208-9.

¹⁴ *Quaeritur enim virum velit Deus omnes homines salvos fieri; et quia negari hoc non potest, cur voluntas Omnipotentis non impleatur inquiritur*. Prosper, *De vocatione* 1.1; PL 51, 649; *Call of Nations* (1952), 26.

¹⁵ Commenting on the introduction of book one, De Letter asserts that, 'the *De vocatione* affirms universalism in God's salvific will, which is taken as certain or even as of faith ... it departs in this view from St. Augustine's restrictive interpretations of 1 Tim. 2.4', P. De Letter, *Call of Nations* (1952), 170 n. 2.

moves beyond Augustine and the Roman Church.¹⁶ Augustine and Leo confirmed the absolute gratuitous nature of salvation but denied the universal salvific will. In *De vocatione*, Prosper affirms both the gratuitous nature of salvation and the universal salvific will, where the former corresponds with Augustine and Leo, and the latter (*i.e.*, universal salvific will) is in line with the Southern Gallic theologians. The underlying bravado of this moment, where Prosper disassociates himself from the debates with Cassian, then affirms universalism as if it was a teaching believed everywhere, by everyone, at all times, is easy to pass over because of the subtlety in the rhetoric.

Following the above assertion, where he affirms God wills to save all of humanity, Prosper declared: 'On this conflict of opinions I shall endeavor, with the Lord's help, to investigate what restraint and moderation we ought to maintain in our views. I shall apply to this study my meager talents in a matter where my own convictions are, I think, moderate'.¹⁷ Prosper claims to be an objective observer, who was once in the throes of debate, is now assessing the situation from a safe distance, offering a detached account of the nature of salvation. Prosper imagines himself as sober minded theologian, who sets limits as defined by the object of study, as one who possesses a sober mind (*in his quae cordi meo sobrie*), then asserts that the limits in our understanding of the mystery of salvation need to be respected by holding to moderate convictions that recognize where inquiry should stop in order to avoid offending anyone.¹⁸ The irony of Prosper's call to moderation is that his insistence on affirming the universal divine salvific will went beyond the claims of Augustine and Leo.

In *De vocatione*, Prosper imagines himself to be above the fray as one who stands as a moderator between those who overemphasize divine grace or human free will. Perhaps, beguiled by the rhetoric, contemporary scholarship has affirmed Prosper's self-characterization without much suspicion. Prosper turns from the polemicist to the consummate moderate, the respectable lay theologian, who navigates the 'middle course between these two extremes' of Augustinianism and the Southern Gallic tradition.¹⁹ Indeed, *De vocatione* has often

¹⁶ Augustine chose to avoid treating the issue of the salvific will within his writings. The problem, which was deemed impossible, was that if God wills to save all humanity, then why are not all saved? The answer would be because of the human will, but then this would make grace dependent on human merit. Alternatively, the answer may be that there is no universal salvific will. De Letter notes that the 'latent presupposition' of this problem is the Augustinian belief that God's will and divine grace can never be thwarted. Later theology posits two types of divine grace in an attempt to nullify the dilemma, P. De Letter, *Call of Nations* (1952), 170-1 n. 3.

¹⁷ *Exercens atque discutiens modulum facultatis meae in his quae cordi meo sobrie (quantum arbitror) inhaeserunt.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 1.1; PL 51, 649; *Call of Nations* (1952), 26.

¹⁸ *Sed et aliis utile sit, ad aliquem nos limitem pervenisse, quem non debeamus excedere.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 1.1; PL 51, 649; *Call of Nations* (1952), 26.

¹⁹ Assessing the *via media* of Prosper in *De vocatione*, De Letter asserts: 'On the other hand, the Semi-Pelagians, Prosper's opponents, forcefully stressed the universality of God's salvific will in order to drive home their point regarding the initiative of man's free will in the work of salvation.'

been framed as a mediating work, which avoided the extremes of Augustine and Cassian. In this present assessment, it will be argued that by posturing as a moderate, who insisted on limits to theological exploration, Prosper simultaneously situates himself as the adjudicator of Augustine, Leo and Cassian. In *De vocatione*, Prosper places these three theologians in conversation thereby synthesizing them into one proclamation of the divine mystery of salvation. Since the inscrutable depth of God's economy of salvation is beyond human comprehension, it takes numerous theologians, reviewed and refined by their able minded successors, to bring them together in order to point towards the mystery of divine grace.

The limits of theological enquiry

From the introduction of *De vocatione* onwards, Prosper declares that theologians need to respect the limits of theological enquiry. By continually affirming the limits, Prosper establishes the boundaries and sets up the debate. He insists that we can never understand why some human beings are not saved as it remains hidden in the 'secret judgments of divine justice'.²⁰ This is a clear boundary throughout *De vocatione*. In chapter thirteen of book one, Prosper turns to the Apostle Paul as the exemplar of moderation, recounting where he declared: 'For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; and we see now through a glass in a dark manner'.²¹ Prosper recognizes that Paul's teachings on salvation raised a multitude questions,²² but in the end, the Apostle preferred to 'leave hidden in the depth of riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God, rather than rashly seek what is withheld from our human knowledge, namely, the secret of the most just Truth and the most merciful Goodness'.²³ Prosper

St. Prosper had therefore to steer a middle course between these two extremes. Against Semi-Pelagianism he had to assert the absolute gratuitousness of grace, but in such wise as to safeguard a real universal salvific will. On the other hand, in spite of St. Augustine's teaching, he had to maintain the universalism of God's will to save men, without, however, impairing the gratuitousness of grace; this gratuitousness he held, with Augustine, to be the Catholic doctrine, P. De Letter, *Call of Nations* (1952), 12.

²⁰ *Ad occulta divinae justitiae judicia referendum, et agnoscendum secreti hujus profunditatem nobis in hac vita patere non posse.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 1.13; PL 51, 665; *Call of Nations* (1952), 53.

²¹ *Ex parte enim scimus, et ex parte prophetamus* (1Cor. 13:9), et *videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 1.13; PL 51, 665; *Call of Nations* (1952), 53.

²² *Praemissa enim docentis assertio locum dabat multimodae quaestioni.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 1.13; PL 51, 666; *Call of Nations* (1952), 55.

²³ *Sed horum mysteriorum judiciorumque causas pius et doctus magister maluit ad altitudinem divitiarum sapientiae Dei scientiaeque suspendere, quam justissimae veritatis et misericordissimae bonitatis subtractum ab humana ab humana cognitione secretum temeraris inquisitione discutere.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 1.13; PL 51, 666; *Call of Nations* (1952), 55.

concludes that Paul 'omitted nothing of what we should know, but he did not touch on what is not given us to see'.²⁴ Prosper continually argues that the boundaries to our understanding of the mystery of salvation is part of the divine plan, thus, we know what we need to know, and that which is hidden, is necessarily kept secret, and any attempt to transgress this epistemological boundary demonstrates hubris and a lack of understanding the role of faith and prayer in the life of the Christian.

In the fourteenth chapter of book one, Prosper continues emphasizing the inscrutability of God's judgments. He notes that there are thousands of differences and circumstances that we cannot account for in this world.²⁵ For instance, Prosper notes that we do not know why one is born catholic and 'nourished in the cradle of the faith',²⁶ whereas another is born of heretics and 'drinks with his mother's milk the poison of error'.²⁷ In order to ground his claims in the biblical witness, Prosper returns to the interactions between the Lord and the Hebrew prophets, thereby recounting the mysteries of divine providence, which reveal that good and bad, fecundity and barrenness, life and death, all these things and much more come from the Lord.²⁸ Following a string of citations related to the divine economy, Prosper concludes this chapter with a lengthy quote from the *Book of Job*. In taking note of the rises to glory and the declines into misery of human endeavors, Prosper ascribes all events to divine judgment, reinserting Job's affirmation that the Lord gives and takes away without respect to person. In the conclusion of this chapter, Prosper asserts that God's will cannot be frustrated, for as Job declares: 'For He is alone, and no man can turn away His thought. And whatsoever His soul desires, that will He do'.²⁹ The boundaries to human understanding are grounded in the biblical testimony, which hedges the discourse in *De vocatione*.

²⁴ *Nihil omittens de his quae non oportet ignorari, nihil contrectans de his quae non licet sciri.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 1.13; PL 51, 649; *Call of Nations* (1952), 55.

²⁵ *Si denique mille alias differentias in habitu corporum, in qualitibus animorum, in conditione temporum, in more regionum,* Prosper, *De vocatione* 1.14; PL 51, 667; *Call of Nations* (1952), 55.

²⁶ *Iste a catholicis editus, in veritatis cunabulis nutriatur.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 1.14; PL 51, 666-7; *Call of Nations* (1952), 55.

²⁷ *Ille haeticorum; progenies, cum ipso lacte matris hauriat virus erroris.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 1.14; PL 51, 667; *Call of Nations* (1952), 56.

²⁸ Prosper references the Lord God asking Moses about who gives a man a mouth, or makes one dumb and deaf, then another seeing or blind. Then, Prosper follows up with the Lord God reminding the prophet Isaiah that it is "I who made barren and fecund". Following the above citations, Prosper references the Book of Ecclesiasticus, recounting the declaration that 'Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God'. Prosper, *De vocatione* 1.14; PL 51, 667; *Call of Nations* (1952), 57.

²⁹ Prosper here cites from *Job* 23:15. Prosper, *De vocatione* 1.14; PL 51, 668; *Call of Nations* (1952), 58.

In affirming the limits to human understanding, Prosper is careful to note that there are things we know with absolute certainty despite our epistemological finitude. We know for certain, Prosper declares, that humanity is created from the original elements, with both body and soul, in a manner that pleases God.³⁰ Prosper assures us that God would not limit human understanding if there was any reason for us to know; indeed, the Lord would reveal why each event occurred, if it were not enough for us to know that it takes place.³¹ Returning to limited knowledge, Prosper warned that one should not ‘scrutinize what God wants to be hidden, but that we may not disregard what He made manifest, else we may be wrongly inquisitive about the former and deserve blame for not gratefully receiving the latter’.³² The latter, which ought to be acknowledged, is that according to the Scriptures, the Lord has chosen a particular plan of salvation, which began with Israel, then was extended to the Gentiles.³³ The Scriptures reveal what has taken place in the past, what is now occurring in the present, and what will come about in the future, thus, we do have some knowledge of the facts of the divine economy of salvation. We know that what of the salvation story; however, the question of why, that is why does God decree all of these events observed throughout the history of Israel, the Church and the world at-large is withheld from human understanding.³⁴ In the conclusion of book one, Prosper declared we must attempt to make our faith, which asserts God wills all to be saved, to be unassailable through a significant amount of research, which will be the primary task undertaken in book two of *De vocatione*.³⁵

By insisting on limits to understanding, Prosper reaffirms the standard view within the tradition. One of the great paradoxes of late antique theologians is that they all affirmed the ineffable nature of God and great mysterious depths of the faith then they dared to speak theologically. The majority of Prosper’s assertions regarding limits to understanding reflect Augustine’s teachings on the same Pauline passages.³⁶ Prosper is in agreement with Augustine, for both

³⁰ Prosper, *De vocatione* 1.14; PL 51, 667; *Call of Nations* (1952), 56.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Quae enim Deus occulta esse voluit, non sunt scrutanda; quae autem manifesta fecit, non sunt scrutanda; quae autem manifesta fecit, non sunt negligenda: ne et in illis illicite curiosi, et in istis damnabiliter inveniamur ingrati.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 1.21; PL 51, 674; *Call of Nations* (1952), 68.

³³ Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.21; PL 51, 685; *Call of Nations* (1952), 69.

³⁴ *Sed quare ita fieri placuerit, ab humanae intelligentiae contemplatione substractum est.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.21; PL 51, 685; *Call of Nations* (1952), 69.

³⁵ Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.1; PL 51, 685; *Call of Nations* (1952), 88.

³⁶ For example, in chapter thirteen of book one, Prosper interprets from the Apostle Paul’s *Epistle to the Romans* in support of his emphasis on the unknowability of God’s saving plan. Augustine employs the same passages in various works of his in order to make the same argument. Thus, Prosper employs *Rom. 11:25-32*, as does Augustine, in *De. grat. et lib. arb.* 22.44. Again, Prosper references *Rom. 11:33-6* in support of the ineffability of the divine wisdom, which reflects

affirm the epistemological limits. However, Prosper argues that the doctrine of universal salvation should be affirmed because of the biblical witness, whereas Augustine avoided the doctrine because it led to difficulties when affirming both predestination and the gratuitous nature of salvation. Prosper believed that one may receive in faith the authority of the Scriptures, which attest to the divine salvific universal will, without fully accounting for the problems with the teaching.

On the other hand, by reminding his audience of the limits to theological enquiry, Prosper establishes the terms for the debate and further exploration. In the introduction of book two of *De vocatione*, Prosper returns to the central theme of divine salvific will, first asserting that if we give up on the 'immoderate disputes (*intemperans disputatio*)',³⁷ then it will become clear that we could hold three conclusions concerning the initial problem addressed in this second book.³⁸ If one gives up the incessant debating over doctrine, then Prosper contends there are three truths that can be agreed upon. First, God wills for all of humanity to be saved and to know the truth.³⁹ Secondly, all who come to the knowledge of salvation and truth do so through the assistance of divine grace (*divinae gratia*) rather than by their own merits (*meritis*).⁴⁰ Thirdly, the judgments of God are inscrutable;⁴¹ therefore, we should not question as to why God wishes to save all humanity but does not do so.⁴² The third assertion is necessary for affirming the first two points. Prosper instructs that if one does not search into what cannot be known, then there should be no problem affirming the first two assertions.⁴³ Indeed, Prosper contends, we should believe and preach them both (*i.e.*, God wills all to be saved and that the knowledge of salvation relies upon divine grace) with the assurance of an undisturbed faith.⁴⁴

Augustine, in *Contra duas epist. Pelag.* 4.6.16. See P. De Letter, *Call of Nations* (1952), 185 n. 185 and 187.

³⁷ *Remotis abdicatisque omnibus concertationibus quas intemperantium disputationum gignit animositas.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.1; PL 51, 685; *Call of Nations* (1952), 89.

³⁸ Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.1; PL 51, 685; *Call of Nations* (1952), 89.
³⁹ *Unum, quo profitendum est Deum velle omnes homines salvos fieri, et in agnitionem veritatis venire.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.1; PL 51, 686; *Call of Nations* (1952), 89.

⁴⁰ *Alterum, quo dubitandum non est ad ipsam cognitionem veritatis perceptionem salutis, non suis quemquam meritis sed ope atque opere divinae gratiae pervenire.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.1; PL 51, 686-7; *Call of Nations* (1952), 89.

⁴¹ *Tertium quo confitendum est altitudinem judiciorum Dei humanae intelligentiae penetrabilem esse non posse.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.1; PL 51, 649; *Call of Nations* (1952), 89.

⁴² *Et cur non omnes homines salvet, qui omnes homines vult salvos fieri, non oportere disquiri.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.1; PL 51, 687; *Call of Nations* (1952), 89.

⁴³ *Quoniam si quod cognosci non potest, non quaeritur, inter primam et secundam definitionem non remanebit causa certaminis.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.1; PL 51, 687; *Call of Nations* (1952), 89.

⁴⁴ *Sed securam ac tranquillam fide utrumque praedicabitur, utrumque credetur.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.1; PL 51, 687; *Call of Nations* (1952), 89.

Prosper affirmed the limits to theological enquiry, which aligned himself with Augustine, but he uses this rule of moderation to safeguard his teaching on the divine salvific will. He established boundaries in step with Augustine, both declaring one only understands what has been revealed, then he argues that the Scriptures reveal that the Lord wills for all humans to be saved, but does not explain why many persons remain lost and damned. Indeed, to attempt any explanation of what has been revealed as a mystery would be intellectual pride and the heights of presumption.

In book two of *De vocatione*, Prosper affirms the limits of understanding and theological truth. On the one hand, he warns against employing dialectics that profane the Scriptures to explain the nature of divine grace for this would make clear statements into uncertain ones.⁴⁵ Likewise, we must avoid advancing any arguments that defile the biblical witness concerning the salvation of all humanity. At this point, Prosper asserted that the more difficult the doctrine, then the more praiseworthy demonstration of faith corresponding with belief in it.⁴⁶ He concluded that assent to believe is exceptionally strong when it is based in authority as the ‘sufficient proof of truth, even though the why of things remains hidden’.⁴⁷ Connecting the inscrutability of divine judgment with the necessity for a strong faith, Prosper set the terms, so that, one should recognize that the limits to our understanding, once respected and affirmed, establishes a starting point for a life of faith and prayer. If the mystery of the divine economy could be solved, then faith would be something lesser than what it is now, for there would be less reliance on the authority of the Scriptures. One is bound to the revelation of the Scriptures by faith, which does not always entail an explanation of contradictions.

Prosper called for sober mindedness, where the theologian remains in the bounds of theological enquiry, then he advanced a speculative doctrine of universal salvation that may have been an original contribution to discourse concerning the divine economy of salvation.⁴⁸ If not entirely affirming universalism, it is clear that God’s universal salvific will is ‘stressed incomparably more’ in *De vocatione* than it had been in Augustine’s writings.⁴⁹ Augustine never

⁴⁵ *Sicut autem ea quae ad manifestationem gratiae ex divinis proferuntur eloquiis nulla possunt disserendi arte violari.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.2; PL 51, 687; *Call of Nations* (1952), 90.

⁴⁶ *Ut quanto hoc ipsum difficiliore intellectu capitur, tanto fide laudabiliore credatur.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.2; PL 51, 687; *Call of Nations* (1952), 90.

⁴⁷ Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.2; PL 51, 687; *Call of Nations* (1952), 90.

⁴⁸ Some scholars, such as Portalié, assert that Prosper affirmed universalism within *De vocatione*. See E. Portalié, ‘Augustinisme’, *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 1.2 (1903), 2515 ff. In referencing Prosper’s affirmation of the divine will to save all humanity in *De vocatione*, Hwang concludes: ‘This treatise reflects Prosper’s personal and speculative view on the issue, which he is quick to acknowledge. It was not intended to be an expression of the catholic faith per se – he does not claim to speak on behalf of the Church – but the reflections of an individual catholic made credible by his claim to objectivity’. A. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover* (2009), 209.

⁴⁹ P. De Letter, *Call of Nations* (1952), 18.

taught a 'universalist doctrine about God's will of salvation; rather he repeatedly interpreted the Scripture texts about God's will to save men, in a restrictive sense'.⁵⁰ Augustine and Pope Leo both located God's universal salvific in the divine general grace.⁵¹ In *De vocatione*, Prosper affirms the gratuitous nature of grace without reference to predestination. Rather, he emphasizes divine foreknowledge of the elect to explain the mysterious nature of divine choice. This is, De Letter suggests, Prosper's 'chief emancipation' from the more severe teachings of Augustine.⁵² Prosper's concept of special grace with election is as close to the doctrine of predestination we find within *De vocatione*.⁵³ In order to synthesize the fully unmerited grace of God with the salvific will, Prosper disconnected the gratuitous character of grace from Augustine's doctrine of predestination.⁵⁴

In his assessment of *De vocatione*, De Letter concludes: 'The originality of St. Prosper's *De vocatione* in solving the problem of salvation of all mankind lies in this idea of a general grace given to all men'.⁵⁵ He argues that Prosper may have found the 'germ of the idea' in Augustine or perhaps in Pope Leo I but the 'clear expression of it is his original contribution'.⁵⁶ De Letter's suggestion has not received a tremendous amount of scrutiny from later historians, which is unfortunate, for his claim suggests that Prosper was not as subservient to Augustine and the Roman Church as is suggested by himself and contemporary scholarship. Prosper's silencing of Augustine's doctrine of predestination was in agreement with the approach of the papacy in the fifth and sixth centuries. Of course, Prosper and the Roman Church affirmed the canonical status of Augustine. By the middle of the fifth century, Augustine was esteemed in sacred memory, but like many of the Church Fathers, his legacy was continually revised and edited, so that there was never one Augustine but many Augustines, which were reworked through centuries of receptive interpretation. *De vocatione* holds

⁵⁰ For Augustine's interpretation of *1Tim. 2:4*, see E. Portalié, 'Augustin (Saint)', *DTC* 1.2 (1903), 247. It has been well documented that Augustine interprets *1Timothy 2:4* in a restrictive manner. See Augustine, *Enchiridion* 27.103; ACW 4.97 and n. 396; *De corrept. et grat.* 15.47; *De praed. sanct.* 8.14.

⁵¹ Augustine, *De spiritu et littera* 33.57-8; CSEL 60, 215-7; Leo, *Serm.* 18.2, 19.2, 24.1, 35.4, 38.3, 44.1, 67.1, 82.2, 91.1; CChr.SL 138-138A; P. De Letter, *Call of Nations* (1952), 167 n. 60-1.

⁵² In his assessment of *De vocatione*, De Letter asserts: 'The gratuitousness of grace is no less stressed than it had been by Augustine, but here it is explained without explicit connection with predestination. This latter, called by Prosper election, and chiefly stressed as God's eternal and infallible foreknowledge of His elect, comes in only as the answer to te mysterious *why* of God's discriminating choice. Perhaps this change of viewpoint, with its consequent shifting of stress laid now on ideas which St. Augustine may have known, but left in the background of his general outlook, constitutes St. Prosper's chief emancipation from rigid', P. De Letter, *Call of Nations* (1952), 8-9.

⁵³ A. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover* (2009), 217.

⁵⁴ P. De Letter, *Call of Nations* (1952), 12. Augustine connects divine grace and predestination throughout his writings. For example, see Augustine, *De dono perserv.* 13.33.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 15.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 15.

an important place in the history of Augustinianism,⁵⁷ which is emblematic of the papal approach at-large during this era.

Prosper avoided the term predestination, which was the typical approach of Popes Celestine, Leo and Hormisdas.⁵⁸ Each of these popes affirmed the canonical status of Augustine, but avoided the doctrine of predestination. Furthermore, Prosper does not mention Augustine throughout the treatise. By avoiding Augustine and the term predestination,⁵⁹ Prosper has located himself within the Roman approach witnessed by the papacy throughout the fifth and sixth centuries. Even the *doctores Gallicani*, such as Faustus, only mentioned Augustine in a positive light if at all within their writings, and whenever there was correction of predestination, it was predominantly done without any mentioning of Augustine even though it was safe to assume he was the intended target.⁶⁰ Prosper clearly recognized the canonical status of Augustine as a Church Father, but edited him through one of the most celebrated practices often applied to the most difficult teachings of the Church Fathers. Prosper engaged in the respected art of avoidance,⁶¹ thus forgetting the doctrine of predestination, or rebuking it without reference to Augustine, then affirming his theological contributions that he deemed in accordance with the biblical testimony and the Roman tradition.

In addition to an unprecedented emphasis on the divine salvific will, Prosper amplified human free will in a more robust way in *De vocatione* than witnessed in Augustine's writings. Cassian emphasized the universality of God's salvific will to emphasize the importance of the human will in the economy of salvation.⁶²

⁵⁷ P. De Letter, *Call of Nations* (1952), 18.

⁵⁸ De Letter asserts it is undeniable that Prosper softened Augustine's doctrine of predestination. Prosper does not use the terms for 'predestination' and its cognates. The term only occurs once and that is in a biblical citation. P. De Letter, *Call of Nations* (1952), 168 n. 67. Hwang similarly observes that the word *praedestinatio* is avoided in favor of the term *electio*. A. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover* (2009), 217.

⁵⁹ Hwang notes that Prosper was mindful of the distrust of the term *praedestinatio*, thus he used the term *electio* and stressed the role of human effort in the process of election. A. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover* (2009), 217.

⁶⁰ For further discussion on Faustus of Riez's *De gratia Dei*, see Matthew J. Pereira, 'Augustine, Pelagius, and the Southern Gallic Tradition: Faustus of Riez's *De gratia Dei*', in Alexander Y. Hwang, Brian Matz and Augustine Casiday (eds), *Grace for Grace: The Debates After Augustine and Pelagius* (Washington, D.C., 2014), 180-207.

⁶¹ The practice of avoiding the difficult teachings of the Church Fathers was commonplace in the fifth and sixth centuries. Cyril of Alexandria's *Third Letter to Nestorius* and *Twelve Anathemas* is another well-known example of a troublesome teaching (i.e., his teaching that the Word of God suffered in the flesh, i.e., theopaschism), which was ignored at the Council of Chalcedon (451). Cyril was a clearly established Church Father after the Council of Ephesus (431), but his doctrine of divine suffering (exemplified in the *Twelve Anathemas*) was ignored until the Council of Constantinople II (553). Under the rule of Emperor Justinian, the council fathers of Constantinople (553) explicitly affirmed Cyril's *Third Letter to Nestorius*.

⁶² J. Cassian, *Coll.* 13; *De prov. div.* 7; also, see Prosper, *Epist. ad Aug.* 4; Hilary, *Epist. ad Aug.* 7. De Letter asserts that Prosper's 'study of the gratuitousness of grace, aimed undoubtedly

Indeed, Prosper's doctrine of grace in *De vocatione* may be more indebted to Cassian than any other theologian.⁶³ In *Contra collatorem*, Prosper purposed to disprove Cassian's manifold view of divine grace.⁶⁴ Now, here in *De vocatione*, Prosper draws from Cassian in chapter twenty six of book two, where he asserts that abundant grace acts as a powerful agent but that this 'influence is not such as to be overpowering, to the extent that whatever transpires in men's salvation is achieved by God's will alone'.⁶⁵ Prosper affirms that the special grace of God is the most prominent in justification,⁶⁶ but human will is associated with grace as a secondary factor.⁶⁷ Human will is aroused so that it may cooperate with God's work, then it may gain merit for that which the 'divine seed inspires the effective desire'.⁶⁸ Prosper borrowed the concept of seeds of virtue (*virtutum semina*) from Cassian.⁶⁹ He previously rejected Cassian's seeds of virtue because the Adamic fall was believed to weaken the possibility of such embedded virtue, but now, in *De vocatione*, Prosper is more accommodating towards this more optimistic view of human nature.⁷⁰ On account of the cooperative relationship between human free will and divine grace, Prosper assures that human failure is due to fickleness whereas victories comes from divine grace.⁷¹ If one refuses divine grace, it is due to their own malice, but where one receives it, this is 'due to both divine grace and their human will'.⁷² Every virtue, including

at the Semi-Pelagians, is loosened from its connection with predestination, and answers the question why it is that not all are saved. The Semi-Pelagians answered the question by saying that those perish who do not wish to be saved stressing the fact that grace waits for their initiative. St. Prosper wanted to discard this explanation at any cost', P. De Letter, *Call of Nations* (1952), 166-7 n. 58.

⁶³ A. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover* (2009), 218.

⁶⁴ Evaluating the significance of Prosper's *Contra Collatorem*, Weaver asserts: 'The *Contra Collatorem*, Prosper's rebuttal of *Collatio* 13, served as the one direct Augustinian response to Cassian', R. Weaver, *Divine Grace* (1996), 117.

⁶⁵ *Ut nullo modo arbitramur esse violentam, quod quidquid in salvandis hominibus agitur, ex sola Dei voluntate peragatur.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.26; PL 51, 711; *Call of Nations* (1952), 134.

⁶⁶ *Gratia quidem Dei illa in omni justificatione principaliter praeeminet.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.26; PL 51, 711; *Call of Nations* (1952), 134-5.

⁶⁷ *Sed etiam voluntas hominis subjungitur ei atque conjungitur.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.26; PL 51, 711; *Call of Nations* (1952), 135.

⁶⁸ *Ut divino in se cooperetur operi, et incipiat exercere ad meritum, quod de superno semine concepit ad studium.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.26; PL 51, 711; *Call of Nations* (1952), 135.

⁶⁹ Hwang notes that Prosper referenced a single seed rather than seeds; furthermore, he switches 'virtue' for 'celestial' but the concept is still very much similar to Cassian. A. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover* (2009), 217. John Cassian, *Conlatio* 13.12.17; CSEL 13, 380; *Conferences*, 479-80.

⁷⁰ It is not entirely clear if Prosper believes that the *superne seminum* is a restored seed or if it is more in keeping with Cassian's notion of the 'seeds of virtue'. A. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover* (2009), 217.

⁷¹ *De sua habens mutabilitate si deficit, de gratiae opitulatione si proficit.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.26; PL 51, 711; *Call of Nations* (1952), 135.

⁷² *Quod autem a multis suscipitur, et gratiae est divinae, et voluntatis humanae.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.26; PL 51, 711; *Call of Nations* (1952), 135.

the beginning of faith in the faithful, is both the gift of divine grace and the consent of human free will.⁷³ In all of that which divine grace does, it first operates to prepare the human will to accept and follow up its gifts.⁷⁴ Here, Prosper differentiates himself from Cassian, as the latter (*i.e.*, Cassian) affirms that the consent of free will precedes and merits grace, the former (*i.e.*, Prosper) emphasizes the dual cooperation between free will and divine grace. God alone is the one who guarantees salvation as a free gift. However, Prosper emphasizes the human role in prayer and right living as the manifestation of election.⁷⁵

***Theologia viatorum* and the mystery of salvation**

Modern assessments of Prosper typically conclude that he was not entirely successful in solving the problems that he set forth to resolve in *De vocatione*.⁷⁶ Amann contends that *De vocatione* is inconsistent in its propositions, which comes from ‘fluctuations of a thought of which cohesion is not the most outstanding feature’.⁷⁷ Cappuyens recognizes the inconsistencies within Prosper’s teachings.⁷⁸ De Letter concurs that an emphasis on inconsistencies may be ‘closest to the objective facts given by the texts’.⁷⁹ In his reflecting upon Prosper’s theology of general grace, De Letter asserts: ‘We may notice how St. Prosper in proposing his theory is struggling to break away from the influence of the Augustinian predestination or election doctrine’.⁸⁰ However, De Letter concludes: ‘Owing to his inability to free himself fully from it, his idea of the general grace, universally given to all, fails to solve the problem’.⁸¹ Thus, Prosper’s solution to the mystery of divine salvation appears to be ‘purely nominal’.⁸² There cannot be a genuine divine universal will for salvation if it is only manifested in a non-saving grace. If Prosper explained that the saving special grace

⁷³ *Sive igitur initia, sive profectus fidelium, sive usque in finem perseverantiam cogitamus, nullum genus nulla species cujusquam virtutes occurret, quae vel sive dono divinae gratiae, vel sine consensu nostrae voluntatis habebatur.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.26; PL 51, 711-2; *Call of Nations* (1952), 135.

⁷⁴ *Ipsae enim gratia hoc omni genere medendi atque auxiliandi agit, ut in eo quem vocat, primam sibi recipientem et famulam donorum suorum praeparet voluntatem.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 2.26; PL 51, 712; *Call of Nations* (1952), 135.

⁷⁵ A. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover* (2009), 217.

⁷⁶ In general agreement with virtually every interpreter of Prosper, Hwang concludes: ‘Prosper was not entirely successful in resolving the problem he set out to solve. The reason behind God’s different dispensations of grace is not answered. Why does God’s grace act in this manner? Prosper’s only response is to plead human ignorance’, A. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover* (2009), 218.

⁷⁷ Émile Amann, ‘Sémi-Pélagiens’, *DTC* 14.2 (1941), 1796-850, 1832.

⁷⁸ D. Cappuyens, ‘L’auteur’ (1927), 212.

⁷⁹ P. De Letter, *Call of Nations* (1952), 166 n. 56.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 17.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

is not given to all because some have refused to receive them, then De Letter asserts this would be a 'great step forward in the right direction'.⁸³ Prosper's attempt to reconcile universal divine salvific will with a doctrine of election was 'essentially the same as Augustinian predestination' and thus is nothing more than, Cappuyns asserts, a 'good intention'.⁸⁴ De Letter suggests a slightly modified conclusion from Cappuyns. De Letter reads a real universalism within *De vocatione* as long as one does not demand a strictly consistent system. He continues by asserting Prosper 'really intends to establish a universal salvific will which excludes no man and extends grace to all men'.⁸⁵ Yet not everyone is saved, why not, the answer for Prosper is hidden in God's election.⁸⁶ Weaver concludes that the tone of *De vocatione* was mediating, but the conclusion was not, for there was no resolution to the controversies over divine grace and human free will. Expressing some level of disappointment, Weaver concludes that: 'The rancor had subsided, but even in this, Prosper's last contribution to the debate, no solution was in sight'.⁸⁷

In response to the many shortcomings of *De vocatione*, namely the fact that Prosper was unable to solve the contradictions or resolve the debates, one may respond it was ever his goal to do as much. In *De vocatione*, Prosper articulates a theology of divine grace that recognizes that no one theologian has perfectly captured the inexpressible truth of divine grace and the mystery of salvation. Therefore, Prosper attempted to bring about coherence out of the dissonance that is the theologies of Augustine, Cassian and Leo, whereby he incorporates 'different perspectives, corrects them, and presents them as expressions of one grace'.⁸⁸ Hwang concludes: 'Prosper took what were partial expressions of grace from Leo, Cassian, and Augustine, corrected them, and formed an understanding of grace that more broadly expressed God's grace'.⁸⁹ In addition to asserting himself as the objective interpreter of the tradition, Prosper demonstrates an increased ability to interpret the Scriptures on his own terms throughout *De vocatione*.

One of Prosper's significant contributions is his interpretation of *1Tim. 2:4*, which declares: 'God will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth'.⁹⁰ He interprets this text in the context of *1Tim. 2:1-6*, which

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ In regards to the universalism of Prosper, Cappuyns asserts that in the final analysis it was 'à une excellente intention', D. Cappuyns, 'Premier représentant' (1927), 337.

⁸⁵ P. De Letter, *Call of Nations* (1952), 168 n. 66.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ R. Weaver, *Divine Grace* (1996), 117.

⁸⁸ A. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover* (2009), 216.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 218.

⁹⁰ *Dicent nos per hujusmodi disputationis Apostolo contradicere definienti, quod Deus homines velit salvos fieri, et in agnitionem veritatis venire.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 1.12; PL 51, 664; *Call of Nations* (1952), 51.

led him to view this passage as an exhortation towards prayer for the salvation of everyone. Prior to declaring it is God's will for all to be saved, *1Timothy* instructs that supplications, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men, for the kinds and for all people in places of authority.⁹¹ After reciting the entirety of *1Tim. 2:1-6*,⁹² Prosper declares that all the priests and the faithful must plead before God, everywhere, not only for the saints and regenerated, but also for the infidels and enemies of Christ, for idol worshippers, Jews, heretics and schismatics.⁹³ The Church is obligated to lift up prayers for everyone without exception. Prosper's admonishment towards prayer for all 'enemies of the Cross of Christ' is reminiscent of the prayers chanted after the singing of the Passion on Good Friday.⁹⁴ These *orationes solennes* of Good Friday may have their origins in the 'prayer of the faithful' (*oratio fidelium*), which was a part of the Roman Mass, often recited after the sermon and prior to the offertory.⁹⁵

Thus, the theology of *De vocatione* is a spiritual theology, which calls the faithful to respond to the mystery of salvation with a life of prayer. Prosper never intended to solve the paradoxes of the economy of salvation. Indeed, to suggest such an accomplishment, would have been to climb the heights of hubris, which would be an assault faith with the foolhardiness of intellectual pride. Prosper places Augustine, Leo and Cassian in conversation with one another, thereby demonstrating that no eye has seen and no mind has fully comprehended the depths of salvation. In *De vocatione*, Prosper returns to his revered teacher Augustine, gives a new hearing to his archrival Cassian, guided by Leo and the liturgy of the Roman Church, all these sources guide him towards a deeper appreciation of the mystery of salvation and divine grace. At the same time, he brings the best theology within these sources together, in order to guide his readers to a greater understanding of salvation. The response to the divine economy is never comprehension; rather, it is, at its root, gratitude, faith and prayer for those who God wills to save.

⁹¹ *Obsecro igitur primo omnium fieri obsecrationes, postulationes, gratiam actiones pro omnibus hominibus, pro regibus, et omnibus qui in sublimitate sunt.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 1.12; PL 51, 664; *Call of Nations* (1952), 51.

⁹² For the full recitation of *1Tim. 2:1-6*, see Prosper, *De vocatione* 1.12; PL 51, 664; *Call of Nations* (1952), 51.

⁹³ *Quam legem supplicationis ita omnium sacerdotum, et omnium fidelium devotio concorditer tenet, ut nulla pars mundi sit in qua hujusmodi orationes non celebrentur a populis Christianis. Supplicat ergo ubique Ecclesia Deo, non solum pro sanctis et in Christo iam regeneratis, sed etiam pro omnibus infidelibus et inimicis crucis Christi, pro omnibus idolorum cultoribus pro omnibus qui Christum in membris ipsius persequantur, pro Judaeis quorum caecitati lumen Evangelii non refulgent, pro haereticis et schismaticis, qui ab unitate fidei et charitatis alieni sunt.* Prosper, *De vocatione* 1.12; PL 51, 664; *Call of Nations* (1952), 52.

⁹⁴ P. De Letter, *Call of Nations* (1952), 184 n. 178.

⁹⁵ P. De Letter, *Call of Nations* (1952), 184 n. 178. Also, see V.L. Kennedy, *The Saints of the Canon of the Mass* (Rome, 1938), 31.

Abjuring Manichaeism in Ostrogothic Rome and Provence: The *Commonitorium quomodo sit agendum cum Manichaeis* and the *Prosperi anathematismi*

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ABSTRACT

The *Commonitorium* consists in a formula for the abjuration of Manichaeism coupled with a *forma* of the letter that Catholic bishops were to deliver to the former *auditores* attesting to their recantation. It also includes some provisions on the procedure to be followed when reconciling the Manichees with the Catholic Church, such as the imposition of monastic confinement to the ancient *electi*. This procedure – also attested in the *Liber Pontificalis*' entry for Pope Siricius (384-399), a clear anachronism – points to a composition of the *Commonitorium* in Rome in the late fifth-early sixth century, most probably in the course of the anti-Manichaean campaigns carried on by Popes Gelasius, Symmachus, and Hormisdas (492-523). The *Commonitorium*, together with the abjuration formula known as the *Prosperi anathematismi* signed by a former Manichee in Provence in 526, attests to the presence of Manichaean Christian communities in the Ostrogothic Kingdom which, however precariously, had managed to preserve their basic soteriological structure (the division of their members into *auditores* and *electi*).

The *Commonitorium quomodo sit agendum cum Manichaeis qui confitentur prauitatem huius nefandi erroris* (CPL, 533; henceforth, *Commonitorium*) was conceived as an aide-mémoire for Catholic bishops having to deal with former Manicheans wishing to abjure this heresy. It consists of a list of ten anathemas against Manichaean tenets,¹ and a *forma* of the letter that bishops should deliver to the ex-Manichees to exonerate them from being prosecuted in the future before public or ecclesiastical courts ([*episcopus*] *det ei epistulam cum die et consule, ut nullam de superiore tempore molestiam uel de publicis legibus uel de disciplina ecclesiastica patiatur*).² These two documents are preceded and

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¹ See *infra*, n. 9.

² *Commonit.*, ed. Joseph Zycha, CSEL 25.2 (Prague, Wien and Leipzig, 1892), 979, (l.) 9-11. The *forma* of this letter provided by the *Commonitorium (forma epistulae, quam dat episcopus conuersis)* reads as follows (982, 5-10): *quoniam te Manichaeorum auditorem te paenitet fuisse, sicut ipse confessus es, anathema dicens blasphemis et impiissimae atque inmundissimae haeresi*

followed by some general statements on the protocol to be observed in reconciling ex-Manichees with the Catholic Church.

In the preface of the *Commonitorium* it is stated that bishops should require from repentant Manichees a *libellus confessionis et paenitentiae* coupled with the list of anathemas provided by the document. After that, bishops were to receive them either into the ranks of the penitents – should they have received the sacrament of baptism in the proper form – or into the catechumenate – should they not.³ The Manichaean *auditores* were to be commended to proven Catholics, under whose tutelage they were expected to attend frequently to the Liturgy of the Word. Bishops were allowed to baptize or to reconcile them only after a long trial period and the testimony of their supervisors. An exception to this rule is danger of death.⁴ In the case of the Manichaean *electi*, however, the procedure is stricter: in the postface of the *Commonitorium* it is stated that ancient Manichaean *electi* were to be deprived for a long time of the episcopal letter which granted to the *ex-auditores* some freedom of movement. On the contrary, the former *electi* were to be relegated to a monastery, where they were to dwell until they were totally purged from their ancient beliefs: *electis uero eorum ... non facile dandae sunt litterae, sed cum dei seruis esse debebunt, siue clericis siue laicis in monasterio uel xenodochio, donec adpareat penitus ipsa superstitione caruisse.*⁵

The *Commonitorium* has been sometimes associated with the name of Prosper of Aquitaine⁶ even if there is not a single manuscript attributing it to him.⁷ All those used by Josef Zycha in his critical edition have in their *incipit* and their *explicit* the name of Augustine,⁸ as one could expect since all its anathemas were borrowed from the bishop of Hippo's anti-Manichaean works.⁹ In my

eorum, ex qua te non nisi fides catholica saluum fecit: habebis hanc epistulam aduersus eos, qui tibi temporis praeteriti errorem, quantum ad istam nefariam pertinet sectam, obiciendum putauerint, quae scripta est die illo et consule illo.

³ *Commonit.*, 979, 5-9: *cum anathemauerint eandem haeresim per hanc formam infra scriptam libellumque dederit unusquisque eorum confessionis et paenitentiae suae atque anathematis eius petens in ecclesia uel catechumeni uel paenitentis locum, si libellus eius episcopo placuerit eumque acceptauerit, det ei epistulam cum die et consule.*

⁴ *Commonit.*, 979-80: *nec facile admitantur ad baptismum, si catechumeni sint, nec ad reconciliationem, si paenitentiae locum acceperint, nisi periculo mortis urgente, uel si eos aliquanto tempore probatos esse cognouerit episcopus per eorum testimonium, quibus fuerint commendati.*

⁵ *Commonit.*, 982, 11-5.

⁶ On Prosper's biography see now Luce Pietri and Marc Heijmans (dirs.), *Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire*, 4. *Prosopographie de la Gaule chrétienne (314-614)* (Paris, 2013), (henceforth, *PCBE*, 4), 1553-6, *Prosper* 1.

⁷ See Jérémy Delmulle, 'Establishing an Authentic List of Prosper's Works', in *SP* 69 (2013), 213-32, 224.

⁸ J. Zycha, *CSEL* 25.2, 979, in *app. crit.*

⁹ Compare, for instance, *Commonit.*, *a(nathema)* 1 (Manichaean dualism), with Aug., *c. Faust.* 21; *Commonit.*, *a.* 2 (Manichaean cosmogony implying God's mutability), with Aug., *c. Faust.* 11, 3 ('Argument of Nebridius'); *Commonit.*, *a.* 3 (redemption of the light particles through the *electi*),

opinion, these para-official documents can hardly be attributed to a sole author. However, it is possible to argue that Prosper could have had a hand in the drafting not of the whole document in its present form – which, as I intend to show, dates from a later date –, but the list of anathemas included in it.

Between 443 and 444, Pope Leo the Great (440-461) carried on in Rome a grand-scale inquisitorial process in the course of which many purported crypto-Manichees were found out.¹⁰ Those who confessed and submitted to the ecclesiastical authorities were required to read and to subscribe to a document anathematizing Manes and all his dogmas and practices in public: *quos potuimus emendare, correximus et ut damnarent Manichaeum cum praedicationibus et disciplinis suis publica in ecclesia professione et manus suae subscriptione, compulimus*.¹¹ We might then assume that since the age of Leo the Great the *scrinia* of the Roman church preserved some form of abjuration from Manichaeism. Moreover, since most of the Manichaean tenets anathematised in the *Commonitorium* are the same targeted by Leo the Great's anti-Manichaean preaching,¹² it is also possible to date the archetype of the list of anathemas later included in the *Commonitorium* to the pontificate of Leo.¹³

On the other hand, Norman W. James has convincingly shown that Prosper was the draftsman of a good deal of Leo's sermons and letters.¹⁴ As for Leo's anti-Manichaean sermons, the fact that most of their arguments were borrowed

with Aug., *mor. Manich.*, 15, 36; *Commonit.*, a. 4 (Adam's generation), with Aug., *nat. b.*, 46; *Commonit.*, a. 5 (seduction of the Archons), with Aug., *nat. b.*, 44; *Commonit.*, a. 6 (the *globus horribilis*), with Aug., *nat. b.*, 42; *Commonit.*, a. 7 (rejection of the Old Testament), with Aug., *c. Adim.*; *Commonit.*, a. 8 (Christological docetism), with Aug., *c. Faust.* 16, 9; *Commonit.*, a. 9 (Manes had the Paraclete), with Aug., *c. Faust.* 13, 17 (*paracletum dicentes esse Manichaeum uel in Manichaeo*); *Commonit.*, a. 10 (Manichaean revelation as *fabulae*), with Aug., *c. Faust.* 11, 3.

¹⁰ On Leo's campaign see, for instance, Trevor Jalland, *The Life and Times of St. Leo the Great* (London, 1941), 43-50; Harry O. Maier, 'Manichee!: Leo the Great and the Orthodox Panopticon', *JECS* 4 (1996), 441-60; Raúl Villegas Marín, 'Vnanimitatem diligite: La persecución del maniqueísmo durante el pontificado de León I (440-461)', *Polis. Revista de ideas y formas políticas de la Antigüedad Clásica* 16 (2004), 214-44; Susan Wessel, *Leo the Great and the Spiritual Rebuilding of a Universal Rome*, Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 93 (Leiden, 2008), 121-36.

¹¹ Leo I, *ep.* 7, 1, ed. Hendrik G. Schipper and Johannes van Oort, CFM SL 1 (Turnhout, 2000), 46-8.

¹² Dualism: Leo I, *hom.* 76, 7 (text a); God's 'mutability': *id.*, *hom.* 24, 5; rejection of the Old Testament: *id.*, *hom.* 9, 4, 34, 4, 24, 1; Christological docetism: *id.*, *hom.* 9, 4, 16, 4, 24, 4, 34, 5, 42, 5 (text a), 72, 5, 72, 7; Manes had the Paraclete: *id.*, *hom.* 76, 6; Manichaean *fabulae*: *id.*, *hom.* 16, 5, 24, 6, 76, 7.

¹³ François Decret, *L'Afrique manichéenne. Étude historique et doctrinale* (Paris, 1978), 2, 170-1, n. 69, suggested that the whole *Commonitorium* might be dated to the pontificate of Leo.

¹⁴ Norman W. James, 'Leo the Great and Prosper of Aquitaine: a Fifth Century Pope and his Adviser', *JTS* 44 (1993), 554-84; *id.*, 'Prosper of Aquitaine Revisited: Gallic Friend of Leo I or Resident Papal Adviser?', *SP* 69 (2013), 267-75. *Contra*, Michele R. Salzman, 'Reconsidering a Relationship: Pope Leo of Rome and Prosper of Aquitaine', in Geoffrey D. Dunn (ed.), *The Bishop of Rome in Late Antiquity* (Farnham and Burlington, 2015), 109-25, who simply dismisses

from the anti-Manichaean works of Augustine of Hippo¹⁵ – Prosper’s admired master – also points to an intervention of the Aquitanian in its drafting. Consequently, the same could also apply to the form of abjuration from Manichaeism that the Roman crypto-Manichees were required to sign under Leo’s pontificate. When having to deal with Roman Manichaeism, Leo could have asked his theological adviser Prosper to scrutinize Augustine’s anti-Manichaean treatises so as to build up a polemic arsenal against this sect. Prosper might have been well acquainted with these works since the time of his polemics against the Provençal masters, when he had had to cope with the accusations of Manichaeism labelled against Augustine by his opponents.¹⁶ In any case, a work such as a form of abjuration from Manichaeism composed of arguments excerpted from Augustine’s polemical works against this sect would be in line with Prosper’s project of providing a reception of Augustine’s thought in the form of *excerpta*. A project that Prosper carried out during his stay in Rome, resulting in the publication of the *Liber sententiarum ex operibus sancti Augustini delibatarum*.¹⁷ As we will later see, the so-called *Prosperi anathematismi* provide further evidence for Prosper of Aquitaine’s intervention in the drafting of the list of anathemas in the *Commonitorium*.

In any case, in the form that it has come to us the *Commonitorium* can by no means be dated back to the pontificate of Leo. When he comes to sum up his anti-Manichaean campaign in his letter 7 to the bishops of Italy, Leo says nothing about having followed different procedures for Manichaean *auditores* and *electi* or having removed Manichees to monasteries. However, there is an interesting reference to a similar provision in the *Liber Pontificalis*, in the entry for Pope Siricius (384-399): *et hoc constituit ut si quis conuersus de Manicheis rediret ad ecclesiam nullatenus communicaretur, nisi tantum religatione monasterii die uitae suae teneretur obnoxius et ut ieiuniis et orationibus maceratus, probatus sub omni examinatione usque ad ultimum diem transitus sui, ut humanitatem ecclesiae uiaticum eis largiatur*.¹⁸

This statement is clearly anachronistic, because by the age of Pope Siricius an institutional monasticism fully incorporated into the ecclesiastical structure of the Church of Rome – as that required by such provision – had not yet

as ‘inconclusive’ the strong arguments – based on textual parallels between Prosper and Leo’s works – advanced by James.

¹⁵ Antoine Lauras, ‘Saint Léon le Grand et le Manichéisme romain’, *SP* 11 (1972), 203-9.

¹⁶ See, for instance, Prosp., *ep. ad Ruf.*, 3, 4, ed. Jean-Baptiste Le Brun des Marettes and Luc-Urbain Mangeant, rep. PL 51, 79: *dicentes eum liberum arbitrium penitus submouere, et sub gratiae nomine necessitatem praedicare fatalem. Adicientes etiam, duas illum humani generis massas, et duas credi uelle naturas: ut scilicet tantae pietatis uiro Paganorum et Manichaeorum adscribatur impietas.*

¹⁷ See Alexander Y. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover of Perfect Grace. The Life and Thought of Prosper of Aquitaine* (Washington, 2009), 204-5.

¹⁸ *LP*, 40, 3, ed. Louis Duchesne, *Le Liber Pontificalis. Texte, introduction et commentaire* (Paris, 1955), 1, 216.

developed. The earliest well-attested Roman monastery is that founded near the basilica of St. Sebastian on the Via Appia (*In catacumbas*) by Sixtus III (432-440).¹⁹ It is then possible that either the author of the entry for Siricius in the ‘first edition’ of the *Liber Pontificalis* – who would have completed his work shortly after the death of Pope Felix IV (526-530)²⁰ – or the one who reworked this ‘first edition’ during the pontificate of Pope Vigilius (537-555)²¹ ascribed to Siricius what was in fact a contemporary anti-Manichaean procedure. As it is well known, the *Liber Pontificalis* in its present form reports that Popes Gelasius (492-496), Symmachus (498-514), and Hormisdas (514-523) carried on anti-Manichaean campaigns in Rome.²² Both the author of the ‘first edition’ of the entry ‘Siricius’ for the *Liber* and its ‘revisor’ for the ‘second edition’ might have been contemporaries of these campaigns and could have been well acquainted with the disciplinary procedure consisting of relegation to monasteries. By the beginning of the sixth-century, many monastic foundations had emerged in Rome on the initiative of Roman bishops, most of them in the main suburban centers of pilgrimage. In order to reinforce the legitimacy of what was in fact a disciplinary innovation (relegation of ex-Manichees to these monasteries),²³ one or another of the aforementioned authors of the *Liber Pontificalis* could have tried to trace back its origin to the pontificate of Siricius.

In a recent article, Samuel Cohen has raised doubts about the historical reliability of the *Liber Pontificalis*’ accounts of the anti-Manichaean campaigns of Gelasius, Symmachus, and Hormisdas. As Cohen puts it, ‘Manichaeism as it is reported in the *Vitae* of Gelasius, Symmachus, and Hormisdas is best explained as a heresiological literary motif mobilized by the compiler of the *Liber Pontificalis* to reinforce the legitimacy of those said to have opposed it’.²⁴ In my opinion, however, by insisting on the use of the *nomen Manichaeorum* in the

¹⁹ Guy Ferrary, *Early Roman Monasteries. Notes for the History of the Monasteries and Convents at Rome from the V through the X Century*, Studi di Antichità Cristiana 23 (Roma, 1957), 163-5.

²⁰ See L. Duchesne, *Le Liber Pontificalis* (1955), 1, xli-xxlviii.

²¹ *Ibid.* xxxix-xli and cxxx-cxxxi. For a short overview of Duchesne’s chronological conclusions see, for instance, Kate Blair-Dixon, ‘Memory and Authority in Sixth-Century Rome: the *Liber Pontificalis* and the *Collectio Avellana*’, in Kate Cooper and Julia Hillner (eds), *Religion, Dynasty, and Patronage in Early Christian Rome, 300-900* (Cambridge, 2007), 59-76, 65-6.

²² *LP*, 51, 1, 255: *huius temporibus inuenti sunt Manichei in urbe Roma quos exilio deportari praecepit, quorum codices ante fores basilicae sanctae Mariae incendio concremauit; LP*, 53, 5, 261: *post haec omnia beatus Symmachus inuenit Manicheos in urbe Roma, quorum omnia simulacra uel codices ante fores basilicae Constantianae incendio concremauit et eos ipsos exilio religauit; LP*, 54, 9, 270-1: *hic inuenit Manicheos, quos etiam discussit cum examinatione plagarum, exilio deportauit; quorum codices ante fores basilicae Constantianae incendio concremauit.*

²³ On the genesis of the sixth-century ecclesiastical penalty of forced monastic confinement see Julia Hillner, *Prison, Punishment and Penance in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2015).

²⁴ Samuel Cohen, ‘Schism and the Polemic of Heresy: Manichaeism and the Representation of Papal Authority in the *Liber Pontificalis*’, *JLA* 8 (2015), 195-230, 222.

Christian heresiological rhetoric – as Cohen does –, scholars risk underestimating the real presence of Manichaean Christianity as a more or less coherent religious movement in the West down to the early post-Imperial period.²⁵ As for the case of early sixth-century Rome, Cohen states that there is no corroborating evidence for the anti-Manichaean campaigns attributed to Gelasius, Symmachus, and Hormisdas.²⁶ According to this scholar, Italian Manichaeism would have been fully devastated by the intensive persecution driven by Pope Leo.²⁷ But there is no reason to exclude that at least some small groups of Manichaeans had managed to survive in secrecy down to the late fifth-early sixth century, as the Manichees of North Africa did – if only to be strongly persecuted at the beginning of the reign of the Vandal king Huneric (477-484).²⁸ In fact, it is quite possible that many African Manichees fleeing from Huneric's persecution took refuge in Italy and joined the local crypto-Manichaean groups, as their co-religionists had done years before in the aftermath of the Vandal conquest of North Africa.²⁹ In any case, it is worth remarking that when Boethius comes to describe the trinitarian errors of several heresies in his *De fide Catholica*, he only uses the present tense in his treatment of Manichaeism, perhaps because he perceived this sect as a real, persistent threat.³⁰

The *Commonitorium* can also be adduced as 'corroborating evidence' for the anti-Manichaean campaigns of Gelasius, Symmachus, and Hormisdas. As we have seen, parallels between the anathemas of this document and the main arguments advanced by Leo in his anti-Manichaean preaching point to a Roman origin of the *Commonitorium*. Moreover, this document provides for the relegation to *monasteria uel xenodochia* of ancient Manichaean *electi*, a measure very similar to that anachronistically attributed to Siricius in the *Liber Pontificalis* by a contemporary of the campaigns of Gelasius, Symmachus, and Hormisdas. It is also interesting to note that the *Commonitorium* includes a *forma* of the letter that was to be granted to repentant Manichaean *auditores* in order to keep them safe from further prosecution: this fact points to a climate of persistent

²⁵ Of course, I am not denying that – as Richard Lim has put it – 'in Late Antiquity, the *nomen Manichaeorum* was after all a label used less for making selves than for marking the religious Other' (Richard Lim, 'The *Nomen Manichaeorum* and Its Uses in Late Antiquity', in Eduard Iricinschi and Holger M. Zellentin [eds], *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*, Text and Studies in Ancient Judaism 119 [Tübingen, 2008], 143-67, 167). But see also his *caueat* in this same article (164-5): 'I shall not go so far as to suggest that there were no "Manichaeans" in Late Antiquity but rather that using the term to label individuals and groups in the Roman world is a much more problematic operation than much of the current scholarship on the subject assumes'.

²⁶ S. Cohen, 'Schism' (2015), 196-7.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 197.

²⁸ Vict. Vit., *Hist. persec. Afric. prou.* 2, 1.

²⁹ See Leo I, *hom.* 16, 5, CFM SL 1, 26: *hos itaque homines, dilectissimi, per omnia execrabilia atque pestiferos, quos aliarum regionum perturbatio nobis intulit crebriores.*

³⁰ Boet., *fid. cath.*, ed. Emanuele Rapisarda, *Boezio. Opuscoli teologici* (Catania, 1960), 33-4.

anti-Manichaean public mobilization that fits well with the pontificates of the three aforementioned bishops. As for the fact that the *Commonitorium* counts on the cooperation of civil servants in the fight against Manichaeism, we should remember that till the crisis of the end of his reign, King Theodoric was in good terms with the Catholic hierarchy and that his religious policy was in line with that of the Christian emperors. With the sole exception of the *lex Gothorum* (Homeism), religions under Theodoric's reign retained their late-Roman legal status. Therefore, there was no room for Manichaeism in Theodoric's *ciuitas*.³¹

If this hypothesis is correct, we might then conclude that despite its illegal status, the Roman Manichaean community managed to preserve its fundamental structure (*auditores / electi*) down to the early sixth-century. If we were to assume that by the age of Pope Gelasius and his successors, accusations of Manichaeism were simply a stigmatizing label bestowed upon religious dissenters of any sort, the accuracy with which the *Commonitorium* distinguishes between the procedures applicable to ancient *auditores* and former *electi* would make no sense. In addition, confining the *electi* to monasteries was a clever strategy for dismantling the Manichaean communities. Not only were the *electi* 'an irreplaceable instrument of liberation' of the divine particles imprisoned in the world,³² but also 'the only channel by means of which the *auditores* might effectively connect with God'.³³

There is also further evidence for the integration of ex-Manichees into the Catholic Church being a hot topic in the Ostrogothic Kingdom: the so-called *Prosperi anathematismi* (CPL, 534), first edited by Jacques Sirmond in 1629 (*Concilia antiqua Galliae*, 1, 209-11). This document consists of a list of 21 anathemas against Manichaean tenets and practices, to which is attached a libel of recantation signed by an ex-Manichee in 526.³⁴ This last document corresponds to the *libellum confessionis et paenitentiae* that, according to the *Commonitorium*, repentant Manichees should deliver to Catholic bishops.³⁵

³¹ Bruno Dumézil, *Les racines chrétiennes de l'Europe. Conversion et liberté dans les royaumes barbares (V^e-VIII^e siècle)* (Paris, 2005), 323-36.

³² Henri-Charles Puech, 'The Concept of Redemption in Manichaeism', in Jason Campbell (ed.), *The Mystic Vision* (Princeton, 1968), 247-314, 296.

³³ Jason David BeDuhn, *The Manichaean Body in Discipline and Ritual* (Baltimore and London, 2000), 65.

³⁴ *Prosp. anath.*, ed. Jacques Sirmond, rep. PL 65, 26: *in Christi nomine, ego Prosper hanc chartulam anathematis Manichaeorum relegi, et anathema dicens omnibus suprascriptis erroribus, manu propria subscripsi, et repudiatis omnibus eorum impietatibus, fide plenissima doctrinis eorum et traditionibus anathema dixi et dico; et me quaecumque Ecclesia catholica confiteatur credere et sequi in omnibus sub testificatione diuina polliceor atque promitto. Not. sub die XIII calendas decembris, Olybrio Iuniore uiro clarissimo consule.*

³⁵ For a close parallel to the text quoted above see the so-called *Libellum Iohannis diaconi*, delivered to Pope Symmachus by this former supporter of Laurentius in 506: *Caelius Iohannes diaconus ecclesiae Romanae, qui me ad tempus ab ecclesia separaui, agnoscens errorem meum spero misericordiam beatitudinis uestrae et reintegrari me unitati, consentiens, quae ueneranda*

As for the list of anathemas, it is just a *uersio aucta* of that contained in the *Commonitorium*.³⁶

The *Prosperi anathematismi* were published by Sirmond from a manuscript preserved in the archives of the church of Lyons. In this codex they immediately follow the acts of the synod of Carpentras presided by Caesarius of Arles in November 527.³⁷ This fact certainly points to a Gallic provenance of the document. We should keep in mind that in 526 Provence was under Ostrogothic rule. Moreover, in November 513 Caesarius of Arles had been named by Pope Symmachus as ‘Papal vicar’ of Gaul, a privilege confirmed in June 514.³⁸ Among Caesarius’ duties as Papal vicar was referring to the Roman See any question arising in Gaul that could not be resolved at the regional level.³⁹ This is what Caesarius did some time prior to the gathering of the Council of Orange in 529, when he requested from Rome advice on the matter of grace and free will. As it is well known, Pope Felix IV met this request by sending to Caesarius a series of *capitula* that formed the basis of sixteen of the twenty-five canons adopted in Orange.⁴⁰

synodus indicauit atque constituit, anathematizantes Petrum Altinatem et Laurentium Romanae ecclesiae peruasorem et scismaticum. Quodsi aliquando similia adtemptauero in ea causa, de qua uenia ab apostolato uestrum merui, tunc ecclesiasticae subiaceam ultioni. Quod manu mea praescriptum obtuli sub die XIII kl.rum Octbr. Fl. Messala u. c. consule (Eckhard Wirbelauer, *Zwei Päpste in Rom. Der Konflikt zwischen Laurentius und Symmachus (498-514). Studien und Texte* [München, 1993], 38; see also Raúl Villegas Marín, ‘La epístola 18 del corpus del obispo romano León I [440-461]: ¿Un “falso simmaquiano”?’, *RHT*, n. s. 8 [2013], 171-226).

³⁶ *Prosp. anath.*, 1-5 = *Commonit.*, a. 1-4 (the fourth anathema in the *Commonitorium* is divided into two in the *Prosperi anathematismi*, with a stunning amendment: the Manichaeans call Atlas Adam’s father); *Prosp. anath.*, 6-9 = *Commonit.*, a. 5-8; *Prosp. anath.*, 18-19 = *Commonit.*, a. 9-10. The following anathemas in the *Prosp. anath.* have no parallels in the list preserved in the *Commonit.*: 11 (rejection of the resurrection in the flesh); 12 (metempsychosis); 13 (Sun and Moon’s role in the liberation of light particles); 14 (animals made by the *principes tenebrarum*); 15 (Manichaean symbol of faith and prayers); 16 (human souls of divine origin; the flesh, a work of the *princeps tenebrarum*); 17 (the Devil, coeternal with God); 20 (Adamantius); and, 21 (a general anathema against Manichaeism). As for *Prosp. anath.*, 10, see *infra*, n. 43. There are some similarities between *Prosp. anath.*, 16, and anathemas 2 and 7-10 in the so-called ‘Milanese abjuration formula’ preserved in MS. Bobbiese O. 210 (fol. 34, *recto*), dated to c. 600 (see Willi Bang, ‘Manichaeische Hymnen’, *Le Muséon* 38 [1925], 1-55, 53-5). In any case, the differences between the two lists are also remarkable. Note, for instance, that anathema 8 in the Milanese formula (*si quis duas animas in hominem esse unam de substantiam dei et alteram carnis anathema sit*) clearly depends on Augustine’s depiction of the alleged two-soul Manichaean anthropology (see, for instance, his *De duabus animabus*); *Prosp. anath.*, 16, on the contrary, does not speak of two souls: *qui credit animas humanas ex substantia Dei esse, et corpora humana a principe tenebrarum uel facta uel fieri, anathema sit*.

³⁷ See the note by Jacques Sirmond reprinted in PL 65, 26-7 (*in codice Ecclesiae Lugdunensis, qui haec capitula nobis suppeditauit, subiiciuntur concilio Carpentoractensi*).

³⁸ *PCBE*, 4, 395, *Caesarius* 1.

³⁹ William E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles. The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Cambridge, 1994), 130-2.

⁴⁰ Rebecca H. Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency. A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy* (Macon [GE], 1996), 228.

From the close relationship between the *Prosperi anathematismi* and the list of anathemas in the *Commonitorium* we may surmise a Roman provenance for the first document too. It is quite possible that, having to deal with the case of Manichaean repentants, Caesarius asked the Roman See for advice. The bishop of Rome might have met this request in a way very similar to that followed just a bit later by Felix IV before the synod of Orange, that is to say, by sending to Caesarius a form of abjuration from Manichaeism preserved in the Roman *scrinia* – a *uersio aucta* of the list of anathemas contained in the *Commonitorium* – as well as by informing him about the protocol followed in Rome in such cases. As for the presence of Manichees in Ostrogothic Provence, some African religious dissenters fleeing from the Vandal persecutions also took refuge in Gaul, as attested by a letter of Avitus of Vienne to Stephen of Lyons dealing with the admission into the Catholic Church of a former African Donatist.⁴¹

As we have seen, the list of anathemas edited by Jacques Sirmond has in the *incipit* '*Prosperi anathematismi*'. According to the Lyonese manuscript used by the French *savant*, 'Prosper' would be the name of the Manichaean repentant who signed the libel of recantation attached to this list. Even if we can't dismiss the possibility that a certain Manichaean called Prosper signed this libel, the homonymy between this *conuersus* and the theological adviser of Leo who probably drafted the archetype of the list of anathemas that the former was to subscribe more than eighty years later is, at least, striking. I dare to suggest that it may be no coincidence at all. Perhaps the list of anathemas sent to Caesarius of Arles by the bishop of Rome originally had in its *incipit* '*Prosperi anathematismi*', that is to say 'anathemas worked up by Prosper'. To this list was attached the *libellus confessionis et paenitentiae* signed by a Manichaean whose name was not Prosper. At a later date, a copyist of the two joined documents may have corrected the original name of the subscriber of the *libellus* into 'Prosper', in the conviction that the name in the genitive in the *incipit* referred not to the author of the list of anathemas, but to the repentant who subscribed it.⁴²

If this hypothesis is correct, the *Prosperi anathematismi* could be adduced as evidence for Prosper of Aquitaine's authorship of a list of anti-Manichaean anathemas. This work would have been preserved in the *scrinia* of the Roman

⁴¹ Auit. Vien., *ep.* 26. This letter is to be dated in between 501 and 515. See *PCBE*, 4, 251-2, *Auitus* 2; 1831, *Stephanus* 3.

⁴² August Brinkmann, 'Die Theosophie des Aristokritos', *Rheinisches Museum*, NF 51 (1896), 273-80, 274-5, n. 2, suggested that 'Prosper' was used in this *libellus* as a mere conventional name ('in typischem Sinne'). Yet, the document is carefully dated (*not. sub die xiii calendas decembris, Olybrio Iuniore uiro clarissimo consule*), which contrasts, for instance, with the formulaic dating clause provided by the *forma epistulae, quam dat episcopus conuersis* in the *Commonitorium* (*quae scripta est die illo et consule illo*). See François Chatillon, 'Un certain Prosper', *RMAL* 10 (1954), 204-6, 206.

church down to the Ostrogothic period, when it was brought back to light by the anti-Manichean inquisitorial processes of Gelasius and his successors.⁴³ This is perhaps the dark side of Prosper's legacy.

⁴³ The fact that *Prosp. anath.*, 10 (*quicumque aduentum Spiritus Paracliti, quem Dominus in Euangelio promittit esse uenturum in apostolos, post ascensionem Domini, in die Pentecostes, non statim credit impletum, sed post multos annos in Mane uel in Adimanto discipulo eius uenisse credit, anathema sit*) overlaps and amplifies *Commonit.*, 9, which, however, is preserved in the *Prosperi anathematismi* (18), proves that the original list of anti-Manichaean anathemas in the *Commonitorium* was enhanced at a later date – and hardly by the same author. I dare to suggest that the *Commonitorium* might date to the pontificate of Gelasius (492-496) and that, in the course of the anti-Manichaean campaigns ran by this pope as well as by Symmachus (498-514) and Hormisdas (514-523), the list of anathemas contained in it – which dated back to the time of Pope Leo I and Prosper of Aquitaine – was successively enhanced, resulting in the abjuration formula that a certain ex-Manichaean was impelled to sign in Gaul in 526.

John Cassian Read by Eucherius of Lyon: Affinities and Divergences

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ABSTRACT

While John Cassian and Vincent of Lérins are the best known of the so-called ‘semi-Pelagians’, there were other Gallic churchmen associated with this illustrious group. It was to Eucherius, the future bishop of Lyon and meanwhile a member of the Lerinian community, that John Cassian dedicated his second series of *Conferences* (*Conf.* XI to XVII). Some years later, in 428, Eucherius composed a short treatise *De laude eremi*, praising the monastic desert in biblical terms and relating it to the Lerinian monastery. It has been assumed that Eucherius has composed his *De laude eremi* in the tone of Cassian’s ascetic works. A close reading of Eucherius’ *De laude eremi* reveals indeed that the Lerinian author borrowed from Cassian certain elements of ascetic vocabulary as well as some thematic motifs. However, the established parallels prove to be incomplete. Their further analysis and an investigation into other themes reveal that Cassian’s and Eucherius’ concepts of monastic life are quite different: for Cassian, this is a harsh and constant fight against vices and demons, for Eucherius, this is a peaceful way where monks are guided by Christ and his sacraments. These observations invite broader considerations about the intentions of both authors and their attitude towards Gallic and Egyptian monasticism. Eucherius’ relation to Cassian’s writings appears thus to be rather independent. His figure adds therefore notably to the variety of the picture of Gallic ascetics in the first half of the 5th century and the theological climate in which the Augustinian controversy emerged.

The name of Eucherius of Lyon is rarely mentioned in the discussion of the Augustinian (or the so called semi-Pelagian) controversy.¹ It is true that our ancient sources never mention Eucherius among the actors of the controversy on grace and free will between the *Gallicani doctores* on the one hand and Augustine and his Gallic supporters on the other. Eucherius plaid however an important role in the circle of Gallic ascetics: before becoming bishop of Lyon around 435-439, he was perhaps in charge of lay families staying on Lerus, the island adjacent to Lérins.² According to S. Pricoco, on certain aspects he may

¹ For the term of ‘the Augustinian controversy’, see Alexander Y. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover of Perfect Grace. The Life and Thought of Prosper of Aquitaine* (Washington, D.C., 2009), 2-6.

² See Martine Dulaey, ‘Eucher exégète: l’interprétation de la Bible en Gaule du Sud dans la première moitié du V^e siècle’, in Otto Wermelinger, Philippe Bruggisser, Beat Näf and Jean-Michel

even be considered as the most representative figure of the Lerinian culture and spirituality.³ He was also closely associated with at least two of the most prominent Gallic figures of the controversy, John Cassian who dedicated to him, together with Honoratus, his second series of *Conferences* (*Conf. XI to XVII*), and Vincent of Lérins whom Eucherius exalts in his *De laude eremi*. Moreover, this last treatise, which will be the object of the present article, was composed around 427/428, exactly the period when the controversy was emerging, and already gaining in speed by the correspondence of Prosper and Hilary with Augustine.

My article, however, will treat directly neither the role nor the position of Eucherius in the controversy.⁴ Eucherius' works are void of any doctrinal claims.⁵ My purpose is rather to contribute to the variety of the picture of those *Gallicani doctores* whom Prosper presented as 'remainders of Pelagian heresy' (*pelagianae reliquiae prauitatis*)⁶ in Gaul. In order to do this, I will explore how Eucherius appropriated Cassian's writings in his *De laude eremi*, a short encomium in praise of the desert and of the solitary life. I will argue that although Eucherius borrowed from Cassian certain elements of ascetic vocabulary as well as some thematic motifs, he did not follow literally Cassian's writings and proposed his own vision of monastic life.⁷ I will start by noting several

Roessli (eds), *Saint Maurice et la légion thébaine. Actes du colloque international Fribourg, Saint-Maurice, Martigny, 17-20 septembre 2003*, Par. 49 (Fribourg, 2005), 67-93, 68-9.

³ Salvatore Pricoco, *L'isola dei Santi. Il cenobio di Lerino e le origini del monachesimo gallico*, *Filologia e critica* 23 (Roma, 1978), 46.

⁴ The only systematic approach in this direction has been made by Clemens M. Kasper, *Theologie und Askese. Die Spiritualität des Inselmönchtums von Lérins im 5. Jahrhundert*, BGAM 40 (Münster, 1991). In the chapter dedicated to the doctrine of grace in Lerinian authors (227-71), Kasper has also analysed the works of Eucherius which, in his opinion, prove Eucherius' progressive development towards the 'semi-Pelagianism' (239-42, 248-56). I find however more convincing the approach of Martine Dulaey who, after a thorough examination of Eucherius' sources and the way he uses them in his *Formulae*, arrives at much more nuanced results, Martine Dulaey, 'Augustin en Provence dans les premières décennies du V^e s.: le témoignage des *Formulae* d'Eucher', in *Comunicazione e ricezione del documento cristiano in epoca tardoantica. XXXII Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiana, Roma, 8-10 maggio 2003*, SEAug 90 (Roma, 2004), 121-46, and *ead.*, 'Les relations entre Lérins et Marseille: Eucher et Cassien', in Yann Codou and Michel Lauwers (eds), *Lérins, une île sainte de l'antiquité au moyen âge*, Collection d'études médiévales de Nice 9 (Turnhout, 2009), 63-82. For a brief evaluation of Eucherius' encounter with the works of Augustine with further bibliography, see David Lambert, 'Eucherius of Lyon', in Karla Pollmann, Willemien Otten (eds), *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 2014), II 952-4.

⁵ Thus S. Pricoco rightly affirms that 'l'impegno e l'approfondimento speculativo non erano nelle corde di Eucherio e niente autorizza ad attribuirgli un riesame sistematico del rapporto fra la potenza della grazia e la libertà dell'individuo', Salvatore Pricoco, *Eucherio. Elogio dell'eremo. Introduzione, testo, traduzione e commento*, BPat 51 (Bologna, 2014), 64.

⁶ Prosp. Aquin., *Ep. ad Aug.*, 7, CSEL 57, 465; English translation by Prudentius de Letter, ACW 32 (Westminster, 1963), 45.

⁷ The precise dating of Cassian's works is unknown. The *Institutes* are usually dated to the period between 419 and 425 while the *Conferences* must have been written before 428. In any case, it is sure that the first two series of the *Conferences* must predate Eucherius' *De laude eremi*,

affinities between the two authors, then proceed to the discussion of whether these affinities can be regarded as Eucherius' dependency on Cassian, and finally explore some themes, the importance and the interpretation of which are quite different in the writings of both authors.

1. Affinities

The *De laude eremi* of Eucherius is a veritable treatise on 'theology of the desert'.⁸ It is written in a form of a letter which Eucherius addresses to Hilary who meanwhile has returned to the Lerinian community after having accompanied Honoratus, the founder of the monastery, to the see of Arles. Apart from the opening and the closing of the letter, the treatise can be divided into two main parts, the first of which (ch. 5 to 26) traverses the deserts of the Bible with an accent on the Exodus story while the second (ch. 27 to 43) concentrates on monastic desert and its spiritual aspect in the way it is experienced in the insular monastery of Lérins.

It has been assumed that Eucherius has composed his *De laude eremi* in the tone of Cassian's ascetic works.⁹ At first sight, the affinity of the subject matter of both authors – monastic life in the desert seen as the accomplishment of the true Exodus – and the fact that they were composing for the same Gallic audiences could indeed invite such an assumption. It should however be verified by a closer analysis of the texts and this is what I shall try to do.

That Eucherius has attentively read the ascetic works of Cassian can be first of all perceived from the resemblance of their vocabulary. Eucherius owes indeed to Cassian some of his expressions pertaining to the description of the desert. One notable example may be found in Eucherius' use of the word *secretum*, which, together with *eremus* and *desertum*, is the most frequent term describing the desert in his encomium.¹⁰ Now, Cassian is the only Latin author before Eucherius who systematically uses *secretum* in the sense of a secluded place, especially to denote the desert. The expressions *eremi secreta* and *desertorum*

since in Cassian's preface to the second part it is stated that Honoratus is still presiding the community of Lérins, while he is already bishop of Arles according to the *De laude eremi*.

⁸ Marie-Anne Vannier, 'Éditorial', *Connaissance des Pères de l'Église* 114 (2009), 1.

⁹ This is the point of view of Léon Cristiani in many of his studies on Eucherius, e.g., L. Cristiani, 'Eucher (saint)', *DSp* 4 (1961), 1653-60. See also Roger Le Déaut, Joseph Lécuyer, 'Exode', *DSp* 4 (1961), 1957-95, 1986, for whom the importance of Exodus in both authors is the sign that Eucherius has composed his *De laude eremi* 'in the line of Cassian'. S. Pricoco also thinks that Eucherius owes to Cassian the interpretation of Exodus in monastic sense, S. Pricoco, *Eucherio* (2014), 94-5. For the discussion on the interpretation of Exodus by Eucherius and Cassian, see below.

¹⁰ There are fifty-two occurrences of *eremus*, forty-one of *desertum* and sixteen of *secretum* in the *De laude eremi*. The *De laude eremi* (referred to as *Laud.*) will be quoted according to the new edition of S. Pricoco, *Eucherio* (2014), 134-86.

secreta occurring in Eucherius' letter are therefore clearly inspired by very similar expressions found in Cassian.¹¹

Among other expressions that Eucherius has probably borrowed from Cassian, one can mention *recedentia penetrare* by which Eucherius evokes Hilary's first arrival on Lérins,¹² or the reference to Egyptian monks 'brought by holy elders to Gaul' as *Aegyptii patres*.¹³ Or again, referring to the Moses' vision of the burning bush (*Exod.* 3), Eucherius describes the 'familiar' conversation of Moses with God in the terms similar to those by which Cassian described the mind, caught in a sublime prayer, speaking 'most familiarly' to God.¹⁴

Apart from verbal similarities, Eucherius picks from Cassian several ideas for the development of his subject matter. While discussing the Moses' vision of the burning bush, Eucherius first quotes *Exod.* 3:5 where the Lord commands Moses to take off his sandals and calls the desert holy, and then proposes the following interpretation: 'In my opinion, the lesson implicit here is that those who approach the desert should first unblock the path of their lives from the obligations of their previous concerns. They should proceed to the desert only when they have taken off the sandals that impeded them, so that they will not profane the sacred place'.¹⁵ Although for the vocabulary of this passage Eucherius was inspired by the fifth hymn of *Cathemerinon* of Prudentius,¹⁶ his ascetic interpretation of the biblical verse comes from the following passage of Cassian's *Institutes*: 'Once having been placed in this world, we cannot be utterly removed from the care and worry of this flesh and are unable to be completely rid of it ... Thus we should not allow that the feet of our soul, which must always be ready for the spiritual race and for preaching the peace of the Gospel, ... to be entangled in the deadly cares of this world'.¹⁷ According to Cassian

¹¹ Euch., *Laud.* 4,1; 8,5; 32,2; Cass., *Inst.* V 36,1 (CSEL 17, 108): *heremi profunda secreta; Conl.* II 5,1 (CSEL 13, 44): *solitudinis secreta; III* 1,2 (CSEL 13, 68): *heremi ... secreta; XVII* 30,2 (CSEL 13, 499): *Scitioticae solitudinis secreta.*

¹² Euch., *Laud.* 1,1; Cass., *Inst.* V 36,1 (CSEL 17, 108): *penetrant heremi profunda secreta; Conl.* XVIII 6,1 (CSEL 13, 511): *[Paulus] heremum penetrasse dicatur; XVIII* 6,2 (CSEL 13, 511-2): *anachoretæ ... heremi recessus penetrare non timeant, etc.*

¹³ Euch., *Laud.* 42,3, with the only known parallel for the expression in Cass., *Inst.* XI 17,1 (CSEL 17, 202).

¹⁴ Euch., *Laud.* 7,4: *Moyses divini colloquii familiaris adhibetur interpres; Cass., Conl.* IX 18,1 (CSEL 13, 265-6): *mens ... familiarissime cum deo uelut patri proprio peculiari pietate conloquitur.* For Eucherius, Moses' conversation with God is a figure of monastic prayer.

¹⁵ *Laud.* 7,3: *Confirmata quippe est a deo sanctitas loci sanctitate etiam testimonii, in quo, ut reor, etiam illud pariter et latenter enuntiat, ut accedens ad eremum pristinis curarum obligationibus vitæ gressus absolvat et anterioribus vinculis expeditus incedat, ne locum polluat.*

¹⁶ Prud., *Cath.* V 35-6 (ed. M. Lavaranne, CUFr, 26): *iussus nexa pedum uinacula soluere / ne sanctum inuolucris pollueret locum.* Prudentius is present in the whole Exodus section of *Laud.* 7-12, and testifies thus for the first time to the presence of his works in Gaul, S. Pricoco, *Eucherio* (2014), 78-81. 215.

¹⁷ Cass., *Inst.* I 9,1 (CSEL 17, 14): *si in hoc mundo constituti cura et sollicitudine carnis huius omnimodis exuti esse non possumus nec ab ea penitus praeualemus absolui ... neue animæ nostræ*

thus, the feet, the image of the soul, have to be free of the cares of this world for the 'spiritual course', the allegoric interpretation that Eucherius takes over in the description of the scene of the burning bush.¹⁸

Most of all, however, Eucherius was inspired by Cassian's two conferences *On Prayer* given by Abba Isaac, the *Conferences* IX and X. It is in chapter 6 of *Conf. X* that Eucherius found the examples of Moses and Elijah as figures of saints whom God 'willingly meets ... in favorable places such as the desert',¹⁹ as well as the scene of the Transfiguration of Jesus as the witness of 'the powerful transformation' possible only in the 'secluded wilderness'.²⁰ The same chapter 6 of *Conf. X* also gives a very clear parallel to Eucherius' insistence on the example of Jesus' prayer in a desert place as a sure proof that our prayer is best when supported by withdrawal.²¹

Another important passage where Cassian is the source of Eucherius, is *Laud. 37* where the Lerinian author describes the mystical experience of a soul caught in a silent prayer. The same vocabulary (*ineffabiles excessus, laetitia*, and *mens* for soul in a state of prayer) and the same spirit reign in Cassian's *Conferences* IX and X, namely in the passages where Abba Isaac describes the experience of a 'fiery prayer'.²²

pedes, qui expediti ad spiritalem cursum et praedicandam euangelii pacem semper esse debent parati ... morticinis saeculi huius curis patiamur inuolui, later followed by a quotation of *Exod. 3:5*. English translation by Boniface Ramsey, ACW 58 (New York, N.Y. and Mahwah, N.J., 2000), 25.

¹⁸ See Adalbert de Vogüé, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'antiquité*, vol. 7: *L'essor de la littérature lériniennne et les écrits contemporains (410-500)* (Paris, 2003), 83, n. 20, but see also Martine Dulaey, 'Les sandales de Moïse', in Louis Holtz, Jean-Claude Frédoille (eds), *De Tertullien aux mozarabes. Mélanges offerts à Jacques Fontaine à l'occasion de son 70^e anniversaire, par ses élèves, amis et collègues*, 3 vols., Collection des Études augustinienes. Série Antiquité 132 (Paris, 1992), I 99-106, who provides parallels of similar moral interpretation of Moses taking off his sandals in other patristic authors.

¹⁹ Euch., *Laud. 3,4*, English translation by Jeffrey B. Russell, CistSS 178 (Kalamazoo, 1999), 199; Cass., *Conl. X 6,3*.

²⁰ Euch., *Laud. 25*, CistSS 178, 206-7; Cass., *Conl. X 6,3*.

²¹ Euch., *Laud. 26*, Cass., *Conl. X 6,4*. I am not aware if a very close parallel to Cassian's passage in one of Gregory of Nazianzus' homilies has already been noticed, see Greg. Naz., *Or. 26 (In semet ipsum)*, 7 (ed. J. Mossay, SC 284, 240-2); the homily was also known in Latin through the translation of Rufinus (CSEL 46, 175). The two motifs, the Transfiguration and Jesus' solitary prayer, are also well attested in former spiritual tradition, see e.g. Hermann Josef Sieben, 'Transfiguration du Seigneur', *DSp* 15 (1991), 1148-60. The reason why I think that Eucherius was inspired here by Cassian is that both combine these motifs together in one passage (*Laud. 26-7* and *Conl. X 6*).

²² Euch., *Laud. 37,2-3*; Cass., *Conl. IX 14-5, 25, 27-8*; *X 11,6*; *Inst. II 10,11*; see A. de Vogüé, *Histoire littéraire* (2003), 92 and S. Pricoco, *Eucherio* (2014), 296-8.

2. Affinities or divergences?

The parallels of vocabulary and of the contents that I have drawn so far witness to the fact that Eucherius read Cassian's writings attentively and used them for his own composition of the *De laude eremi*. The question remains however if Eucherius' borrowings from Cassian do not amount to more than simply copying him, albeit with small variations. For apart from short expressions, the Lerinian author never reproduces Cassian's phrases in an exactly the same manner or the same sense.

If we take one more look at the parallels indicated above, we will see that in ch. 6 of *Conf. X* Cassian appealed to the examples of Moses, Elijah and Jesus at the Transfiguration in order to support his teaching on the two kinds of contemplation: there are ordinary people who see Jesus in towns and villages – those 'who have an active life' (*actualis conversatio*), who are still on the way of purification from faults; while only those pure of heart, 'free from the uproar of every earthly thought and disturbance, removed from every taint of vice, and exalted with the purest faith and with soaring virtue', can see Jesus in 'that brightness with which he appears to those who are able to climb with him the aforesaid mount of the virtues – namely, to Peter, James, and John. For it was in the desert that he appeared to Moses and spoke to Elijah'.²³ Cassian interprets the events of the earthly life of Jesus, supported by two figures of the Old Testament, as an allegory expressing the levels of a monk's relationship with God, and this interpretation is directly related to Cassian's theory of 'pure prayer'.²⁴ Nothing of this kind appears in Eucherius for whom all these scriptural examples serve as *historical* arguments for his main thesis, namely, that the one who desires to experience God should seek seclusion from the world because God 'willingly meets with people in favorable places such as the desert'. It was the case with Moses who, in the desert, 'gazed upon God until his face shone with glory', it was also the case with Elijah who, again in the desert, 'covered his face for fear of seeing God'.²⁵ The scene of the Transfiguration (*Laud. 25*) is presented by Eucherius among other events of the earthly life of Jesus witnessing to the particular role of wilderness.²⁶ Like Cassian, he distinguishes between 'ordinary' and glorified Jesus,²⁷ but without any reference to the spiritual progress of those who meet Jesus in one or another state. If Eucherius then borrows from Cassian the same scriptural examples, it is not in order

²³ *Conl. X* 6,3, English translation by B. Ramsey, ACW 57 (New York, N.Y. and Mahwah, N.J., 1997), 375.

²⁴ See the discussion in Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (Oxford, 1998), 95-7.

²⁵ *Laud. 3,4*, CistSS 178, 199.

²⁶ The stay of Jesus in the wilderness after his baptism (*Laud. 22-3*), the multiplication of bread (*Laud. 24*), and the solitary prayer (*Laud. 26*).

²⁷ *Laud. 25,1*: *qui, cum assumptum palam hominem praeferret, declarandae maiestatis indicium secretis credit.*

to adopt Cassian's teaching but rather to insert them into his own vision of what monastic life is.

Similar observations can be made about Eucherius' emphasis on the example of the solitary prayer of Jesus in *Laud.* 26, the parallel to which in Cassian's *Conf.* X 6 I have also mentioned above. For Cassian, the prayer of Jesus alone on the mountain is a model for us of 'perfect purity' (*perfectae puritatis exempla*), we who 'too wish to address God with purity and integrity of heart (*puro et integro cordis affectu*)'.²⁸ Jesus' solitary prayer is therefore a perfect model for what Cassian has described as 'pure prayer'. In the passage of Eucherius, none of Cassian's terms related to purity appear.²⁹ Eucherius' emphasis is rather on the seclusion of the place where Jesus prayed: the initial *desertus locus* is referred to further on in the same phrase by three occurrences of *locus*, and three adverbs of place, *unde*, *illic* and *ubi*. Once again, the same scriptural example is set forth in quite different contexts and supports different argumentation by Cassian and by Eucherius.

The last provided parallel between the representations of silent prayer by Eucherius (*Laud.* 37) and by Cassian also reveals to be incomplete: if Cassian, in his description of the mystical experience, aims to emphasise the absence of any image in the highest form of prayer in view of his more global polemics against the anthropomorphism which opens the *Conf.* X, Eucherius rather inserts the representation of the mind caught in contemplation into a lyrical description of the attractiveness of the desert and of its propitiousness for contemplative life.

3. Divergences

I will continue by exploring some themes, the importance and the interpretation of which are quite distinct in the writings of both authors.

I will start by renunciation. In Cassian's works, it is an essential disposition of anyone embracing monastic life and progressing in the way of virtues. The whole of *Conference* III is dedicated to the three sorts of renunciation (the bodily, the one by which we reject vices and affections, and the one by which 'we call our mind away from everything that is present and visible'³⁰). Renunciation is also discussed in many other passages and is often related to mortification. The model of renunciation for Cassian is the crucified Christ: 'Renunciation is nothing else than a manifestation of the cross and of a dying'.³¹ The monk is then the one who constantly carries a cross and who,

²⁸ *Conl.* X 6,4 (CSEL 13, 292), ACW 57, 375.

²⁹ The notion of purity appears only once in *De laude eremi* (*Laud.* 35,3: *cor purissimum*).

³⁰ *Conl.* III 6,1, ACW 57, 123.

³¹ *Inst.* IV 34, ACW 58, 97.

crucified by the fear of the Lord, has died to all things.³² None of these motifs is important for Eucherius: we find neither renunciation nor mortification in his vision of monastic life.³³ A monk leads on the contrary a peaceful and spiritually joyful life exempt from any risk of sin.³⁴ The few allusions to ascetic practices exclude any reference to the sufferings of Christ.³⁵ Eucherius may have borrowed from Cassian the idea of insistence on the solitary prayer of Jesus mentioned above, he did not however take from him the argument of the silent prayer of Jesus in agony.³⁶ The only occurrence of 'the wood of the cross' (*lignum crucis*) in the *De laude eremi* appears in its valedictory chapter³⁷ where it serves as a typological – and not ascetical – argument to which I shall return later.

The same sort of remarks can be made about another ascetical aspect so important in Cassian's writings and never appearing in the *De laude eremi*. Cassian sees the progress in virtues by way of ascetic practices as a military fight (*militia spiritalis*) where a monk, athlete of Christ (*athleta Christi, miles Christi*), fights against the 'thoughts' and evil spirits. As O. Chadwick remarks, for Cassian the fight 'is a fight against; not so obviously a fight for. ... Vices are much more prominent than virtues'.³⁸ In 'the deep recesses of the desert', anchorites are attacked most fiercely by demons in terrible combats.³⁹ Eucherius uses only once the term *militia* for monastic life but combines it with *caelestis* in an expression which, quite typically for him, is based on biblical text.⁴⁰ In fact, the Lerinian 'desert' is all but a place of temptations and fierce struggle against evil forces. This may be the reason why Eucherius, while taking from Cassian some notions describing the remoteness of the desert, is reluctant towards other – *squalor heremi* or *horrenda solitudo*⁴¹ – which point to the horror of the desert as a place of desolation and the abode of demons. Eucherius' desert, on the contrary, is 'specially protected by Christ as its defender', where 'the prowling adversary howls in vain' because the desert's inhabitants are surrounded by desert's strong

³² See *Inst.* IV 35; *Conl.* III 6,3 and XIX 7,3.

³³ For the absence of 'suffering sanctity' in the whole of early Lerinian literature, see S. Pricoco, *L'isola dei santi* (1978), 164-9.

³⁴ *Laud.* 31,2; 35,3-4.

³⁵ *Laud.* 34,3; 41,2.

³⁶ Referred to by Cassian in *Conl.* IX 25.

³⁷ *Laud.* 44,3.

³⁸ Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian* (2nd ed.; Cambridge, 1968), 95-6. A good illustration for this observation can be found in *Conl.* XIV 3.

³⁹ *Inst.* V 36,1; see also *Conl.* VII 23,2 and the note by Ramsey with further references in ACW 57, 67.

⁴⁰ *Laud.* 1,2 and *Luke* 2:13. For the biblical foundations of Eucherius' vocabulary, see M. Lenkaitytė, 'Eucher interprete de la Bible dans l'« Éloge du désert »', in Y. Codou, M. Lauwers (eds), *Lérins, une île sainte* (2009), 83-104, 88-9.

⁴¹ *Squalor heremi* in *Conl.* I 2,3 (CSEL 13, 9); *squalor solitudinis* in *Conl.* XIII 6,2 (CSEL 13, 367) and XIX 9,1 (CSEL 13, 543); *horrenda solitudinis vastitas* in *Conl.* XXIV 2,4 (CSEL 13, 677).

wall.⁴² While Cassian's monk may be disturbed by the 'noonday demon', the desert dwellers of Eucherius can contemplate the divine Spouse of the *Canticle of Canticles* at the same moment of the day.⁴³ Cassian accentuates the importance of man's proper role in the way towards perfection through the fight against vices. Eucherius has a very positive vision of monastic life in the sense that for him, the desert contains in itself the grace of God.⁴⁴

Another major divergence between the two authors is their attitude towards the Church and its institutions. Cassian's monks form the elite of the Church. They are some 'of the chosen few' who, contrary to the multitude, 'may deserve to be found in the Kingdom',⁴⁵ because in them has remained inviolate 'the perfection of the primitive Church'.⁴⁶ Cassian's reticence towards the clerical office is notorious⁴⁷ and he provides no particular reflection on the role of monks in the mystical Body of Christ.⁴⁸ Eucherius proves to be much more sensitive to the universal Church and the role of monks in it. In spite of the fact that the word *ecclesia* does not occur as such in his encomium, the way he elaborates the image of the blossoming desert in chapters 39 and 40, and the interpretation of the same symbols proposed a few years later in his exegetical treatise *Formulae spiritalis intellegentiae*, suggest that he sees the monastic desert as a place where the saints are assembled by Christ in his Church and where they are vivified by the divine Word and the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.⁴⁹ Moreover, Eucherius is happy to proclaim that Lérins is worthy not only 'for nourishing the outstanding monks' but also 'the most requested priests'.⁵⁰ For Eucherius then, although the monk may live separated from the rest of the world, he is nevertheless an integral member of the universal Church and is ready to serve it whenever such a demand arrives.⁵¹

⁴² *Laud.* 38,1-2, CistSS 178, 211-2.

⁴³ Cass., *Inst.* X 1; Euch., *Laud.* 38,4, with reference to *Ct.* 1:6 and 3:4. See also S. Pricoco, *L'isola dei Santi* (1978), 168, and *id.*, *Eucherio* (2014), 55-6, 305-6.

⁴⁴ See M. Lenkaiyté Ostermann, 'Magna loci gratia : désert, lieu de salut selon Eucher de Lyon', in Theresia Hainthaler, Franz Mali, Gregor Emmenegger, Manté Lenkaiyté Ostermann (eds), *Für uns und für unser Heil. Soteriologie in Ost und West, Pro Oriente 37 = Wiener Patristische Tagungen VI* (Innsbruck, 2014), 181-95.

⁴⁵ *Inst.* IV 38, ACW 58, 99.

⁴⁶ *Inst.* II 5,3, ACW 58, 40. See also *Conl.* XVIII 5-7; *Inst.* VII 17-8 and A. de Vogüé, 'Monachisme et Église dans la pensée de Cassien', in *Théologie de la vie monastique*, Théologie 49 (Paris, 1961), 213-40, who provides a fine analysis of Cassian's two myths of the origins of coenobitism.

⁴⁷ See *Inst.* XI 14-8; *Conl.* I 20,5.

⁴⁸ As observed by M. Dulaey, 'Les relations entre Lérins et Marseille' (2009), 73; see also Robert Austin Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, 1990), 165-7.

⁴⁹ See M. Lenkaiyté Ostermann, 'Magna loci gratia' (2014), 192-4.

⁵⁰ *Laud.* 42,2, CistSS 178, 214.

⁵¹ In the *Formulae* as well, Eucherius' universe seems to be that of the universal Church and not only that of the monastery as it is often for Cassian, M. Dulaey, 'Les relations entre Lérins et Marseille' (2009), 79-82.

My final point will be on scriptural interpretation. Cassian and Eucherius adopt different exegetical strategies in their ascetical works. For Cassian, reading of the Bible is an ascetical exercise, a means of combatting vice and cultivating virtue with the aim of attaining purity of heart.⁵² He was mostly ‘concerned with the morally instructive content of the biblical narratives’⁵³ and the way these could shape the monastic vocation.⁵⁴ Eucherius, although he is also aware of the ascetic reading of the Bible, develops rather a typological, baptismal and Christological interpretation of the monastic life. Consequently, a number of the same biblical passages and biblical figures receive quite different interpretation in Cassian and in Eucherius.⁵⁵ I will concentrate for the present only on the Exodus which plays a major role in Cassian’s *Conferences* and is the major theme in Eucherius’ letter to Hilary.

For Cassian, the Exodus story symbolizes allegorically the ascetical migration towards perfect life.⁵⁶ Thus, the way ‘how the children of Israel were liberated by Moses from the affliction of Egypt’ symbolizes the second kind of calling for monastic life, ‘that which comes about through human agency’.⁵⁷ The monk who has abandoned the world must strive not to turn back in his desires to what he has left behind, just as the Hebrews who ‘turned back to Egypt in their heart’.⁵⁸ The crossing of ‘the desert of the virtues’ where the monks have to fight against the seven nations of Canaan, symbols of vices, is above all seen as a war.⁵⁹ The ascetical interpretation of the Exodus serves as a background for the whole of *Conference V (On the Eight Principal Vices)* and occurs in several other passages.⁶⁰ One can say then that ‘Cassian’s use of the image of the Promised Land transforms the biblical event and the words of Moses into monastic instruction’.⁶¹

⁵² See Karl Suso Frank, ‘Asketischer Evangelismus. Schriftauslegung bei Johannes Cassianus’, in Georg Schöllgen, Clemens Scholten (eds), *Stimuli. Exegese und ihre Hermeneutik in Antike und Christentum. Festschrift für Ernst Dassmann*, JAC 23 (Münster, 1996), 435-43, and C. Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (1998), 90-5, 100-13.

⁵³ Christopher J. Kelly, *Cassian’s Conferences. Scriptural Interpretation and the Monastic Ideal* (Farnham, 2012), 103.

⁵⁴ For a survey of Cassian’s use of the Bible to argue for virtues or against vices, or to support the use of certain monastic rules and habits, see M. Lenkaitytė, ‘Biblical Saints, Eastern Monks and Personal Teachers as Shaping Elements of the Monk’s Model in Early Latin Monastic Literature’, *Archivum Bobiense* 30 (2008), 67-174, 159-65.

⁵⁵ See M. Lenkaitytė, ‘Eucher interprète de la Bible’ (2009).

⁵⁶ See R. Le Déaut, J. Lécuyer, ‘Exode’ (1961) for references of Cassian’s use of the Exodus.

⁵⁷ Cass., *Conl.* III 4,3, ACW 57, 121.

⁵⁸ Cass., *Conl.* III 7,5, ACW 57, 126.

⁵⁹ See especially *Conl.* V 16,1; V 22.

⁶⁰ *Conl.* VI 11,1 (the temptations in the desert symbolize the trials of spiritual life); VII 5,2-3 (the rulers established by Moses for the government of the people in *Exod.* 18:21 represent the virtues commanding the thoughts and the body); XXI 28,1-2 (the forty years in the desert as a symbol for the forty days of Lent).

⁶¹ C.J. Kelly, *Cassian’s Conferences* (2012), 85. See also the whole chapter on the figure of Moses embodying the *abba* ideal within a specifically monastic context, *ibid.* 76-85. Cassian is

Eucherius is not ignorant of an ascetical meaning of the Exodus story either.⁶² He tends however to accentuate its traditional sense, *i.e.* that which pertains to its Christological and baptismal interpretation. Eucherius dedicates the largest biblical part of his encomium (chapters 8 to 16) to the miracles that happened to the Hebrews in the desert of Sinai. By quoting the passage of *1Cor.* 10:2-4 ('They were all baptized in Moses, in the cloud and in the sea, and they all ate the spiritual food and drank the spiritual drink') at the end of this section, and by referring explicitly to 'deep mysteries' (*sacramentorum altitudo*) announced by the Exodus,⁶³ Eucherius clearly indicates that he reads it as a figure for baptism and Eucharist. Moreover, the events of Exodus are recapitulated in the final chapter of the encomium where they receive a Christological explanation: the wood which has made sweet the bitter waters of the rock in the desert of Sinai was 'the wood of the cross', the rock from which the water sprang was Christ, it is 'from the Gospel' that Hilary receives 'the divine word in thunder' and, finally, the company of Israel in the desert permits Hilary to 'enter the Promised Land with Jesus'.⁶⁴ While both use the Exodus story to develop a monastic subject, Cassian and Eucherius are thus privileging different methods of its interpretation, and this leads to different concepts of monastic life: for Cassian, this is a harsh and constant fight against vices and demons, for Eucherius, this is a peaceful way where monks are guided by Christ and his sacraments.

These observations invite broader considerations about the intentions and attitudes of both authors. Cassian's target audience were the monastic communities in southern Gaul, either already existing or planning to be founded in the near future. His concern was to guide them in their monastic project by providing them with ascetical and spiritual teaching and models of imitation. Cassian presents the teaching he transmits as received personally from venerable Eastern fathers while he himself was a monk living in Palestine and Egypt. Having proved the apostolic origin of Egyptian monasticism on the one hand, and the superiority of Egyptian customs to the rest of the East on the other, Cassian can claim that this long-established tradition of the fathers, *patrum traditio*, guarantees the authority of the teaching he transmits.

Cassian's view of the existing monastic life in Gaul is rather negative. He sees 'monasticism in Gaul as a poorly organized and undisciplined way of life that substitutes individual preference for traditional rules',⁶⁵ and does not

the first to employ the Exodus story in a properly monastic sense, R. Le Déaut, J. Lécuyer, 'Exode' (1961), 1986.

⁶² See *Laud.* 7,3; 8,1; 44,3.

⁶³ *Laud.* 15,1, CistSS 178, 203-4.

⁶⁴ *Laud.* 44,3, CistSS 178, 215.

⁶⁵ C. Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (1998), 17, with reference to *Inst.* II 3,4-5 and IV 16,3; the idea is expressed already in the prologue of the *Institutes*.

hesitate to ironize Gallic monks and their habits.⁶⁶ In order to improve the situation, Cassian can offer nothing better than the venerable tradition of Eastern monasticism: 'I do not at all believe that a new constitution in the West, in Gaul, could be more reasonable or indeed more perfect than what has already been instituted in those parts where monasteries founded by holy and spiritual fathers at the time when the apostles started preaching remain even to our own day'.⁶⁷ When Egyptian discipline seems 'to be impossible or hard or arduous for this country, because of either a harsh climate or difficulty and diversity of behaviour', Cassian concedes to temper it 'by recourse to the customs of the monasteries in Palestine and Mesopotamia'.⁶⁸ On the whole however, Gallic monks in Cassian's view will never be able to imitate perfectly the virtues of 'the elders'.

Otherwise than Cassian, Eucherius does not aim to correct or to instruct in his *De laude eremi*. The return of Hilary to the Lerinian community after having accompanied Honoratus to Arles is the occasion for Eucherius to praise the desert, home of a monk, but also to promote more precisely 'the desert' of the Lerinian island.⁶⁹ After arguing the desert's specific role in Salvation History in the first part of his encomium, Eucherius then praises the monastic solitary way of life and paints the insular 'desert' of Lérins in paradisiac terms. His intention is to glorify the life of prayer and solitude while addressing this fervent encomium to those who have already embraced this sort of life. While Cassian says explicitly that his purpose is not 'to elaborate the praise' of virtue but 'to explain its character',⁷⁰ Eucherius dedicates the most lyrical passages of his letter to exalt the virtuous life that one lives in a desert. It might be then that Eucherius consciously adopts different strategies and arguments than Cassian, and this might suggest a certain rivalry between Marseille and Lérins in their competition to win new members for their respective communities.⁷¹

Another important element that separates the two Gallic writers is the way they see Egyptian and Gallic monks.⁷² Egyptian fathers do play a role in Eucherius' letter but this role is not as preponderant as in Cassian's writings. Although

⁶⁶ *Inst.* IV 14-5.

⁶⁷ *Inst.*, prol., 8, ACW 58, 14.

⁶⁸ *Inst.*, prol., 9, ACW 58, 14. For the application of the announced method, see *Inst.* IV 11 or X 23.

⁶⁹ See Conrad Leyser, "'This Sainted Isle": Panegyric, Nostalgia, and the Invention of Lerinian Monasticism', in William E. Klingshirn, Mark Vessey (eds), *The Limits of Ancient Christianity. Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R. A. Markus* (Ann Harbor, 1999), 188-206, 195.

⁷⁰ *Inst.* VI 14, ACW 58, 159.

⁷¹ I thank Alexander Hwang for this remark.

⁷² Maria-Elisabeth Brunert, *Das Ideal der Wüstenaskese und seine Rezeption in Gallien bis zum Ende des 6. Jahrhunderts*, BGMB 42 (Münster, 1994), 179-87, argues that Eucherius wrote his encomium as a response to Cassian's praises of Egypt.

the two Egyptian hermits, Macarius and John, are praised as having ‘attained the stage of being already in heaven in spirit though their bodies were still on earth’,⁷³ their role is rather to serve as a turning point in the development of the subject. Evoked in the middle of the encomium right after the examples from the Holy Scripture, their spiritual experience in the desert introduces the allegorical description of the wilderness and its role for the inner man’s development. It is therefore not the Eastern monks but the community of Lérins, the image of which culminates in the last chapters of the encomium, that presents the perfect example of such an experience. For Cassian, there has been a disruption in the transmission of the ascetic tradition from Egypt to Gaul, a disruption that needs a serious correction. For Eucherius, the Lerinian monks, who have indeed ‘brought Egyptian fathers’ into the island,⁷⁴ can claim to be legitimate successors both of the saints of the Bible and of Eastern monks. For Eucherius the tradition is therefore just as important as for Cassian, with one difference however that Lerinian monks fully make up part of this tradition. By attributing the origins of monasticism to the first Christian community of Jerusalem on one hand, and to the first bishop of Alexandria Marc on the other, Cassian had already invented the beginnings of monasticism from apostolic times. Eucherius takes a further step by inserting the monastic movement into the even broader history of Salvation, where the monastic experience lived on the Lérins is viewed as its continuation.

* * *

To conclude, if I return now to the topics of our workshop, I am not at all sure that Eucherius *should* be placed either among Prosper’s friends or his adversaries. We may be too much inclined to attribute at any costs one or another figure to this or another camp. Besides, these camps were perhaps not defined elsewhere than in Prosper’s mind.⁷⁵ As shown by Martine Dulaey on the basis of his *Formulae*, Eucherius was no less reader and follower of Augustine as he was of John Cassian.⁷⁶ The aim of my present contribution was to

⁷³ *Laud.* 27,1, CistSS 178, 207.

⁷⁴ *Laud.* 42,3, CistSS 178, 214.

⁷⁵ ‘It is by no means clear that those writers whose texts deal with the issue saw themselves as being part of enduring factions’, David Lambert, ‘Patterns of Augustine’s Reception, 430-c.700’, in K. Pollmann, W. Otten, *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine* (Oxford, 2014), I 15-23, 16. Or, as R.A. Markus puts it, ‘there may have been much less of this controversy outside the immediate circle of Prosper and his opponents in the years between 428 and 433 than is generally supposed’, R.A. Markus, *The End* (1990), 178-9.

⁷⁶ M. Dulaey, ‘Les relations entre Lérins et Marseille’ (2009). Eucherius’ debt to Augustine has also been shown recently by Weidmann who newly attributes to the bishop of Lyon two spurious homilies of Augustine, see Clemens Weidmann, ‘Zwei Weihnachtspredigten des Eucherius von Lyon’, in Victoria Zimmerl-Panagl, Lukas J. Dorbauer, Clemens Weidmann (eds),

explore Eucherius' relation to Cassian's writings through the lens of his *De laude eremi*. This relation has proved to be rather independent: albeit Eucherius does borrow ideas and vocabulary from Cassian, he has nevertheless his own vision of an ascetic life and of its multiple dimensions – very distinct from those of John Cassian. The figure of Eucherius adds therefore notably to the variety of the picture of Gallic ascetics in the first half of the 5th century and the theological climate in which the Augustinian controversy emerged.

Obedience and Communal Authority in John Cassian

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ABSTRACT

This article lays out a definition of monastic obedience as taught by John Cassian, then presents an assessment of those conditions under which he thought it was appropriate to practice obedience, and finally explores the significance of Cassian's attitude toward obedience for the broader scholarly discussion about his understanding of Christian authority. I show that Cassian operated with a fairly straightforward concept of monastic obedience in which monks under obedience in a *cenobium* were expected to do whatever they were told under any circumstances. However, observing a stark lack of attention to the virtue of obedience in Cassian's writings about anchoritic life, I conclude that Cassian did not consider obedience to be a universal practice recommended for all monks and nuns. Instead, he saw it as essential for monastics living in a properly constituted community, while he advocated for a different virtue, discretion, as the most important for those monks living alone. This, I conclude, is most probably because Cassian thought of obedience as possible only in those contexts in which a community and its institutions were present so as to ensure that a given monk would receive good spiritual leadership. Cassian's approach to obedience, I argue, thus reveals him to be more of an ad hoc thinker on the question of authority than much recent scholarship has allowed. Cassian seems to conceive of no singular and essential system of Christian authority, as some scholars have suggested, but rather he tailors his way of teaching on authority to the specific context about which he is writing in light of the spiritual goods that he held to be most important. All told, authority mattered a great deal to Cassian, yet this does not imply that he can properly be read as a systematic theorist on the topic. Instead, Cassian's attitude toward obedience seems consistent with a fluid pastoral approach on his part to monastic institutions and authority.

Let us ask three primary questions. First, what is obedience for John Cassian? Second, under what conditions does he think it to be appropriately practised? Third, what does Cassian's approach to obedience tell us about his understanding of authority more broadly?

Let us take the first question first.

John Cassian is well known for his emphasis on obedience (*oboedientia*), especially in the portions of his *Institutes* that deal with his rules for life in a *cenobium*. In his longest treatment of the topic, Cassian explains the role that obedience plays in the life of a potential entrant to one of his monastic

communities. First, he says, the new monk spends one year working with the guest-master of the *cenobium*. Then, if the newcomer has served diligently, he is assigned to another elder for the expressed purpose of learning obedience.¹ The method by which he is to do so is simple. The new monk must obey his elder on absolutely every matter to the point that he does not ‘even presume to attend to [his] common and natural necessities on [his] own authority, to say nothing of daring to leave [his] cell, without the knowledge and permission of [his] superior’.² There is no room (or need) for independent thought on the part of the new monk – the elder will be consulted and obeyed on even the tiniest question. And, what is more, this obedience must hold regardless of the nature of the order given. Indeed, a good entrant must happily carry out even absurd tasks, a point that Cassian illustrates with (among other things) the story of John the Short, who famously watered a stick for years simply because his elder told him to do so.³

The point of all this obedience, Cassian says, is to learn the essential virtues necessary for life in the *cenobium*. Obedience teaches a new monk to overcome his desires, and it is only in overcoming these desires that the monk can learn things like ‘humility of heart’, ‘unbroken unity with his brothers’, and ‘a solid and enduring peace’.⁴ As such, according to the *Institutes* (though not the *Conferences*, as we shall see), obedience ‘holds the first place among the other virtues’.⁵

We have a fairly clear answer to our first question; monastic obedience, for Cassian, is just what it sounds like: the complete submission of the will of one monk to his elder in all matters great and small, carried out for the purpose of developing Christian virtue.

On to question two: under what conditions does Cassian consider obedience to be appropriate?

Let us answer this question in two stages. First, let us observe what Cassian says about what makes a particular abba worthy of authority.

Therefore no one is chosen to rule over a community of brothers unless, before he himself exercises authority, he has learned by obedience how he should command those who will be subject to him and has understood from the institutes of the elders what he should pass on to the young.⁶

To attain authority, Cassian says here, an abba must first submit himself by obedience to the authority of those who came before him. Cassian goes on to

¹ *Inst.* 4.VII.

² *Inst.* 4.X. Translations of Cassian from (for the *Institutes*) Boniface Ramsay, *John Cassian: The Institutes*, Ancient Christian Writers 58 (New York, 2000); or from (for the *Conferences*) Boniface Ramsay, *John Cassian: The Conferences*, Ancient Christian Writers 57 (New York, 1997).

³ *Inst.* 4.XXIII-XXVI.

⁴ *Inst.* 4.VIII.

⁵ *Inst.* 4.XXX.1.

⁶ *Inst.* 2.III.3.

say that most variances in monastic tradition arise when people break with the chain of tradition and thus 'declare ourselves abbas before we profess to be disciples, as is right, being readier to demand that our own whims be honoured than that the considered teaching of our forebears be observed'.⁷

This comes as little surprise; a preoccupation with the authority of historical tradition is a hallmark of Cassian's thought, especially in the *Institutes*. Cassian often goes out of his way to show that even minor details in the life of a good *cenobium* (such as the specifics of how monks dress or the number of psalms read at a particular time of day) all have good historical precedent from foundational authorities like Antony the Great, the Evangelist Mark, or, in one famous case, even an angel.⁸ In the *Institutes*, Cassian creates a simple and straightforward link between obedience and the historical tradition that he so values. In saying that obedience to those who came before him is a prerequisite for the authority of an abba in a *cenobium*, Cassian uses obedience as a means of concretely connecting a given abba to this historical tradition. This connection established in this way is thus one of the conditions for obedience in accordance with the *Institutes*.

We must now make our second observation about the conditions under which Cassian expects monastic obedience to occur. If one were to read only the *Institutes*, one might well conclude that obedience is a *sine qua non* of all monastic life and authority for Cassian. And, when it comes to monasticism as practised in one of his own *cenobia*, this conclusion would appear basically correct. Yet, in Cassian's much longer *Conferences*, especially Parts I and II thereof, which deal exclusively with anchoritic life, the concept of obedience goes virtually unmentioned. Obedience, we must note, does receive some attention and praise in Part III of the *Conferences*,⁹ which part was written (at a later date than the other two sections) explicitly to explore the links between the cenobitic and anchoritic ways of life,¹⁰ perhaps in the face of concern at the sometimes harsh tone with which Cassian speaks about cenobites in Parts I and II.¹¹ With renewed attention to cenobitic life at the end of the *Conferences*, obedience re-emerges as an important theme; this fact highlights yet further the stark absence of obedience in those sections of the *Conferences* devoted to life in the desert.

The almost complete lack of any discussion of obedience in Parts I and II of the *Conferences* points us to something crucial about Cassian's understanding of the topic, namely, that he associates it more or less exclusively with life in

⁷ *Inst.* 2.III.5.

⁸ *Inst.* 2.IV-V. See Richard J. Goodrich, *Contextualizing Cassian: Aristocrats, Asceticism, and Reformation in Fifth-Century Gaul* (Oxford, 2007), 126-39.

⁹ Especially *Conlat.* 19.II.1; 19.VI.6; 20.I.3.

¹⁰ *Conlat.* 3 *praef.* 2

¹¹ For instance, *Conlat.* 17.XIV.1 and *passim*.

an established community. Obedience, for Cassian, appears to be a discipline worth discussing only when writing about the *cenobium* specifically.¹²

As such, in those sections of the *Conferences* dealing with the lives of hermits, a very different virtue is emphasized: discretion (*discretio*), which can be defined roughly as the virtue of carrying out balanced and wise self-assessment.¹³ Regarding discretion the *Conferences* now say (in nominal contradiction to the *Institutes*) that ‘among all the virtues [it] holds the supreme and first place’,¹⁴ a teaching that (Cassian says) comes from no less of an authority than St Antony the Great.¹⁵

Cassian’s depictions of desert life are strongly consistent with his claim that discretion reigns supreme among the monks of Skete. Desert monks are frequently spoken of in the *Conferences* as monitoring their own thoughts in isolation from others, saddled with the responsibility of determining for themselves whether certain of their ideas and impulses are consistent with authentic teaching, as well as what spiritual practices to engage in.¹⁶ What is more, the virtue comes up in conversations on all sorts of topics. In *Conference Sixteen*, for instance, Cassian teaches that friendship between monks in the desert can only be established by avoiding and assuaging anger in large part by way of discretion.¹⁷ And, indeed, some of the most memorable passages in the *Conferences* comprise Cassian’s descriptions of the sometimes horrifying fate of hermits who lack in the virtue, some of whom are driven as far as suicide by demonic thoughts.¹⁸

Accompanying the rise in emphasis on discretion in Parts I and II of the *Conferences* is a deeply diminished place for obedience. For one thing, as we have already noticed, Cassian no longer claims obedience to be first among virtues. This dethroning of obedience is accompanied by a commensurate silence about it in these first parts of the *Conferences*. For example, throughout Cassian’s extended discussion (in *Conference Five*) of the eight primary vices (and the virtues and skills necessary to combat them) obedience is never once mentioned. Much to the contrary, Cassian paints a picture that emphasizes the monk’s own decisions and judgement, saying explicitly that monks in the desert each themselves ‘must draw up battle plans according to which the progress which follows each victory and triumph will bring us to purity of heart and to the fullness of perfection’.¹⁹ The monk here is presented as the commander of

¹² See also *Conlat.* 19.II.2, wherein life in the desert is noted to be free of exacting submission.

¹³ The term unguates in meaning somewhat in the *Conferences*, but the best sources for a definition are *Conlat.* 1.XX-XXII; 2.II.4.

¹⁴ *Conlat.* 1.XXIII.1.

¹⁵ *Conlat.* 2.II.3-4.

¹⁶ *Conlat.* 1.XX-XXII; 17.VIII.2.

¹⁷ *Conlat.* 16.XXVII.1.

¹⁸ See *Conlat.* 2.V-VIII.

¹⁹ *Conlat.* 5.XXVII.1.

his own spiritual battle, quite far from simply doing whatever he is told by someone else.

Indeed, the prominence of obedience fades so far at times that Cassian, in *Conference Seventeen*, actually engages in an extended scriptural defence of deceitful lying in order to show that he and Germanus did right by breaking a promise to return to their *cenobium* after their visit to Skete. He even appears to argue here that vows in the *cenobium* can never really lead to perfection at all.²⁰ One would have to assume that he is being hyperbolic (through the mouth of Germanus he expresses worry that he could be setting a bad example),²¹ but the essential point still rings through: everywhere one turns in the first two parts of the *Conferences*, personal discretion rather than obedience is emphasized as the key to successfully navigating a solitary or nearly solitary monastic existence – a trend that runs to the depths of his thought in these portions of his corpus.

Cassian does, however, see an important role for the wisdom of elders in the life of desert monks, and he strongly encourages imitation of these elders.²² Indeed, true discretion, Cassian implies, amounts precisely to conforming one's own judgements to that of the elders.²³ Connection to historical tradition has thus not lost its importance in the *Conferences*.²⁴ Yet, in the desert the anchorite must himself do the leg-work involved in submitting to this tradition rather than relying on absolute obedience to teach it to him. Illustrating this beautifully, Cassian compares desert monks to bees trying to gather honey from a variety of different flowers – the flowers being various elders – and thus seeking out shreds of wisdom wherever they can find them.²⁵ And, indeed, the finding of good spiritual honey is no easy task from Cassian's point of view. The *Conferences* contain numerous stories of bad elders giving soul-destroying advice, and are riven with other brief warnings about their ilk.²⁶

If, then, Cassian sees the *cenobium* as a place to practice absolute obedience in order to connect with tradition, he equally sees the desert as a spiritual marketplace (an image he himself uses)²⁷ where individual discretion becomes the virtue most crucial for creating the link to history that is necessary for spiritual success.

It is well to note that Cassian, on a few occasions, argues that the anchoritic life is not appropriate until a monk has first developed some maturity in the *cenobium*, in part through obedience. His argument to this end is most explicit

²⁰ *Conlat.* 17.XIV.1.

²¹ *Conlat.* 17.XV.

²² *Conlat.* 18.III.1.

²³ *Conlat.* 2.V.2.

²⁴ *Conlat.* 2.X.2. See also *Conlat.* 2.XI.6; 2.XXI.1-2.

²⁵ *Inst.* 5.IV.2.

²⁶ For example, *Conlat.* 2.XIII.4-12; 10.III.1-2.

²⁷ *Conlat.* 18.I.2.

early in Part III of the *Conferences*, where he claims that anchorites ‘are first instructed in the *cenobia* and then, perfected in their practical way of life, choose the recesses of the desert’.²⁸ As we have already noted, Part III of the *Conferences* was written to explain the connection between the life of the desert and that of the *cenobium*, and here Cassian seems to want to locate these ways of life as two stages of asceticism, the second entered into by certain highly capable monks, and the first a universal. One might thus be tempted to think that Cassian took obedience for granted as part of the life of all monks, at least in the beginning. Yet, there are virtually no traces of a two-stage understanding of monasticism in the first two parts of the *Conferences*, and, while Cassian gushes continually about the virtues of various desert hermits throughout the collection, he never includes obedience on the list until he arrives at Part III (where it suddenly appears in force).²⁹ Thus the two-stage move appears to be more a retroactive explanation than it is an essential part of Cassian’s thought structure, or a real reflection of the practices of Skete. The desert way of life as following the *cenobium* may well have become Cassian’s ideal, but he seems not to have assumed that it was really lived up to all the time even among the wisest abbas (to say nothing of the bad ones), and thus, it seems, he basically accepted the notion that some desert monks attained to real holiness without much (if any) structured obedience (though not without discretion).

Thus we are left with real variance in Cassian’s writings on the question of obedience. It is identified as the single most important virtue of all in the *Institutes* and portions of Part III of the *Conferences*, each written about the *cenobium*, yet it is a topic of practically no interest in texts dealing with the anchorites, and is displaced by discretion as virtue number one.

This variance in emphasis on obedience is probably not arbitrary. Rather, the contexts about which Cassian is writing in different portions of his corpus are probably what drives him to trumpet obedience in some places, while focusing instead on discretion in others. After all, where an abba in a *cenobium* has a community around him to vouch for his authority, anyone can wander out into Skete and call himself a monk; and it seems from Cassian’s own writings that many a questionable character did so in his time. One is reminded of the story of the proud elder who, listening to a demon, threw himself into a well,³⁰ or the story of the elder who cruelly criticized a young monk for his sexual thoughts, only to be destroyed by the same thoughts himself.³¹ Cassian seems quite sensitive to the fact that a pilgrim or hermit in the desert has virtually no concrete means by which to judge the validity of a given person’s connection to the right kind of historical tradition, and he often notes that mere old age or

²⁸ *Conlat.* 18.IV.2.

²⁹ See *Conlat.* 19.II.1-2.

³⁰ *Conlat.* 2.V.2-3.

³¹ *Conlat.* 2.XIII.

even strict asceticism are not necessarily signs of worthiness as an elder in the desert.³²

Cassian thus ends up advocating obedience only for monks for whom there is at least some level of institutional structure backing a given abba's authority. The *cenobium*, as an institution, provides a kind of safe-guard for the monk, such that he can trust immediately and completely the elder to which he is assigned for the work of obedience. Indeed, this very act of *assignment* is deeply significant. In the *cenobium*, it is not the monk who, like a honey-bee, seeks out the elder (as Cassian says is the method in the desert), it is, instead, the community that assigns an elder to him. This is done self-consciously on the part of the community, and according to a specific set of rules pertaining to the specific office of the master of obedience.³³ Obedience in the *cenobium* is thus an exercise that is checked and structured by the community within which it occurs; it is an institutional extension of the authority of that community and its abba who, as we have seen, is expected to have submitted to tradition via his own past obedience. When talking about the wilderness, where there is no community to provide this kind of structure, Cassian is suddenly silent on obedience and verbose (to say the least) on discretion.

We have, then, a good answer to our second primary question. Obedience is appropriate, for Cassian, in communal monastic institutions headed by an abba who has the right kind of relationship with historical tradition as demonstrated by his own past obedience – in other words, in a good *cenobium* as defined by John Cassian, and not necessarily elsewhere.

Now for our third overarching question.

This brief examination of obedience in Cassian allows us to make a basic observation about his view of authority more broadly. This observation is simply that Cassian, on the question of authority, is not an entirely systematic thinker.

Perhaps this seems obvious. Yet, while I am certainly not the only scholar who sees Cassian this way,³⁴ there are other recent writers who prefer to argue for one or another essential system whereby Cassian sought to establish authority in his and other monasteries as well as the Church more broadly. To this end, some scholarship has attempted to frame obedience and the structured master/disciple relationship as the essence of Cassian's presumed system,³⁵ while other scholarship has argued for an emphasis on monastic law as claimed

³² For example, *Conlat.* 2.V; 2.XIII.1-2.

³³ Such rules include, for example, the one year lag time between an entrant's first appearance at the monastery gates, as well as the divvying up of entering monks so as to allocate ten at a time to a given master. *Inst.* 4.VII.

³⁴ See Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (Oxford, 1998), 37-9.

³⁵ George E. Demacopoulos, *Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church* (Notre Dame, 2007). It is certainly true that the disciple/elder relationship was of major importance to Cassian, but this relationship is not always founded on obedience (as Demacopoulos implies). Obedience, as

to be derived from historical, especially Egyptian, sources (though, the argument goes, it is really Cassian's own synthesis).³⁶ Still more scholarship has asserted that Cassian saw authority wholly in terms of personal expertise (*peritia*), and thus found it impossible to conceive of a community in which various individuals at different levels of spiritual skill could successfully live together.³⁷ Scholars seeking an essential system of authority in Cassian have tended to frame his writing project in highly rhetorical terms, giving us a Cassian whose main goal in composing the *Institutes* and *Conferences* was not simply to enrich or even justify the lifestyles of his and other monastic communities in southern Gaul, but rather to establish himself and his system as the sole means by which authority was to be built in the region for monks, nuns, and perhaps even the ecclesial hierarchy and Church as a whole.

Approaches to Cassian like these may nicely explain *some* of the data from his corpus, including some of the data on obedience, and it would be impossible to deny that many sections of Cassian's writings have a rhetorical and political bent. But seeking a single proposed authority structure in Cassian, and treating his writings as elaborate apologetics for such a structure, consistently leaves us to puzzle over passages (and areas of silence) in which Cassian bucks whichever set of expectations we have embraced. If Cassian's entire system depends on obedience alone, for instance, what are we to do with the majority of the *Conferences*, in which that virtue receives no meaningful attention at all? Or, conversely, if discretion and *peritia* are the building blocks of all authority in Cassian, what do we make of his tremendous emphasis on obedience in the *Institutes*? Approaching the question of obedience in Cassian from either systematic point of view simply leaves out far too much of the data from his writings, and struggles against the weight of countervailing forces in his thought.

But Cassian's treatment of obedience and its relation to authority seems perfectly simple if we instead employ a somewhat older and rather more straightforward approach to him. Our observations here suggest that Cassian is perhaps best viewed more as an ad-hoc, pastoral thinker than as a theoretician after all – at least when it comes to the problem of authority.³⁸ Putting issues

we have seen, is located in the *cenobium* specifically for Cassian, and thus it cannot be understood to be the universal foundation of Cassian's approach to authority.

³⁶ R.J. Goodrich, *Contextualizing Cassian* (2007), 117-50.

³⁷ Conrad Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2000). Leyser goes as far as to argue that, in Cassian's monasteries, 'there is ultimately no possibility of supporting weaker brethren', *ibid.* 57. The statement seems almost bizarre in light of Cassian's extended comments on how new and inexperienced monks are trained through obedience, as discussed above. Leyser bases his comments on *Conl.* 16, but seems not to take into account the anchoritic setting of this conference.

³⁸ Of some interest here is the assessment of Cassian's understanding of individuation found in Catherine M. Chin, 'Cassian, Cognition, and the Common Life', in Blake Leyerle and Robin Darling Young (eds), *Ascetic Culture: Essays in Honor of Philip Rousseau* (Notre Dame, 2013). The Cassian presented by Chin would strike us as a dynamic and fluid thinker (to say the least)

like virtue, purity of heart, and the kingdom of God first, Cassian seems often to have taken a flexible approach to his project of promoting authority-based practices like obedience, arguing for various structures as he perceived them to be best suited to a given context.

Those strategies for establishing authority observed by previous scholars are, in every case, genuinely present in Cassian's works. It is, therefore, not that any these scholars have it all wrong. It is simply that Cassian cannot be boiled down to any one bare minimum system as many of these scholars seem to want. Rather than seeing Cassian as a man of conscious and absolute principles from which he constructed a system of authority, we must sometimes let him change his emphasis, shift his strategy, drop a subject, or even appear to contradict himself – doing so on the basis of context and consistent with an interest in other virtues – if we are to understand him fully.

So it is with obedience; there is no universal rule or principle for Cassian. For an entrant into one of his *cenobia*, the raw obedience of following orders no matter what would have been absolutely required as a means of submitting to authority and tradition, and of becoming a potential authority himself in the future. Yet, for those wandering in the desert, or, we might well surmise, living in other contexts outside of the institution of good communities, Cassian's advice generally focuses on developing discretion and searching for wisdom, strategies that he appears to have considered more appropriate for navigating the tumultuous realities of freer, and thus (from his point of view) more difficult ways of being Christian.

on the topic of persons and their communities, a picture which plays well with the one being painted here.

Epic Emotions: Narratorial Involvement in Sedulius' *Carmen Paschale*¹

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ABSTRACT

In the 5th century biblical epic *Carmen Paschale* ('Easter Song') by Sedulius, the narrative of the life of Christ frequently reveals the emotional involvement of the narrator. This phenomenon is most prominent in the fifth and last book, describing Christ's passion, death, resurrection, and ascension. A combined discourse-linguistic and narratological analysis makes it possible to show how the poet has shaped his text in order to convey his emotional involvement. By means of an example – an apostrophe to the people who ask for a guard at Christ's tomb (5.303-14) – it is illustrated how an accumulation of certain linguistic and stylistic devices in such highly emotional passages creates the sense of a Peak in the text. It is remarkable that a Peak, as in this example, does not always occur at a climactic moment in the story. It does, however, mark a pivotal point at the argumentative level of the text. The high level of the narrator's emotional involvement aims at persuading the reader in order to make him/her share the beliefs of the narrator. An analysis of the characteristics and distribution of passages like this makes clear that book 5 not only presents the climax of the story of Christ, but also contains the essential message the text seeks to convey. In this way, it is shown how the poet by means of his innovative use of emotional narratorial intrusions adds a dimension of rhetorical fireworks to a familiar storyline, thus heightening the communicative potential of the text.

In the genre of epic in antiquity a development can be discerned from Homer's rather objective and invisible narrator towards an overt, subjective, and emotionally involved narrator in later (Latin) epics, such as those of Statius and, above all, Lucan.² This tendency is continued in Late Antiquity, and previous scholarship has observed that this kind of emotional involvement on the part of the narrator is a common feature of early Christian poetry, and of biblical

¹ I thank Caroline Kroon, Nienke Vos, and Klazina Staat for their valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper.

² For an overview of this development from Homer to Silius Italicus, see Bernd Effe, *Epische Objektivität und subjektives Erzählen: 'Auktoriale' Narrativik von Homer bis zum römischen Epos der Flavienzeit* (Trier, 2004). Important on this topic is the work by Irene de Jong; see e.g., Irene J.F. de Jong, *Narratology and Classics: A Practical Guide* (Oxford, 2014).

epic in particular.³ In this respect, the fifth century biblical epic *Carmen Paschale* by Sedulius holds an extreme position: the narrator of this epic poem about the life of Christ is exceedingly engaged with his subject matter and the narrative style can be considered as very subjective.⁴ The narrative is repeatedly interrupted by evaluative remarks of the narrator, who often provides exegetical guidance or comments in a highly emotional way on the story.⁵

This article aims to provide insight in the way Sedulius employs the device of narratorial involvement in his *Carmen Paschale* and to suggest an answer to the question as to why these emotional passages occur where they do and what their function may be. After some background information on the poet and his work, as well as some general observations regarding narratorial intrusions in the *Carmen Paschale*, the main part of the article consists of a case study based on an extract from the fifth book of the poem. In my analysis, I make use of some methodological tools from the field of discourse linguistics and narratology in order to come to conclusions on the narrative presentation of the poem.⁶

Sedulius, of whom practically nothing is known, wrote his epic poem *Carmen Paschale* (*Easter Song*), probably around 430 AD.⁷ He may have been a *grammaticus*;⁸ in any case, he was well acquainted with the Latin literary tradition. The *Carmen Paschale*, which consists of five books, totalling approximately 1750 lines, is saturated with epic – especially Vergilian – vocabulary,

³ See, e.g., Michael J. Roberts, 'Poetry and Hymnography (1): Christian Latin Poetry', in Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (Oxford, 2008), 628-40, 636. On Christian epic in general, see also Karla Pollmann, 'The Transformation of the Epic Genre in Christian Late Antiquity', *SP* 36, 61-75.

⁴ The emotional involvement of the narrator of the *Carmen Paschale* is, in fact, comparable to that of the narrator of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*. See Roger P.H. Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament: Juvencus, Sedulius, Arator* (Oxford, 2006), 210. As Lucan was widely read in Late Antiquity, his narrative style appears to have had considerable influence on late antique poets.

⁵ Otis and, more recently, Conte, in their studies of Vergil's *Aeneid* call these kind of subjective narratorial intrusions 'sympathy' or *sympatheia* respectively, see Brooks Otis, *Virgil: A Study in Civilized Poetry* (Oxford, 1964); Gian Biagio Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and Other Latin Poets* (Ithaca, 1986), 168; and Gian Biagio Conte, *The Poetry of Pathos: Studies in Virgilian Epic* (Oxford, 2007), 50. As regards the *Carmen Paschale*, the emotions of the narrator are more often negative feelings towards antagonists than positive ones towards protagonists. Hence the term 'sympathy' or *sympatheia* would be misleading and is better avoided here.

⁶ An example of this kind of approach in the field of patristics is Paula J. Rose, *A Commentary on Augustine's De cura pro mortuis gerenda: Rhetoric in Practice* (Leiden, 2013).

⁷ On Sedulius and his *Carmen Paschale*, see R.P.H. Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament* (2006), 135-250; and Carl P.E. Springer, *The Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity: the Paschale carmen of Sedulius*, SVigChr 2 (Leiden, 1988). Or see the more concise introductions to the recent translations by Springer (English) and Bureau (French): *Sedulius. The Paschal Song and Hymns*, translated with an introduction and notes by Carl P.E. Springer, SBL Writings from the Greco-Roman World 35 (Atlanta, 2013); *Sédulius. Le Chant de Pâques*, traduction de Bruno Bureau, Les pères dans la foi 103 (Paris, 2013).

⁸ C.P.E. Springer, *The Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity* (1988), 27.

although the narrative style, with its disjunctive, episodic structure, is unquestionably late antique and differs greatly from that of Vergil.⁹ The poem has a strong thematic focus on the miracle stories as related in the four canonical gospels. After the first, introductory book, which consists mainly of an enumeration of Old Testament wonders prefiguring the miracles of Christ, book 2 starts with the birth, youth, and early ministry of Christ. Books 3 and 4 relate more or less all miracle stories from the Gospels, mainly healings. The fifth and final book tells of the passion of Christ, his death, resurrection, appearances, and, finally, his ascension. Sedulius does not simply render the Gospel texts into hexameters, but treats his source material with considerable freedom, omitting certain elements (such as most direct discourse), while elaborating on others.¹⁰ Moreover, Sedulius often intersperses the rather scanty narrative details with ample exegetical passages in which he stresses the spiritual truth and importance of the narrative, time and again relating the story of Christ to the mystery of God's salvation plan. Sedulius not only narrates a story, but also guides the reader in how the story should affect him/her.

In the *Carmen Paschale*, the involvement of the narrator is apparent throughout the text, in different grades of intensity. A frequent, but relatively unobtrusive way of expressing the narrator's stance is the use of evaluative or judgmental adjectives, in particular in the description of characters; King Herod is, for instance, called 'the cruel king' (*rege cruento*, 2.119), and John the Baptist is introduced as 'the mighty baptizer' (*baptista potens*, 2.143).¹¹ At certain points in the narrative, however, the narrator's involvement is expressed with more emotional intensity.¹² A clear example of this kind of high emotional involvement on the part of the narrator is the horrified exclamation he makes just before relating how Christ is beaten and spat in the face by the crowd: 'Ah, how many tears / forestall me as I attempt to tell how the furious crowd / laid

⁹ In the majority of editions the *Carmen Paschale* is divided into five books. However, the original book division is uncertain. For a recent discussion of the problems involved, see Victoria Zimmerl-Panagl, 'Parva loquor... Remarks on the Structure of Sedulius' *Carmen Paschale*', in Clara Burini De Lorenzi and Miryam De Gaetano (eds), *La poesia tardoantica e medievale. IV Convegno internazionale di studi Perugia, 15-17 novembre 2007* (Alessandria, 2010), 205-21, 216-20.

¹⁰ Some 100 years earlier, Sedulius' predecessor in the genre of biblical epic, Juvenius, in his *Evangeliorum Libri Quattuor*, stayed much closer to the Gospel texts and did hardly insert any exegetical remarks into the narrative. On Juvenius, see R.P.H. Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament* (2006), 1-134; for a recent translation with introduction and notes, see Scott McGill, *Juvenius' Four Books of the Gospels: Evangeliorum Libri Quattuor* (London, 2016).

¹¹ Text: *Sedulius. Opera omnia*, ed. Johannes Huemer and Victoria Panagl, CSEL 10, 2nd ed. (Wien, 2007). Translations in this article are from C.P.E. Springer: *Sedulius. The Paschal Song and Hymns* (2013).

¹² On the penetration of the narrative by passages of high emotional involvement in the *CP*, see Michael Roberts, *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase in Late Antiquity* (Liverpool, 1985), 168-71; C.P.E. Springer, *The Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity* (1988), 90-2.

Discipuli Christum raperent et abisse referrent
Ter redeunte die, sicut praedixerat ipse. 300
Quo stimulante metu vigilum munimina poscunt
Plura dari saevaque locum obsidione teneri.

So, when that place, made noble because of the Lord lying in it, 295
 Received the rich treasury of his body that was laid to rest
 (It was even more noble when he rose from there), the deceitful generation
 Was increasing the impiety within their hearts. In the dead of night, they said,
 The disciples would steal Christ's body and claim that he had gone away
 When the third day arrived, just as he himself had foretold. 300
 Motivated by this fear, they asked for a large contingent of guards
 To be provided and for the place to be kept under strict surveillance.¹⁶

After this narrative section, which is, in fact, already quite subjectively coloured – note the evaluative adjectives *nobilis* (296), *nobilior* (297), and *fallax* (297), as well as the evaluative noun *nefas* (298) –, follows a lengthy apostrophe (303-14) addressed to those who made the request.

Si nondum post vincla crucis, post vulnera ferri,
Post obitum mortis numerosa caede cruentum,
Carnifices, impletis opus nec creditis illum, 305
Qui totiens imis animas produxit ab umbris,
Posse suam revocare magis, peioribus aptos
Consiliis armate dolos, signate sepulcrum,
Ponite custodes, monumento advolvite saxum.
Quis poterit servare Deum, cui cardine rerum 310
Cuncta patent? Undis habitat, per tartara regnat,
Et caeli de nube tonat. Quid saeve tumultus,
Excubiis deperdis opus? Quid niteris illam
Explorare fidem, cui non vis credulus esse?

If, after the bonds of the cross, after the wounds inflicted by iron,
 After the ruin of death, bloody because of the numerous beatings,
 If you have not yet discharged your office, you butchers, and do not believe 305
 That he who so often has brought forth souls from the deep shades
 Is the more able to recall his own, arm yourself with stratagems
 In keeping with your evil counsels, seal the sepulcher,
 Set sentries in position, roll a rock in front of the tomb!
 Who will be able to keep in the Lord, for whom all things in the limits 310
 Of the universe lie open? He dwells on the waves, rules through Tartarus,
 And thunders from the clouds in the sky above. Why, fierce rabble,
 Do you waste your effort on watchmen? Why do you strive
 To test that faith which you are unwilling to believe?¹⁷

¹⁶ Translation of line 296 altered.

¹⁷ Translation of lines 303-4 altered.

The use of the rhetorical figure of apostrophe is a forceful means for the narrator to show his intense emotional involvement.¹⁸ In this apostrophe the narrator's emotions appear to be anger and indignation, as becomes clear by the use of the denouncing vocatives *carnifices* ['butchers'] in 305, and *saeve tumultus* ['savage rabble'] in 312. Because of its offensive character, this apostrophe can be labelled as an invective.¹⁹

The narrator's emotional engagement is not only expressed by the employment of apostrophe and subjective vocabulary, but also by a number of other characteristic linguistic and rhetorical devices, the most significant of which are:

- the use of absolute or hyperbolic vocabulary, stressing the gravity of the situation; apart from the vocatives already mentioned we find *numerosa caede* ['numerous beating'] (304) and *totiens* ['so often'] (306).²⁰
- a high density of verbs from line 308 onwards (*armate, signate, ponite, advolvite, poterit, patent, habitat, regnat, tonat, deperdis, niteris, vis*), which creates a staccato effect.
- the repetitive use of imperatives (*armate, signate, ponite, advolvite*, 308-9).
- the repetitive use of rhetorical questions (*Quis – Deum, Quid – opus, Quid – fidem*, 310-14).²¹
- strong repetition in different forms (both in sound and structure):
 - anaphora: *post, post, post* (303-4)
 - alliteration: *vincla, vulnera* (303); *caede cruentum / carnifices* (304-5)
 - polyptoton: *quis, cui, quid, quid, cui* (310-4)
 - echo: *nec creditis – non credulus* (305, 314)
- repetition and parallelism of syntactic structures: *post vincla crucis, post vulnera ferri, / Post obitum mortis* (303-4); *armate dolos, signate sepulcrum, / Ponite custodes, (...) advolvite saxum* (308-9); *Undis habitat, per tartara*

¹⁸ For apostrophe as a device for expressing emotion, see H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik* (2008), 377-8; Elizabeth Block, 'The Narrator Speaks: Apostrophe in Homer and Vergil', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 112 (1982), 7-22, 8-9. Apart from marking emotional points in the story, apostrophe also highlights crucial events and themes; see Irene J.F. de Jong, 'Metalepsis in Ancient Greek Literature', in Jonas Grethlein and Antonios Rengakos (eds), *Narratology and Interpretation: The Content of Narrative Form in Ancient Literature* (Berlin, 2009), 87-115, 96-7; Siegmund Döpp, 'Metalepsen als signifikante Elemente spätleinischer Literatur', in Ute E. Eisen and Peter von Möllendorff (eds), *Über die Grenze: Metalepse in Text- und Bildmedien des Altertums* (Berlin, 2013), 431-65, 446-51.

¹⁹ A considerable number of apostrophes in the *CP* may be characterized as invectives. In particular book 5 is rich in invectives: eight out of eleven apostrophes in this book are addressed to antagonists. A treatment of seven instances of invective in the *CP* can be found in Roberto Mori, *Sedulio: Tra prosa e poesia. L'Opus Paschale e il Carmen Paschale* (Padova, 2013), 91-126.

²⁰ Compare M. Toolan, 'Engagement via Emotional Heightening' (2012), 219 ad 7.

²¹ The rhetorical question is an apt rhetorical device for arousing indignation; see Quint., *Inst.* 9.2.8; H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik* (2008), 380; for the arousal of indignation in Lucan: B. Effe, *Epische Objektivität und subjektives Erzählen* (2004), 67-8.

*regnat, / Et caeli de nube tonat (311-2); quid (...) deperdis (...) quid niteris (312-3).*²²

Above all, the emotional intensity is revealed by the fact that all these stylistic and linguistic features are concentrated in such a small fragment of the text.

The vehement emotions of the narrator are thus reflected in the rather turbulent form and structure of the discourse. A section in a text that shows such a high degree of agitation at the linguistic level is what Longacre calls a 'Peak'.²³ Peaks typically draw the attention of the reader towards a pivotal point in the text. Hence it is significant to consider what this pivotal point pertains to in a given text.

In most narrative texts, Peaks correspond to a climax in the events of the story that is related in the text. In case of a Passion-story, it is thus to be expected that the death and resurrection of Christ are marked as important by the presence of rhetorical and linguistic Peak features. In the case of *CP* 5.295-314, however, there does not seem to be a climactic moment in the sequence of events at all: the request for a guard at the tomb is not a decisive moment in the progression of the narrative. The narrator even seems to exaggerate when he suggests that the request for a guard is the climax of the crimes committed, while, in fact, it is a considerably less violent act than the ones described before – such as the beating of Christ and the crucifixion itself. So, why would the narrator be so outraged, and why does a Peak occur at this particular place?

In line 305 it becomes clear that the narrator is incensed because of the fact that the Jews, by asking for a guard, show that they do not believe (*nec creditis*) that Christ will rise from his grave. The importance of *nec creditis* (305) is stressed by the echo of it at the end of the apostrophe: *non vis credulus esse* (314). With the four sarcastic imperatives in 308-9, the narrator challenges the

²² Compare M. Toolan, 'Engagement via Emotional Heightening' (2012), 219 *ad* 8.

²³ Robert E. Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1996), 33-50. Peak features discussed by Longacre that can also be found in *CP* 5.303-14 are: high frequency of verbs, shift to short sentences, asyndeton, shift to pseudodialogue (including apostrophe and rhetorical question), and rhetorical underlining by means of figures of speech, repetition, and/or parallelism. In discourse linguistics the term 'Peak' is generally employed in the analysis of strictly narrative texts. It is mostly understood as a linguistically and stylistically marked highpoint of the narrative at the end of a phase of complicating action. The concept of Peak was inserted by Fleischman into Labov's model of prototypical narrative structure; Suzanne Fleischman, *Tense and Narrativity: From Medieval Performance to Modern Fiction* (Austin, 1990), 135-54; William Labov, *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular* (Philadelphia, 1972), 362-70. Longacre, however, makes clear that Peak is a linguistic feature applicable to all sorts of texts, such as procedural, expository, and hortatory discourse; R.E. Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse* (1996), 48-50. In this article I use the term Peak in this way, *i.e.*, as a term not strictly reserved for narrative passages, but applicable to any stylistically and linguistically marked highpoint in the text.

addressees of the apostrophe to do whatever they want, because all their actions will be in vain anyway. As becomes clear from the following rhetorical questions, the narrator trusts in the omnipotence of God, who governs everything and is therefore also able to conquer Death. Thus, although the vehement emotions of the narrator and the linguistic features of a Peak do not correspond with a climax in the sequence of events, they do mark the presence of a pivotal point on the argumentative level of the text: that is, the question whether one believes in the resurrection of Christ or not.²⁴

While the presence of a Peak emphasizes the importance of the content, the highly emotional character of this Peak is an effective means to influence the readers. The explicitness of the narrator's emotions serves to evoke the same emotions in the recipient of the text, so that he or she will be inclined to share the stance of the narrator.²⁵ As is the case with most of the highly emotional passages in book 5, the emotion evoked here is of a quite negative kind. The wickedness of the antagonists is magnified in order to create a strong negative figure of identification. A sensible reader should not want to be like those butchers, who do not believe in the resurrection, but should rather want to side with the narrator, to whom the omnipotence of God is manifest.²⁶

It is noteworthy that a significant number of Peaks in book 5 of the *Carmen Paschale* are passages – comparable to the one above – that convey the narrator's emotional involvement in the events of the narrative, especially by means of exclamations, apostrophes and rhetorical questions.²⁷ Moreover, the number of these highly emotional passages is considerably higher in book 5 than in the preceding books of the poem. This can, for example, be discerned from the distribution of apostrophes throughout the poem: eleven of the twenty-four instances of apostrophe in the *Carmen Paschale* can be found in book 5 (book 1 contains five instances, books 2 and 4 each count four apostrophes, book 3 has none).

In addition, it is striking to observe that almost all Peaks in book 5 do not occur in narrative sections, that is, in sections in which the narrator paraphrases

²⁴ A comparable case is provided by the apostrophe to the guards at the tomb in 5.339-48. This invective is aimed at convincing the reader of the reality of the resurrection as well.

²⁵ For this effect of pathos, see n. 13; H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik* (2008), 142-4. For this effect of apostrophe in particular, see *id.* 377-8; E. Block, 'The Narrator Speaks' (1982), 8-9; Jacqueline Klooster, 'Apostrophe in Homer, Apollonius and Callimachus', in U.E. Eisen and P. von Möllendorff (eds), *Über die Grenze* (2013), 151-73, 152; Francesca D'Alessandro Behr, *Feeling History: Lucan, Stoicism, and the Poetics of Passion* (Columbus, 2007), 2, 5; B. Effe, *Epische Objektivität und subjektives Erzählen* (2004), 44-5; see also M. Roberts, *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase* (1985), 171.

²⁶ Earlier in the epic tradition, the use of apostrophe for expressing negative feelings towards antagonists was exploited to the full by Lucan. See F. D'Alessandro Behr, *Feeling History* (2007), 33-75.

²⁷ Other examples are 5.14-7, 5.27-31, 5.59-68, 5.94-6, 5.152-5, 5.156-63, 5.276-84, 5.339-48, 5.351-8.

events from the Gospels, but rather in the more argumentative, exegetical or evaluative sections that generally follow the narrative parts, as in the example analyzed above.²⁸ As a result, the message expressed in the evaluative sections receives more emphasis than the story itself. Related to this feature of Sedulius' poetic technique is another remarkable phenomenon: narrative elements that are vital to the development of the story regularly occur within the evaluative sections rather than the narrative sections.²⁹ Thus, the evaluative sections gain an even higher profile. In the passage analyzed in this paper, the fact that Christ's tomb is sealed with a large stone can only be inferred from the sarcastic imperative clause *monumento advolvite saxum* (309) in the apostrophe, as it is not mentioned in the narrative section preceding the apostrophe (295-302). This way of treating essential narrative elements can only be successfully employed if the audience is already familiar with the story.

Both these phenomena, which are in fact conspicuous innovations in the genre of epic poetry,³⁰ are related to the communicative goal of the text. The text is not aimed at immersing the reader in an exciting story – one which in all likelihood would have been known to the reader –, but at the edification of the reader by the Christian message of salvation.³¹ Crucial to this message is the belief in Christ's conquest over death through his resurrection. In order to persuade the reader to truly share in this belief, the poet, when narrating Christ's Passion and resurrection, pulls out all the stops and employs the most powerful rhetorical devices of pathos. That is, in my opinion, why book five, in which the climax of the *Carmen Paschale* is treated, contains such a high degree of highly emotional passages.

²⁸ Of the four books narrating the life of Christ (2-5), this phenomenon is most apparent in book 5 – the only clear exceptions being the scarce instances of direct discourse at 5.6-10, 5.80-1, 5.416-21. Book 3, the middle section of the poem, in particular differs from book 5: it contains relatively few evaluative comments, and the episodic narrative is rarely interrupted by narratorial intrusions. See also V. Zimmerl-Panagl, 'Parva loquor...' (2010), 210. Therefore, the Peaks of book 3 can almost exclusively be found in strictly narrative sections.

²⁹ Compare, e.g., the kiss of Judas (5.64) or Pilate washing his hands (5.159). See also M. Roberts, *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase* (1985), 169.

³⁰ Sedulius' innovative narrative style has been highly influential on later Christian epics, such as those of Arator or Venantius Fortunatus; see, e.g., R.P.H. Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament* (2006), 251-350; Michael J. Roberts, 'The Last Epic of Antiquity: Generic Continuity and Innovation in the Vita Sancti Martini of Venantius Fortunatus', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 131 (2001), 257-86.

³¹ The target readership of the *CP* has been much discussed. Most scholars assume an educated Christian readership that would have enjoyed the poetical form of the *CP* and at the same time would have been edified and strengthened in their beliefs by the content of it. For an overview of the discussion, see R.P.H. Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament* (2006), 244-50. Two recent contributions to the discussion on this topic: Daniel Deerberg, *Der Sturz des Judas. Kommentar (5,1–163) und Studien zur poetischen Erbauung bei Sedulius*, *Orbis Antiquus* 43 (Münster, 2011), 369-460; B. Bureau, *Sedulius. Le Chant de Pâques* (2013), 35-40.

Thus, the *Carmen Paschale*, by means of its extensive use of narratorial emotions, seeks to bring home the message, not only trying to influence the reader by the force of argument, but also by speaking to his/her heart. From a methodological point of view, the application of discourse linguistic and narratological concepts elucidates how the poet effectively employs these emotions in order to make them serve his communicative aims. It makes us understand why his epic is so emotional and his emotions so epic.

Evaluations of Multilingual Competence in Cassiodorus' *Variae* and *Institutiones*¹

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ABSTRACT

In this short article I discuss the evaluations of multilingual competence (defined as an individual's mastery of various languages) occurring in Cassiodorus' *Variae* and *Institutiones*. I examine how multilingual competence is evaluated and in which specific contexts, and whether a difference can be discerned between the pre-conversion *Variae* and the post-conversion *Institutiones*. I conclude that Cassiodorus is consistent in his positive appraisal of multilingual competence, but that a discontinuity can be observed as to the contexts in which these positive appraisals are found.

Introduction

Multilingual competence – an individual's mastery of various languages – is a recurring theme in the *Variae* and *Institutiones* of Cassiodorus, who lived from around 485 until around 580. Cassiodorus issued from a Christian family and built up an impressive worldly career under the Ostrogothic kingdom. When in 540 Ravenna fell, however, Cassiodorus withdrew from political life, became a monk, and founded a twin monastery at Vivarium and Castellum, near Scyllaceum, respectively for coenobitic and anachoretic monks.² In this article, I will discuss those passages in the *Variae* and *Institutiones* where Cassiodorus mentions people's multilingual competence and evaluates it. In doing so, I will pay special attention to the specific contexts within which multilingual

¹ This article is part of a KU Leuven research project which has resulted in my PhD thesis entitled *Linguistic Ideas in Early Latin Christianity (c.250-636): A historiographical study* (Leuven, 2015). Thanks are due to Thorsten Fögen, Gert Partoens, Pierre Swiggers and Toon Van Hal for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article. For the Latin source texts, I have relied on the following editions: CChr.SL 96 for the *Variae*; *Cassiodori Senatoris Institutiones: Edited from the Manuscripts* by R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1963 [1937]) for the *Institutiones*; and CChr.SL 97 for *Expositio psalorum*. Furthermore, I have quoted or relied upon the following translations: Samuel J.B. Barnish, *Cassiodorus, Variae: Translated with Notes and Introduction*, Translated Texts for Historians 12 (Liverpool, 1992), and James W. Halporn, *Cassiodorus, Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning and On the Soul: Translated with Notes by James W. Halporn and Introduction by Mark Vessey*, Translated Texts for Historians 42 (Liverpool, 2004).

² Wolfgang Bürsgens, 'Cassiodor', in Siegmar Döpp and Wilhelm Geerlings (eds), *Lexikon der antiken christlichen Literatur*, 3rd ed. (Freiburg, Basel and Wien, 2002), 141-3, 141.

competence is evaluated in a particular way, and I will try to establish whether one can discern a difference between the evaluations of multilingual competence occurring in Cassiodorus' pre-conversion *Variae* and those occurring in his post-conversion *Institutiones*.

Pre-conversion: *Variae*

An individual's competence in Greek and, in general, Greek learning are prominent themes throughout the letters included in the *Variae*.³ An interesting case occurs in a literary letter written by Cassiodorus, but allegedly addressed by king Theoderic to Boethius (1.45.3-4).⁴ Cassiodorus – who himself succeeded Boethius as Theoderic's *magister officiorum* – extensively praises Boethius' ambitious but uncompleted project of translating Plato, Aristotle, and the Neoplatonist commentators from Greek into Latin. Cassiodorus states that by way of Boethius alone, Rome has received all of Greek science and culture 'in her native speech'.⁵ In this piece, which has been called a 'virtual encomium of the Greek learning of Boethius',⁶ it is left unstated but clearly implied that Boethius had a profound mastery of both Latin and Greek. Boethius' actual translations are explicitly referred to only once, namely when the author states that speakers of Latin have access to Greek science 'through your translations'.⁷ Apart from this statement, Boethius' efforts are praised in the broader context of the transfer of Greek culture and learning to a 'Roman' environment. The author refers to commonplace Roman and Greek types of clothing in order to emphasize the fundamental cultural 'otherness' and, thus, the exceptional merit of Boethius' initiative. Moreover, he contends that someone able to read both the Greek original and Boethius' Latin translation would prefer Boethius' version over the original. This is a line of rhetoric which is reminiscent of Cicero's programme in *Tusculanae disputationes* (2.2.5-6) to replace Greek libraries with Latin ones.⁸ Boethius' competence in Greek is thus positively valued in

³ See Jonathan J. Arnold, *Theoderic, the Goths, and the Restoration of the Roman Empire*. PhD thesis University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, 2008), 125; *id.*, *Theoderic and the Roman Imperial Restoration* (New York, 2014).

⁴ S.J.B. Barnish, *Variae* (1992), 20.

⁵ *Variae* 1.45.4: *Et quascumque disciplinas uel artes facunda Graecia per singulos uiros edidit, te uno auctore patrio sermone Roma suscepit.*

⁶ J.J. Arnold, *Theoderic* (2008), 125 n. 127; *id.*, *Theoderic* (2014), 149.

⁷ *Variae* 1.45.4: *Translationibus enim tuis Pythagoras musicus, Ptolemaeus astronomus leguntur Itali: Nicomachus arithmeticus, geometricus Euclides audiuntur Ausonii: Plato theologus, Aristoteles logicus Quirinali uoce disceptant: mechanicum etiam Archimedes Latiale Siculis reddidisti.* See Pierre Courcelle, *Les lettres grecques en Occident: De Macrobe à Cassiodore*, 2nd ed., Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 159 (Paris, 1948), 332 n. 5.

⁸ Cicero's statement reads as follows (ed. Pohlenz): *Quam ob rem hortor omnis, qui facere id possunt, ut huius quoque generis laudem iam languenti Graeciae eripiant et transferant in*

the context of scientific or philosophical translation. It is important to keep in mind that the works translated by Boethius were all composed by 'pagan' philosophers.

Another relevant case can be found in a letter where king Theoderic virtually praises his ambassador Cyprian (5.40.5).⁹ Cassiodorus in this laudatory piece thematizes Cyprian's trilingual competence in Latin, Greek and Ostrogothic. He writes that Cyprian, when sent on an embassy to Constantinople, has no reason at all to be nervous; Greece has nothing to surprise him with, as he is schooled in these three languages, namely Latin, Greek and Ostrogothic.¹⁰ Multilingual competence is here connected to a global image of intelligence and worldly sophistication, and is used to suggest that Cyprian knows how to move in the culturally superior – or considered to be so – Eastern empire. A similar instance occurs when Cassiodorus values the multilingual competence of Cyprian's sons (8.21.7), writing that although they are 'boys of Roman descent', they also speak 'our' language, *i.e.* Ostrogothic.¹¹ This is subsequently presented by Cassiodorus as a good omen for the future of the Ostrogoths. Relatedly, Cassiodorus writes elsewhere (8.22.5) that Cyprian's sons were educated among adult men in order to become capable of being in charge. Verbal skills obviously occupy an important place in this context. The boys are said not to be afraid to answer when they are permitted to, and to be able to 'speak excellently in various languages'.¹² Political affairs here provide the context for Cassiodorus' positive appraisal of multilingual competence.

hanc urbem, sicut reliquas omnis, quae quidem erant expetendae, studio atque industria sua maiores nostri transtulerunt. [...] Quodsi haec studia traducta erunt ad nostros, ne bibliothecis quidem Graecis egebimus, in quibus multitudo infinita librorum propter eorum est multitudinem, qui scripserunt. Eadem enim dicuntur a multis, ex quo libris omnia refererunt. Quod accidet etiam nostris, si ad haec studia plures confluerint. See Thorsten Fögen, *Patrii sermonis egestas: Einstellungen lateinischer Autoren zu ihrer Muttersprache. Ein Beitrag zum Sprachbewußtsein in der römischen Antike*, Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 150 (München and Leipzig, 2000), 100, 153; Siobhán McElduff, *Roman Theories of Translation: Surpassing the Source*, Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies 14 (London, 2013), 103–4.

⁹ S.J.B. Barnish, *Variae* (1992), 87; P. Courcelle, *Les lettres grecques* (1948), 259 n. 2.

¹⁰ *Variae* 5.40.5: *Instructus enim trifariis linguis non tibi Graecia quod nouum ostentaret inuenit nec ipsa, qua nimium praeualet, te transcendit argutia.* See S.J.B. Barnish, *Variae* (1992), 88 n. 5; Philip H. Burton, 'Assessing Latin-Gothic Interaction', in James N. Adams, Mark Janse and Simon Swain (eds), *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Word* (Oxford and New York, 2002), 393–418, 393; J.J. Arnold, *Theoderic* (2008), 126 n. 130; *id.*, *Theoderic* (2014), 149.

¹¹ *Variae* 8.21.7: *Pueri stirpis Romanae nostra lingua loquuntur, eximie indicantes exhibere se nobis futuram fidem, quorum iam uidentur affectasse sermonem.* See J.J. Arnold, *Theoderic* (2008), 116 n. 88; *id.*, *Theoderic* (2014), 140 n. 102.

¹² *Variae* 8.22.5: *Habet etiam, unde uobis reddatur acceptior, quando tales curiae uestrae alumnos protulit, de quibus quamuis audius pater tamen propria uota superauit, non infantia trepidos, non ad respondendum, ut licebat, ignaros: uariis linguis loquuntur egregie, maturis uiris communiōne miscentur.* See P. Courcelle, *Les lettres grecques* (1948), 259 n. 2; S.J.B. Barnish, *Variae* (1992), 88 n. 5; P.H. Burton, 'Latin-Gothic Interaction' (2002), 393–4.

Within the same context, a particularly interesting case can be found when Cassiodorus values the multilingual competence of a woman (11.1.6-8), namely of Amalasuintha, daughter of Theoderic and mother of Athalaric.¹³ Cassiodorus highlights Amalasuintha's fluency in Latin, Greek and Ostrogothic (her *natiuus sermo*), connecting it to a global positive appraisal of her intellectual and verbal capacities. He rhetorically argues that while it is already an impressive merit to master one's own language well, it is all the more praiseworthy to be fluent in foreign languages. Cassiodorus furthermore elaborates on the practical advantage of multilingual competence on the level of diplomacy, arguing that thanks to her trilingual competence, Amalasuintha is a 'great and necessary safeguard' for people of different nations, since 'no one needs an interpreter when addressing the ears of our wise mistress'. In other words, Amalasuintha's fluency makes the dilatory and obstructive intermediary of an interpreter superfluous.¹⁴ Lastly, Cassiodorus notes that Amalasuintha's multilingual competence is crowned by 'the priceless knowledge of literature', thus accrediting her with an accomplished *Bildung*.

Although this passage is rather exceptional for its positive appraisal of a woman's multilingual competence, it becomes clear that to Cassiodorus' mind (and probably to that of his contemporaries), it is only within certain boundaries that a woman's verbal skills can be valued. Cassiodorus writes that in spite of her 'linguistic perfection', Amalasuintha 'is so silent in public business that you would think her indolent'; that 'she unties the knots of litigation by a few words'; that 'she quietly calms heated conflicts'; and that 'she acts in silence for the public good'.¹⁵ This passage involves an important differentiation. It is not just because of her linguistic competences that Amalasuintha is to be praised, but perhaps more importantly because she knows when and when not to make use of them. With the emphasis Cassiodorus lays on this verbal self-control and discretion, it is hard not to think that he is projecting a typically 'male' ideal on a female ruler who – in his opinion – would normally be inclined to talk too much and on the wrong moments, exactly due to her gender. This is a persisting assumption which has been shown to be unfounded by

¹³ S.J.B. Barnish, *Variae* (1992), 124, 145.

¹⁴ *Variae* 11.1.7: *Hinc uenit diuersis nationibus necessarium magnumque praesidium, quod apud aures prudentissimae dominae nullus eget interprete. Non enim aut legatus moram aut interpellans aliquam sustinet de mediatoris tarditate iacturam, quando uterque et genuinis uerbis auditur et patriotica responsione componitur.* See Claudia Wiotte-Franz, *Hermeneus und Interpreter: Zum Dolmetscherwesen in der Antike*, Saarbrücker Studien zur Archäologie und alte Geschichte 16 (Saarbrücken, 2001), 131, 162; Stefan Krautschick, *Cassiodor und die Politik seiner Zeit*, Habelts Dissertationsdrucke: Reihe alte Geschichte 17 (Bonn, 1983), 150-2.

¹⁵ *Variae* 11.1.8: *Sed cum tanta gaudeat perfectione linguarum, in actu publico sic tacita est, ut credatur otiosa. Paucis litigia nodosa dissoluit: bella feruentia sub quiete disponit, silentiose geritur publicum bonum.*

recent work in sociolinguistics.¹⁶ Although Amalasuintha's multilingual competence has received considerable attention in scholarly literature, this is a crucial limitation that has not been taken into account.¹⁷

Post-conversion: *Institutiones*

In the period following upon his monastic conversion, Cassiodorus often applaudingly mentions Jerome's linguistic skills by reproducing Jerome's own rhetoric of the *Hebraica ueritas* and of *uir trilinguis* – 'man of three languages' (Latin, Greek and Hebrew).¹⁸ He qualifies Jerome not only as a 'distinguished propagator' and an 'eminent multiplier' of the Latin language (and literature) in his *Institutiones*,¹⁹ but also, in his *Expositio psalmorum*, as 'a most learned investigator of the Hebrew language'.²⁰ Furthermore, he argues in his *Institutiones* that thanks to Jerome's new translation of the Old Testament, from Hebrew into Latin, 'we hardly need to refer to the Hebrew source'.²¹ It can easily be observed that it is the Vulgate, the perceivedly invaluable product of Jerome's translation activities, that made his multilingual competence into a laudable skill. It is important to note in this connection that whereas Jerome used the phrase *Hebraica ueritas* as an *ad hoc* reference to the Hebrew source text, Cassiodorus uses it to refer to Jerome's translation of the Old Testament generally.

Other relevant comments from the post-conversion period relate to Dionysius exiguus, a personal friend of Cassiodorus' and possibly his former teacher.²²

¹⁶ See e.g. Peter Trudgill, 'Social Identity and Linguistic Sex Differentiation: Explanations and pseudo-explanations for differences between women's and men's speech', in *id.* (ed.), *On Dialect: Social and Geographical Perspectives* (Oxford, 1983), 161-8; and Janet Holmes, 'Women Talk Too Much', in Laurie Bauer and Peter Trudgill (eds), *Language Myths* (London, 1998), 41-9. With specific reference to Antiquity, see Thorsten Fögen, 'Gender-Specific Communication in Graeco-Roman Antiquity: With a research bibliography', *Historiographia Linguistica* 31 (2004), 199-276.

¹⁷ Discussions of this passage can be found in P. Courcelle, *Les lettres grecques* (1948), 258 n. 10; Pierre Riché, *Éducation et culture dans l'Occident barbare: VI^e-VIII^e siècles*, 3rd ed., *Patristica Sorbonensia* 4 (Paris, 1962), 98; S. Krautschick, *Cassiodor* (1983), 150-4; Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, trans. by Thomas J. Dunlap (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1988), 325 n. 454 on 519; J.J. Arnold, *Theoderic* (2008), 126; *id.*, *Theoderic* (2014), 149.

¹⁸ See Stefan Rebenich, 'Jerome: the "Vir Trilinguis" and the "Hebraica Veritas"', *VChr* 47 (1993), 50-77.

¹⁹ *Institutiones* 1.21.1: *Latinae linguae dilatator eximius*; *Institutiones* 1.5.4: *Latinae linguae multiplicator egregius*. For a recent study of the *Institutiones*, see Andreas Pronay (ed.), *Cassiodorus Senator. Einführung in die geistlichen und weltlichen Wissenschaften (Institutiones diuinarum et saecularium litterarum): Eingeleitet, übersetzt und erläutert von Andreas Pronay*, *Spudasmata* 163 (Hildesheim, Zürich and New York, 2014).

²⁰ *Expositio psalmorum* pref. 11: *Hebraicae linguae doctissimus inquisitor*.

²¹ *Institutiones* 1.21.1: *ut ad Hebreum fontem paene non egeamus accedere*.

²² James J. O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1979), 24, 211.

Dionysius was born in Scythia Minor around 470 and moved to Rome after the death of bishop Gelasius I in 496. Thanks to his migration, Dionysius perfectly mastered both Greek and Latin, a bilingual competence which he put to use in translating Greek ecclesiastical writings into Latin, and in mediating between the Eastern and Western Churches.²³ Dionysius' bilingual competence is a prominent theme in Cassiodorus' praising comments on his friend (1.23.2).²⁴ Cassiodorus describes Dionysius as 'Scythian by birth but thoroughly Roman in his manner of life', and as 'most highly learned in both languages'.²⁵ In Cassiodorus' presentation, he was able to translate Greek texts into Latin while just reading them, but also the other way round. And in both directions, he managed to do so without preparation, quickly and without mistakes. Dionysius is reported to have translated 'in an excellent way' the collections of ecclesiastical *Canones* from Greek into Latin, along with many other works. Interestingly, Cassiodorus emphasizes that all of Dionysius' translations from Greek into Latin are suitable for ecclesiastical use.²⁶ This acknowledgment may be read as an indication that among speakers of Latin who do not know Greek, a certain distrust against competence in Greek is developing around this time, a distrust which was later summarized in the adage *Graeca sunt, non leguntur*.²⁷

James J. O'Donnell states that 'in spite of the extensive program of translations from the Greek that [Cassiodorus] instituted at the Vivarium, there is no evidence that he ever worked as a translator himself'.²⁸ We do know for sure that Cassiodorus was assisted by three men named Bellator, Mutianus and Epiphanius, who procured translations from Greek into Latin. It would be highly interesting to find out whether these translators actually collaborated as a team – as is possibly suggested when Cassiodorus writes (1.9.1) that 'my friends [...] have translated' commentaries by John Chrysostom – and if so, exactly in which way they proceeded. Did they, for instance, divide a work into several portions and translate a portion each according to set guidelines, or did they revise each other's portions in order to deliver a homogeneous entity?

²³ Eckhard Wirbelauer, 'Dionysius Exiguus', in S. Döpp and W. Geerlings (eds), *Lexikon der antiken christlichen Literatur*, 3rd ed. (2002), 205-7, 206.

²⁴ See Arno Borst, *Der Turmbau von Babel: Geschichte der Meinungen über Ursprung und Vielfalt der Sprachen und Völker*, 4 vols in 6 (1957-1963), vol. 2/1 (Stuttgart, 1958), 430; J.J. O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus* (1979), 24, 211.

²⁵ *Institutiones* 1.23.2: *Scythia natione sed moribus omnino Romanus, in utraque lingua ualde doctissimus*.

²⁶ *Institutiones* 1.23.2: *Alia quoque multa ex Graeco transtulit in Latinum, quae utilitati possunt ecclesiasticae conuenire; qui tanta Latinitatis et Graecitatis peritia fungebatur, ut quoscumque libros Graecos in manibus acciperet, Latine sine offensione transcurreret, iterumque Latinos Attico sermone relegeret, ut crederes hoc esse conscriptum, quod os eius inoffensa uelocitate fundebat*.

²⁷ See Walter Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter: Von Hieronymus zu Nikolaus von Kues* (Bern and München, 1980).

²⁸ J.J. O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus* (1979), 143.

Unfortunately, it seems to have become impossible to reconstruct these translators' method. Regardless, Cassiodorus throughout his *Institutiones* often considers it worthwhile to mention *by whom* a translation has been made, and to state his (mostly positive) appraisal of the translator and his work. This shows that in the period following upon his monastic conversion, it is the practice of translating theological and ecclesiastical works that made bilingual competence in Latin and Greek highly relevant to Cassiodorus.

Conclusion

Throughout his works, Cassiodorus is consistent in his positive appraisal of multilingual competence. This concords with a general tendency among early Christian Latin authors. Linguistic diversity is generally conceived of as the undesirable consequence of the construction of the tower of Babel (as described in *Genesis* 11), and as an impediment to communication and to the propagation of faith. Accordingly, the mastery of various languages is commonly considered an appropriate way of countering the reality of linguistic diversity. In the specific case of Cassiodorus, however, it is possible to discern a clear discontinuity between the period preceding and the period following upon his monastic conversion, namely with regard to the contexts within which multilingual competence is positively valued. In the pre-conversion *Variae*, multilingual competence is valued within the contexts of political affairs, civil negotiation and scientific or philosophical translation. A particular case is that of Amalasuintha, whose multilingual competence is positively valued as long as it respects certain boundaries. In the post-conversion *Institutiones*, to the contrary, positive appraisals of multilingual competence occur exclusively in connection to Bible translation and the translation of works which serve an ecclesiastical purpose.

On Menstruation, Marital Intercourse and ‘Wet Dreams’ in a Letter by Gregory the Great

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ABSTRACT

The article seeks to delve into the contents of the replies given by Gregory the Great to Bishop Augustine of Canterbury, circa the year 600. The answers given by Gregory denote a certain dependence on Levitical laws and ritual purity. At the same time, Gregory – to whom *ars est artium regimen animarum* – demonstrates a great deal of pragmatism in sexual matters. Through such an attitude, one observes that he is an expert in the weakness of human nature, and that he has sensible answers to give. The directives studied in this article reveal Gregory’s deep psychological insights which are useful today as much as they were in his time. The exemplary shepherd of souls addresses the hearts of those entrusted to his care according to their personal circumstances. The magnanimous advice he gives in the text which is investigated in this article is based on natural law enlightened by divine revelation and wisely adapted with open-mindedness, clarity and pastoral solicitude.

This article investigates a very specific set of replies given by Gregory the Great to the questions made by Bishop Augustine of Canterbury, sometime between the year 597 and July 601. Gregory was continuously inundated with all kinds of questions from ecclesiastics of all ranks and provenance, sovereigns and private individuals. These questions by Augustine are no exception. Known for his profound wisdom and his pastoral solicitude, the former Benedictine monk who was appointed Bishop of Rome in 590, sought to provide practical answers to all kinds of matters. This article focuses on the advice given by Gregory with regard to sexual matters and ritual purity.

The answers given by Gregory denote, at first glance, a certain dependence on the Levitical purity laws. Yet, it has to be noted from the outset, that Gregory to whom pastoral care is a priority, shows a great deal of common sense and pragmatism in sexual matters – this highlights the fact that he was not only an expert in the weakness of human nature, but that his counsel reveals wisdom, moderation and a great deal of *epikeia*. As Gregory affirms in his *Regula pastoralis*, the ‘pastor’s understanding’ is likened to ‘a mother’s bosom’ (*ad pastoris mentem quasi ad matris sinum recurrant*).¹ This research is neither

¹ Greg. Magn., *Liber Regulae Pastoralis* II 5: Grégoire le Grand, *Règle Pastorale*, I, SC 381 (Paris, 1992), 200.

a comparative study on a delicate topic which could be considered a taboo by other Church Fathers, nor a detailed linguistic analysis. Its scope, rather, is a presentation of a problem which was troubling the conscience of members of the People of God, and the subsequent much-awaited advice given by Gregory the Great.

An excellent English translation of the text is that by John Martyn,² the letter in question being the thirty-seventh in the eighth volume of Gregory's *Registrum epistularum*. The Latin text is available in *Patrologia Latina* (77, 1193-200) as *Epistula* 11,64, and it appears, with an *apparatus criticus* in the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (2, 338-43) as *Epistula* 11,56a. John Martyn³ tells us that Frederick Homes Dudden's two-volume work on Gregory did not doubt the authenticity of this letter to Augustine, but he affirms that a few modern scholars are sceptical. The fact that Martyn placed the letter in the eighth book, while Migne and the *Monumenta* situate it in the eleventh book of the *Registrum* reveals a degree of uncertainty as to its date, but when Gregory affirms that 'the English church has quite recently been brought to the faith', this suggests a date sometime between 597 and the years 600/601.

This paper zooms upon the answers given to the two last questions – Questions 8 and 9 – out of a group of nine (following the enumeration in *MGH* and Martyn), sent to Gregory the Great by Augustine, bishop of the English. Question 8 concerns pregnant women and baptism, menstruation and marital intercourse, while Question 9 is about those who have been defiled by nocturnal pollution, namely 'wet dreams'.

Question 8, 'about pregnant women, and about baptism', is sub-divided into six sub-questions to which Gregory was expected to provide practical Christian guidance. These are the six corollary questions posed by Augustine: (a) Should a pregnant woman be baptized? (b) When the child has been born, how long afterwards can she enter a church? (c) After how many days also may this infant be allowed to receive the sacrament of holy baptism, in case the offspring is prevented by death? (d) After how long might her husband join with her in carnal intercourse? (e) If she is affected by her menstruation, should she be allowed to enter a church or receive the sacraments of Holy Communion? (f) And if a husband has had intercourse with his wife, may he enter a church or even approach the mystery of Holy Communion, before he has washed himself? Augustine adds as an aside a judgmental and derogatory comment: 'The ignorant (*rudis*) nation of the English needs to find out all of these matters'.

² John R.C. Martyn, *The Letters of Gregory the Great*, translated, with introduction and notes, 3 vols (Toronto, 2004).

³ See J.R.C. Martyn, *The Letters of Gregory the Great* (2004), II 532. Here, Martyn refers to F. Homes Dudden, *Gregory the Great. His Place in History and Thought*, 2 vols (London, 1905), II 130-6.

Gregory's long answer displays his annoyance because he has already explained the issues at stake to Augustine, but – as Martyn comments – Gregory 'is reluctantly willing to confirm his thoughts on it'.⁴ Gregory affirms: 'I have no doubt that your Fraternity has been asked this, and I think that I have already replied to your question. But I believe that you wanted what you yourself could have said and thought would be confirmed by my reply'. As expected, Gregory refers several times to the purity laws of the Old Testament, as legislated in the book of *Leviticus* (as for example, *Lev.* 12:2-5). Despite the latter text being at the back of his mind, and possibly in the mind of Augustine and his evangelising community of monks, Gregory pronounces himself with great clarity: 'There is no prohibition (*nullo modo prohibetur*) at all on baptizing a woman who has given birth, or the child born to her, if pressed by the danger of death, even at the very moment when she gives birth, and when her child has been born'. Gregory's pastoral sensitivity and open-mindedness is conspicuous when he proceeds to state: 'For as every effort should be made to provide the grace of the holy mystery to those alive and with understanding, even so it should be provided without delay for those who are threatened by death'.⁵

Another issue which is dealt with is that regarding whether women in menstruation should be allowed to enter a church or not. Again, Gregory resorts to a great deal of pragmatism: *Quae tamen mulier, dam consuetudinem menstruam patitur, prohiberi ecclesiam intrare non debet, quia ei naturae superfluitas in culpam non valet reputari* ('... while she endures her usual menstruation, [she] should not be prohibited from entering a church, because the natural overflowing cannot be used as a charge against her, and it is not just to deprive her of entry into a church because of what she suffers unwillingly').⁶ Here, Gregory refers to the Gospel passage which narrates the encounter with Jesus of the woman who suffered from haemorrhage (*Lk.* 8:43-4). The argument used by Gregory is very logical. If the woman mentioned in the Gospel passage indeed touched the Lord's garment and was praised by him for her faith, what can stop a woman, experiencing the flow of menstrual blood, from entering a church? His precise words are: 'If, therefore, the woman who touched the Lord's clothing when feeling faint was justified in her presumption, why should what was allowed to one sickly person, not be allowed to all women who are unwell, through the fault of their nature?'⁷ What we have to point out, here, is that for Gregory, 'even the menstrual flow of her blood is an illness (*Feminae itaque et menstruus sui sanguinis fluxus aegritudo est*)'.⁸

⁴ J.R.C. Martyn (2004), II 538, note 167.

⁵ J.R.C. Martyn (2004), II 538 (MGH 2, 338.29-30).

⁶ *Ibid.* 539 (MGH 2, 339.11-3).

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.* (MGH 2, 339.24-5).

Naturally, we cannot blame Gregory, and his contemporaries, for saying so: the discoveries of biological science regarding ovulation and the ovum would be unravelled, over twelve centuries later, in 1827 by Karl von Baer in the case of the mammalian ovum, and for the human ovum, only as recently as 1928 by Edgar Allen.

I have already highlighted Gregory's pragmatic approach on not prohibiting the above-mentioned women from entering a church. The Bishop of Rome, in the advice he gives, moreover goes a step further when he addresses the issue of whether menstruating women could receive the Eucharist or not. Without any mention of the question of conscience, Gregory does, in fact, reveal an innate moral application on the issue which is very wise, and puts the onus on the individual woman to decide what is best. Gregory writes: 'And a woman ought not to be prohibited (*non debet prohiberi*) from receiving the mystery of Holy Communion during those same days. And if, from great reverence (*ex veneratione magna*), she does not presume to receive it, she should be applauded (*laudanda est*), but if she receives it, she should not be judged (*non iudicanda*)'.⁹

Gregory proceeds to elaborate further upon his line of moral reasoning later on in the letter. After entering into the question of sin, and affirming clearly that 'menstruation is not a sin at all for women, because of course it happens naturally (*non aliqua culpa est, videlicet quae naturaliter accedit*)',¹⁰ he reiterates his immense respect for human freedom and responsibility: 'let women make up their own minds (*Atque ideo feminae cum semetipsis considerent*)'.¹¹ If the woman in question, in conscience, feels that she is not to receive the Eucharist, she is to be praised *de sua recta consideratione*; on the other hand, if women are full of spiritual enthusiasm for the Eucharist (*ex religiosae vitae consuetudine eiusdem mysterii amore rapiuntur*) and receive the sacrament, they are not to be reprimanded.

Another issue, within the confines of Question 8, concerns marital intercourse and ritual purity. Naturally, we have to bear in mind that the Church's teaching on such matters was still light-years away from contemporary theology which highlights the sanctity of the *una caro* of husband and wife in marriage. It is also striking that Gregory refers only to the male: 'But a man sleeping with his own wife ought not to enter a church unless he has washed himself, but he is not to enter at once, even when washed'.¹² In this case, Gregory's dependence on the stipulations found in the book of *Leviticus* (15:16) is conspicuous, when he proceeds to state: 'But the Law directed the ancient people that a man who had made love to a woman ought to wash himself and should not enter a church before sunset, which can be understood in a spiritual sense,

⁹ *Ibid.* (MGH 2, 339.29-30).

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 540 (MGH 2, 339.33-4).

¹¹ *Ibid.* (MGH 2, 340.2-3)

¹² *Ibid.*

because a man makes love to his wife when his mind is bound by thoughts of illicit desire through pleasure'.¹³ He describes such a man as *dignum se congregationi fratrum aestimare non debet*. Having pronounced himself in this way, Gregory seeks to attenuate the prohibition by stating that different peoples possess different attitudes (*diversa sentiant*) to such a concrete and normal situation and 'seem to observe other rules' (*alia custodire videantur*). He immediately goes on to add the established Roman practice that 'after a man has had intercourse with his own wife, he should seek purification by washing, and abstain reverently from entering a church for a little while' (*et ab ingressu ecclesiae paululum reverenter abstinere*).¹⁴ He does not state for how long, whether it is a few days, a week or a month. There is no mention whatsoever of sacramental confession because the practice of frequent confession had, in all probability, not yet reached the Continent, let alone, Rome.

Gregory then expounds upon marriage, distinguishing between lawful intercourse for the sake of offspring and bodily pleasure. Earlier, it was pointed out that Gregory refers only to the responsibility to be shown by men in such circumstances. It is only at the end of the answer to Question 8 that he refers to the moral responsibility of women. Having mentioned the cleanliness required of God's people prior to his revelation to them at Sinai, Gregory asks: 'How much more should women, as they receive the body of the almighty Lord, protect the cleanliness of flesh in themselves, so that they are not burdened by the very magnitude of the inestimable mystery?'¹⁵ The bottom line is remarkable. After such an extended reflection on a matter which was vexing Augustine and his monks, Gregory again demonstrates his pragmatism: 'The man who has washed himself (*lotus aqua fuerit*) after intercourse with his wife can even receive the mystery of Holy Communion, since it will be lawful for him to enter a church according to prescribed opinion'.¹⁶

The Ninth Question asked in order to obtain Gregory's advice concerns 'wet dreams': 'After a nocturnal emission (*inlusio, illusio*), as often happens during a dream (*per somnium*), can anyone receive the body of the Lord, and if he is a priest, celebrate the holy mysteries?'¹⁷ Although his starting point is once more a reference to the Levitical prescriptions, Gregory immediately provides Augustine and the Angles with a very practical ruling: 'But spiritual people may receive the law with the same understanding, yet interpret it in a different way'.¹⁸ Gregory presents two situations. Firstly, when a man's dream is the consequence of indecency or real images, Gregory states that the

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.* (MGH 2, 340.24-8).

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 542.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.* (MGH 2, 342.4-5).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

man ‘must wash himself with water, to cleanse his sinful thoughts with his tears (*ut culpas cogitationis lacrimis abluat*)’.¹⁹ This is the first and only occurrence, in the text we are investigating, that tears of repentance are referred to.

The second situation is different. If the nocturnal emission is the consequence of drunkenness (*ex crapula*), superfluity and sickness (*ex naturae superfluitate vel infirmitate*) or due to one’s thoughts (*ex cogitatione*), we observe a gradation in Gregory’s advice. If it is the result of natural superfluity or sickness, one is to remain serene because ‘the mind has suffered an emission without knowing it (*quia hanc animam nescientem*), rather than that it caused it’.²⁰ In the case of gluttony (*cum vero ultra modum appetitus gulae in sumendis alimentis*), he states that ‘the mind derives some guilt from this’.²¹ This particular situation, Gregory explains, does not prohibit the individual from receiving communion, or in the case of a priest, he can still celebrate the Mass, either if it is a holy day of obligation, or because of necessity because there are no other priests. Yet, if other priests are available, the priest who has had a nocturnal emission, according to Gregory’s humble opinion, while being able to receive the Eucharist, is advised not to celebrate the holy mystery.

Gregory clarifies himself when he affirms that if the emission is the consequence of disgusting thoughts while awake, then the mind is clearly guilty (*patet animo reatus suus*). As we have seen earlier in the cases mentioned previously, Gregory provides Augustine with a very balanced answer and advice. One has to investigate what caused the nocturnal emission, ‘because what he thought of knowingly, he suffered without knowing. But one should consider whether the thought itself arose from a mere suggestion, or from pleasure, or, which is more serious, from consent to sin’.²² Here, Gregory’s advice is the use of great discretion of mind to ‘judge between suggestion and pleasure, and between pleasure and consent’.

Having analysed these few pages from the *Registrum epistularum*, we can make some conclusions with regard to the pastoral attitudes embraced and put into practice by Gregory the Great. He clearly displays a pragmatic approach which is sensitive to the daily needs of Christians in an area often marked by taboo. He could have ignored the request made by Augustine of Canterbury; instead, he takes the bull by the horns and pronounces himself with authority. Although he makes several references to Scripture, he feels free to depart from the shackles of the Levitical prescriptions and their literal application, and adapts them with an open mind and heart to the newly-evangelised English. Keeping in mind the shining adage he proposes in his *Regula pastoralis* – *ars*

¹⁹ *Ibid.* (MGH 2, 342.10-1).

²⁰ *Ibid.* 542-3 (MGH 2, 342.17).

²¹ *Ibid.* 543 (MGH 2, 342.18).

²² *Ibid.*

*est artium regimen animarum*²³ – Gregory's truly pastoral attitude is characterised by *tranquillitas animi, moderationis gratia, honesta cura* and *decoris consideratio*.

Furthermore, in accordance with the third part of his *Regula*, Gregory proposes – in the text we have studied – practical directives for dealing with all kinds of persons. The directives studied in this article reveal his deep psychological insights which are useful today as much as they were in his time. The shepherd of souls *bene vivens* must know *qualiter doceat* according to the personal circumstances of those whom he is advising. The magnanimous advice he gives is based on natural law enlightened by divine revelation and wisely adapted with open-mindedness, clarity and pastoral solicitude.

²³ See Greg. Magn., *Liber Regulae Pastoralis* I 1: Grégoire le Grand, *Règle Pastorale*, I, SC 381 (Paris, 1992), 128.

To See with Body and to See with Mind: Corporeal and Spiritual Cognition in the ‘Dialogues’ of Gregory the Great

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ABSTRACT

There is still a tendency among historians of medieval thought to disavow sensual metaphors. They are treated as well-worn phrases, rhetorical tropes from the bygone era of classical antiquity that were completely empty even in the early middle ages. In this article, I want to show that this view is not at all justified. As an example of the importance of sensual metaphors, I use the writings of Gregory the Great, who lived in the second half of the 6th century. I concentrate on his *Dialogues* as they are full of references to both corporeal and spiritual senses, and particularly to sight. I reconstruct a certain pattern in these sight references and use it to create a framework for understanding Gregory’s philosophy of seeing. I think that the spiritual senses play a crucial role in Gregory’s thought. They are something more than just, as some scholars suggest, ‘an effective mechanism to relate his pastoral and ascetic concerns to his audience’. I argue that, according to Gregory, the correct mode of seeing is indispensable to human salvation. I claim that Gregory uses *Dialogues* to teach his readers how to look in order to perceive the true nature of the world.

Historians of medieval thought had long called for the greater attention to the metaphors pertaining to the senses, and to the spiritual senses in particular.¹ Yet, there is still a tendency to disavow sensual metaphors by treating them as well-worn phrases, rhetorical tropes from the bygone era of classical antiquity that were completely empty already at the times of Gregory. At best, scholars mark spiritual senses as a sign of some inclination towards Platonism, and do not show any further interest.² Recently, however, scholars have concentrated

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¹ See for example, Ernst Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. W.R. Trask (Princeton and Oxford, 2013), 136-8; K. Pomian, *Przeszłość jako przedmiot wiary* (Warszawa, 2009), 55-6.

² Plato is generally acknowledged to coin the phrase ‘eyes of the soul’: Plato, *Republic*, 533d. See also his argument for the superiority of sight over other senses: Plato, *Timaeus*, 46e-47c. For the proofs of the popularity of Platonic or *quasi*-Platonic sight metaphors in Antiquity see references in the note 1.

their efforts to better understand the role of spiritual senses in patristic thought. One of the effects of this endeavour is certainly a collection of essays called *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity* in which George Demacopoulos published an article about Gregory the Great's spiritual cognition.³ Curiously, Demacopoulos omits the *Dialogues* altogether in his argument, even though he explicitly acknowledges Gregory's authorship of the work.⁴ This lacuna is startling as the *Dialogues* are full of references to both corporeal and spiritual senses, and particularly of sight. Hence, in my article I analyse Gregory the Great's attitude towards sight as presented in his *Dialogues*. I reconstruct a certain pattern of thought that all these sight references fit into, and use them to recreate a framework for Gregory's philosophy of seeing. Contrary to Demacopoulos, I think that the spiritual senses play bigger a role in Gregory's thought, and are something more than just 'an effective mechanism to relate his pastoral and ascetic concerns to his audience'.⁵ I argue that according to Gregory, the correct mode of seeing is indispensable to human salvation. I claim that Gregory uses his *Dialogues* to teach his readers how to look in order to perceive the true nature of the world.

I.

The reader of the *Dialogues* quickly notices that Gregory very often uses the following terms: the 'eye of the body' (*oculus corporalis*) and the 'eye of the soul' (*oculus mentis*). Although Gregory draws a clear distinction between the former and the latter, he never explicitly states what he means by these phrases, and in what way corporeal sight differs from the spiritual one. He hints, however, that what is crucial here is the complex relation between the eye, the body, and the soul:

No visible things can be seen if not by the means of these that are invisible. Indeed, the eye of your body observes all that is corporeal, yet it could not see anything corporeal by itself, without being provoked to see by something incorporeal. For if you remove the mind, which is not visible, the eye that once saw now stands open in vain. If you take away the soul from the body, the eyes, without doubt, will remain open; therefore,

³ George Demacopoulos, *Gregory the Great*, in P.L. Gavrilyuk and S. Coakley (eds), *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity* (Cambridge and New York, 2011), 71-85.

⁴ G. Demacopoulos, *Gregory the Great* (2011), 85. This is the only mention of the *Dialogues* in Demacopoulos' paper. The *Dialogues*' authenticity, since F. Clark, *The Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues*, *Studies in the History of Christian Thought* 37 (Leiden, 1987), is still doubted by some scholars. Most, however, have rejected Clark's thesis and follow the reasoning presented in A. de Vogüé, 'Les Dialogues, œuvre authentique et publiée par Gregoire lui-même', in *Gregorio Magno e il suo tempo*, *Studia Ephemeridis 'Augustinianum'* 33-4 (Roma, 1991), 2, 27-40.

⁵ G. Demacopoulos, *Gregory the Great* (2011), 84.

if the eyes did see by themselves, how come when the soul is gone they see nothing at all? You shall then learn that visible things can only see by the means of things that are invisible.⁶

It seems that for Gregory the eye serves as a medium between the subject of seeing – here the soul – and its object – in this case a material world. It is worth noting that eye's role is purely passive – by itself it is inactive and requires an operator. Gregory claims that even the visible can be seen only by the means of the invisible (the soul), which means that also the corporeal sight has a spiritual aspect. Hence, it appears that in the passage quoted above Gregory talks on the nature of the eye itself, which only through the specific use becomes the eye of the body or the eye of the soul. The eye itself is merely a tool of the soul, and the character of the vision, whether it is spiritual or corporeal, depends on something external. If that is the case, the responsibility for the corporality or spirituality of vision falls on either the subject or the object of seeing, on the properties of the soul or on the properties of what the soul gazes upon.

In order to resolve the dilemma outlined above, it is helpful to consider the remarks that Gregory makes on the human condition before and after the expulsion from paradise. Gregory mentions that Adam was able to perceive what is spiritual through his own eyes because of the purity of his heart (*munditia cordis*). He employed his eyes as the eyes of the soul. After the fall, when sin corrupted Adam's soul, he was deprived of this ability and sent to live in darkness.⁷ He was forced to look on the material world, and started to use his eyes as the eyes of the body. It seems, then, that the whole distinction between the eye of the body and the eye of the soul derives from the ancestral sin.

In order to illustrate the position of mankind post ancestral sin, Gregory adopts and transposes the Platonic myth of the cave:

Imagine a pregnant woman thrown into prison, and there giving birth to a son. This boy, born in prison, in there would be nourished and in there he would grow up. Possibly, his mother would tell him of the sun, moon, stars, mountains and plains, of the flying birds and galloping horses. The boy, however, born and nourished in prison, acquainted with nothing else but the darkness of his cell, might well hear what she said, but because he would not know it by his own experience, in truth he would doubt if what she says is real. In the same way, men born in the exile of their own blindness [by which Gregory means the material world], hearing that there are highest and invisible

⁶ *Nulla uisibilia nisi per inuisibilia uidentur. Ecce enim cuncta corporea oculus tui corporis aspicit, nec tamen ipse corporeus oculus aliquid corporeum uideret, nisi hunc res incorporea ad uidendum acueret. Nam tolle mentem quae non uidetur, et incassum patet oculus qui uidebat. Subtrahe animam corpori: remanent procul dubio oculi in corpore aperti; si igitur per se uidebant, cur discedente anima, nihil uident? Hinc ergo college, quia ipsa quoque uisibilia non nisi per inuisibilia uidentur* [all translations by J.Sz.], Grégoire le Grand, *Dialogues*, SC 251, 260, 265 (Paris, 1978-1980), IV 5.6.

⁷ *Ibid.* IV 1.1-2.

things, doubt if these are real. It is because said men are only aware of those things that are lowest and visible, among which they were born.⁸

It appears that the state of darkness is imposed on mankind particularly by the 'lowest and visible' things that surround everyone on earth. Gregory explicitly states that: 'Carnal delight without doubt obscures the mind which it had corrupted, so that it cannot see the brightness of true light. The more it takes pleasure in that which is inferior, the darker seems that which is superior'.⁹ For this reason, Gregory warns against directing the eye of the soul away from 'the light of contemplation'¹⁰ and gives the example of saint Benedict who 'did not tarnish the eye of his soul by looking on things that are outside'.¹¹

Gregory strongly asserts that 'it is impossible to believe in something, that one can also see'.¹² Paradoxically, in order to perceive more, to 'see' the invisible, the true light, one must see less, because the ordinary perception of the material world only brings more darkness. The best illustration of the importance of not-seeing is blindness, an affliction bestowed by God on the selected few that have proven their worthiness but have not yet managed to restrain their eyes from wandering about. Gregory tells the story of abbot Spes whom God loved so much that He made him blind for forty years. In this way, Spes could contemplate the heavenly light with the eye of his soul free from external temptations.¹³

The true cognition requires then right seeing, which is in fact not-seeing. It is the combination of faith and contemplation to which one must use his or her spiritual eye. It seems that sight is very important to Gregory for two reasons: first of all, one must guard his or her eye of the body, because it can lead to darkness; second of all, one must utilize his or her eye of the soul in order to contemplate the light, perceive the invisible, and acquire true cognition of the world.¹⁴

⁸ *Ac si enim praegnans mulier mittatur in carcerem ibique puerum pariat, qui natus puer in carcere nutriatur et crescat; cui si fortasse mater, quae hunc genuit, solem, lunam, stellas, montes et campos, uolantes aues, currentes equos nominet, ille uero qui est in carcere natus et nutritus nihil aliud quam tenebras carceris sciat, et haec quidem esse audiat, sed quia ea per experimentum non nouit, ueraciter esse diffidat; ita in hac exilii sui caecitate nati homines, dum esse dumma et inuisibilia audiunt, diffidunt an uera sint, quia sola haec infima in quibus nati sunt, uisibilia nouerunt, ibid. IV 1.3.*

⁹ *Nimirum carnalis delectatio mentem quam inficit obscurat, ut ueri luminis claritatem non uideat, sed unde delectatur inferius, inde caliginem ad superna patiatur, ibid. IV 38.5.*

¹⁰ *Ibid. II 3.5.*

¹¹ *Extra se mentis suae oculum non deuulgauit, ibid. II 3.7.*

¹² *Ibid. IV 5.5.*

¹³ *Ibid. IV 11.*

¹⁴ Gregory quotes *Matth. 6:22-3* to prove his point: *The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single [simplex, i.e. healthy], thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!* *Ibid. I 10.7.*

II.

But how exactly are we to teach ourselves the correct usage of both manners of seeing? Unfortunately for Gregory's readers, it is not easy to keep the eyes away from the material world. As Gregory has remarked in the passage I have quoted earlier, it is hard to look for something that is invisible, when so many visible objects are readily available to our sight. Also, the devil may directly interfere with our eyesight, putting in front of our eyes the objects we cannot escape from. Gregory recalls the story of Andrew, bishop of Fondi, who decided to let one pious nun live with him in order to serve him. The devil took advantage of this recklessness: in order to get access to Andrew's soul, he placed the image of the nun's beauty inside the bishop's eyes, which caused him to neglect his usual pursue of chastity: once he even patted this nun on the back. In the end, only with great difficulty and not small amount of luck did the bishop escape the devil's trap.¹⁵

Nevertheless, Gregory shows his readers that despite the conditions, in which mankind lives on earth, and the devilish trickery, one can still perceive the invisible, the true light, by directing one's eyes in the correct direction – namely inside oneself. After all, the *Dialogues* present Gregory's Italy as the home of many saints who, like saint Benedict, direct their eyes of the soul to the light of contemplation. Interestingly, the saints, after they have obtained great faith through contemplation, gain the ability to better perceive what is corporeal. Gregory gives many examples of the miracles that involve the exquisite sense of sight saints have access to. It seems that these miracles are performed by saints in order to show to the common people the invisible sphere that saints can perceive through faith. 'It is a great comfort in life to see men doing miracles, and to observe on earth the celestial Jerusalem in its citizens [*i.e.* the saints]', notices Peter, Gregory's interlocutor.¹⁶ Ordinary people marvel when saints can see through deception, no matter how cleverly practiced;¹⁷ when they are able to spot things from far away, and also detect what is concealed from the ordinary eye.¹⁸ Benedict's sight went even further, when he famously saw the whole world in the one ray of light.¹⁹ The same saint once freed a peasant from the fetters only by looking at them.²⁰ Saints can also grant to others their ability to see the true spiritual dimension of the world. On one occasion, a certain monk from among Benedict's brethren succumbed to temptation and wished to leave the monastery. Only through the saint abbot's prayers was he

¹⁵ *Ibid.* III 7.1-7.

¹⁶ *Magna uitae aedificatio est uidere uiros mira facientes, atque in ciuibus suis Hierusalem caelestem in terra conspicerere, ibid.* IV 35.6.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* II 14.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* II 18.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* II 35.7.

²⁰ *Ibid.* II 31.3.

able to see the dragon that awaited him just outside the cloister's walls – the devil ready to feast on his prey.²¹

Also God Himself can grant humans the possibility to glimpse at the true reality by the means of miracles. Gregory writes for example that during the pestilence, one could see *corporali visu*, 'with the corporeal sight', the arrows that flew from heaven and hit the victims of the plague.²² Apart from miracles, God also leaves traces of the invisible in the visible world. If correctly interpreted, these objects can bring people closer to the extrasensory dimension through sensory means. In this way the Sicilian volcanic craters serve as a reminder to mankind of the infernal fires that await sinners.²³

It should therefore be noted that Gregory's theory is not a strict one: although faith and the correct use of the eye of the soul is a prerequisite to true comprehension, with the eye of the body one can get a glimpse of the invisible as well. This is possible because of the special link between the eye and the soul. By affecting the eyes one can get a direct access to the soul. This property of the eye is by no means obscure, and is exploited by people, God, and devil alike.

What I have tried to prove in this article is that by analysing the *Dialogues* from this perspective, one can get an insight into an important part of Gregory's thought. If we look closer at the metaphors of senses, we could understand the system of thought that they give us the traces of. According to Gregory, the importance of seeing lies in its determining one's salvation. He teaches his readers that in order to attain salvation, one ought to contemplate the truth, turning his spiritual eyes inward. And as it is difficult not to look at what is in front of our corporeal eyes, and have faith big enough to perceive the invisible, God performs miracles. Therefore, although inferior to the spiritual, corporeal perception is still immensely valuable to a human being. God acts Himself and through His saints to give man a glimpse of the true world. However, it is still only a glimpse. For the rest of it we must look inside ourselves.

²¹ *Ibid.* II 25.

²² *Ibid.* IV 37.7.

²³ *Ibid.* IV 36.12.

Chants, Icons, and Relics in the Evangelization Doctrine of Gregory the Great: The Case of Kent*

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ABSTRACT

Gregory I (590-604) was elected bishop of Rome when the City found herself in a very difficult situation. However, Gregory succeeded to spread the word of Christ to the unbelievers, notably to the pagans. Although there were some guidelines to evangelize them, late sixth-century society was quite different to the fourth-century's, and so was Anglo-Saxon England to its contemporary Mediterranean world. Thus, Gregory adopted 'conventional' missionary procedures and added his own pragmatic vision, emphasizing a powerful triple way to reach their hearts: music, image, and relics. We have some evidences in Gregory's *Registrum* and also in his *Moralia*, but we must rely essentially on Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* if we want to restore what role may these complementary evangelization methods have played in the conversion of heathen Jutes. The pope sent two retinues to Canterbury with the aim of Christianising king Ethelbert and his people, maybe supported by queen Bertha and her courtesan chaplain bishop Liudhard, both Frankish by birth and Catholic by faith. From the very beginning, the missionaries seem to have used icons and chants in their first encounter with the sovereign on the island of Thanet in 597. Moreover, we find a mention to the true relics of Sixtus in the controverted *Libellus responsionum* addressed to Augustine, and another in a letter sent to Mellitus on his way to Kent in which Gregory presents an accommodating spirit concerning cultural substitution of the pagan shrines through the deposition of relics.

'Some days afterwards the king came to the island and, sitting in the open air, commanded Augustine and his comrades to come thither to talk with him. He took care that they should not meet in any building, for he held the traditional superstition that, if they practised any magic art, they might deceive him and get the better of him as soon as he entered. But they came endowed with divine not devilish power and bearing as their standard a silver cross and the image of our Lord and Saviour painted on a panel. They chanted litanies and uttered prayers to the Lord for their own eternal salvation and the salvation of

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those for whom and to whom they had come'. Those are the words of Bede¹ in his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*.

This passage describes the first meeting at Thanet between Aethelbert,² king of Kent and *bretwalda* of the Anglo-Saxons, and Augustine,³ leader of the missionary retinue sent by pope Gregory the Great in 596 with the purpose of Christianizing the heathen Jutes. We can easily imagine the scene, and also interpret its inner meaning: the struggle among the evil demons of paganism and the Christian *uiri Dei* to win the souls of that little kingdom in the southeast of *Anglia*. From this point of view, we must consider the arrangements made by Aethelbert before the arrival of some mysterious envoys of a new faith. Aethelbert was himself a pagan, and this would explain his reluctance to meet Augustine in a closed space where the latter could perform his supposed magical arts to seize the king's will. Bede provides an additional explanation: this measure was due to a traditional ancient superstition – *uetere usus augurio* –, a sure sign of that heathenism Augustine was sent to fight. Aethelbert may be pagan but he was no fool. He certainly had some notions of what Christianity consisted in: not only many of his Briton subjects were Christian, but also were his wife Bertha,⁴ a catholic Frankish princess, and bishop Liudhard,⁵ who

¹ Bede, *Hist. eccl.* 1,25 (*Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and Roger A.B. Mynors, Oxford Medieval Texts, 2nd ed. [Oxford, 2007], 74): *post dies ergo uenit ad insulam rex, et residens sub diuo iussit Augustinum cum sociis ad suum ibidem aduenire colloquium. Cauerat enim ne in aliquam domum se introirent, uetere usus augurio, ne superuentu suo, siquid maleficae artis habuissent, eum superando deciperent. At illi non daemoniaca sed diuina uirtute praediti ueniebant, crucem pro uexillo ferentes argenteam, et imaginem Domini Saluatoris in tabula depictam, laetantisque canentes pro sua simul et eorum, propter quos et ad quos uenerant, salute aeterna Domino supplicabant.* We quote the English translation of Colgrave and Mynors in the text.

² A historical survey of Aethelbert of Kent in Jeffrey Richards, *Consul of God. The Life and Times of Gregory the Great* (London, 1980), 241-8; Robert A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and his World* (Cambridge, 1997), 178-84; Sofia Boesch Gajano, *Gregorio Magno. Alle origini del Medioevo*, Sacro/Santo 8 (Roma, 2004), 123-5; *PLRE* IIIA, *Aethelbert*, 20. See note 37.

³ On Augustine of Canterbury, see J. Richards, *Consul of God* (1980), 242-50; R.A. Markus, *Gregory the Great* (1997), 178-88; S. Boesch Gajano, *Gregorio Magno* (2004), 122-5; *PCBE* II 1, *Augustinus* 3, 222-3. See note 10.

⁴ About the Neustrian princess, see J. Richards, *Consul of God* (1980), 241-8; Franca E. Con-solino, 'Il papa e le regine: potere femminile e politica ecclesiastica nell'epistolario di Gregorio Magno', in *Gregorio Magno e il suo tempo. XIX Incontro di studiosi dell'Antichità cristiana*, 2 vols., *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 33 (Roma, 1991), I 225-49, 238-9; R.A. Markus, *Gregory the Great* (1997), 178-81; S. Boesch Gajano, *Gregorio Magno* (2004), 123; *PLRE* IIIA, *Bertha*, 227-8. See also note 38.

⁵ According to J. Richards, *Consul of God* (1980), 241-2, Liudhard could have introduced the Christian faith to the people of Kent inasmuch as he carried out some religious activity in Canterbury, at least in the ancient Roman church of Saint Martin, where he used to assist together with queen Bertha in compliance of her clauses of marriage: Bede, *Hist. eccl.* 1,25-6 (72-6). John M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship in England and on the Continent* (Oxford, 1971), 24-7, bestows a relevant missionary role to Bertha and Liudhard whose actual significance could be discussed.

accompanied her in her new realm. Even if we cannot be sure about the actions undertaken by the queen and her courtesan chaplain, it seems quite probable that the king had learnt basic concepts of the Christian beliefs and rites by means of a simple conversation with them.

Whatever the case is, it appears that the new religion won out despite old superstitions and thus Aethelbert allowed Augustine to settle in his capital and to evangelize his people⁶ from there and that of the neighbouring reigns as well. Therefore, we see how the Roman monks⁷ enter Canterbury in procession to occupy their newly granted churches in the city again bearing the holy cross and the icon of the Lord – *crux argentea, imago Saluatoris in tabula depicta* – and singing litanies – the *Deprecamur te*. This all clearly illustrates the relevance of images and chants in the procedures used by the missionaries to Christianize the unfaithful; and, as we shall see, relics would soon follow to set up new places in the hagiotopography of the island.

Until now, we have considered Bede's testimony concerning the arrival of Augustine and the audiovisual method of religious identification – and proselytism – he used. But, what about Gregory? Is this method coincident with papal ideas? Could we appreciate a Gregorian hand behind the deployment of such symbols in the performance in Thanet? Let's analyse some facts documented in the life and writings of the pontiff.

When Gregory was elected bishop of Rome in 590, the City found herself in a very difficult situation,⁸ and nothing seemed to foresee that a pope could undertake any other deed but to keep his troubled see safe. Nevertheless, Gregory managed to attend what he considered his main duty and primary vocation: to preach the word of Christ to the unbelievers, notably to the pagans. As early as 596 – even earlier if we are to believe the famous story of the Anglian slaves told by the anonymous⁹ *Vita Gregorii* from Whitby –, he

⁶ Bede, *Hist. eccl.* 1,33 (114). See note 12.

⁷ Bede, *Hist. eccl.* 1,25 (74): *fertur autem quia adpropinquantes ciuitati, more suo cum cruce sancta, et imagine magni regis Domini nostri Iesu Christi, hanc laetantiam consona uoce modularentur*. See also notes 16 and 26.

⁸ On the awful situation of Rome, struck by pestilence, famine, and war, see Charles Pietri, 'La Rome de Grégoire', in *Gregorio Magno e il suo tempo. XIX Incontro di studiosi dell'Antichità cristiana*, 2 vols., Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum 33 (Roma, 1991), I 9-21; Paolo Delogu, 'Solium Imperii – Vrbs Ecclesiae. Roma fra la tarda Antichità e l'alto Medioevo', in Gisela Ripoll and Josep Maria Gurt (eds), *Sedes regiae (ann. 400-800)* (Barcelona, 2000), 83-108, 84-92 and 95-102.

⁹ We do not know where the anecdote of the Anglian slaves comes from, but the first source to document it is the anonymous Gregorian biography of Whitby: Anon. Angl., *Vita Greg.* 9 (*The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great by an Anonymous Monk of Whitby*, ed. Bertram Colgrave [Cambridge, 1985], 90); followed by Bede, *Hist. eccl.* 2,1 (132-4), who includes a longer version. However, there could be some real facts behind the legend: J. Richards, *Consul of God* (1980), 238-40; Henry Chadwick 'Gregory the Great and the Mission to the Anglo-Saxons', in *Gregorio Magno e il suo tempo. XIX Incontro di studiosi dell'Antichità cristiana*, 2 vols., Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum 33 (Roma, 1991), I 199-212, 205 n. 26; R.A. Markus, *Gregory the Great* (1997),

planned to Christianize the people of a remote kingdom in *Britannia* ruled by barbarian invaders for almost two centuries. A missionary embassy¹⁰ of forty monks from the Gregorian monastery of Saint Andrew in the Coelian Hill, headed by the aforementioned Augustine, was quickly organised and departed for Gaul in the summer. There, rumours about the Anglo-Saxon fierceness towards foreigners spread out over the retinue so it remained in the continent¹¹ until Gregory could ensure the protection and assistance of the Frankish kings; when it arrived into the island, Bertha and Liudhard would probably offer their help for the success of the mission. The Roman legation finally landed in Kent in spring of 597, and on Christmas day of this very same year, Aethelbert was baptised together with ten thousand of his subjects as stated in the letter 8, 29 to Eulogius of Alexandria.¹² The question is: did Gregory provide Augustine with specific instructions regarding the conversion of the pagans, British in this case?

177⁶. On the other hand, S. Boesch Gajano, *Gregorio Magno* (2004), 121-2, considers that Bede interpreted *ep.* 6,10 to Candidus, *rector patrimoniolum Galliarum*, concerning the purchase of certain *pueri Angli* as a proof of Gregory's intention to evangelize *Britannia*; followed by R. Lizzi, 'L'Église, les *domini*, les païens *rustici*: quelques stratégies pour la christianisation de l'Occident (IV^e-VI^e siècle)', in Hervé Inglebert, Sylvain Destephen and Bruno Dumézil (eds), *Le problème de la christianisation du monde antique*, Textes, Images et Monuments de l'Antiquité au Haut Moyen Âge 10 (Paris, 2010), 77-113, 78 n. 6. We deem really probable that these *pueri Angli* were the same slaves cited by the anonymous writer of Whitby; and we can even infer that the pontiff had the intention to send them back to *Anglia* to preach to their countrymen after having been formed as monks. See note 36.

¹⁰ There is little doubt to affirm that Augustine and his fellows – as well as Mellitus and the second retinue – came from the Gregorian monastery of Saint Andrew in the Coelian Hill. Gregory the Great, *Ep.* 8,29 (*Gregorii Magni Registrum epistularum [libri VIII-XIV, Appendix]*, ed. Dag Norberg, CChr.SL 140 [Turnhout, 1982], 551). See Bede, *Hist. eccl.* 1,25 (72). See notes 3 and 29.

¹¹ An irrational panic overrun the Roman missionaries in such a way that they stayed at the Provence, forcing Augustine to return to Rome and come back to them with a handful of *litterae commendatoriae* (all dated in July 23rd 596) addressed to sovereigns and bishops of the Frankish kingdoms in order to ease their journey. According to these letters, one may trace down the route followed by the retinue: Françoise Prévot, 'Grégoire le Grand et la mission d'évangélisation des Angles: premières difficultés en Gaule', in *Romanité et cité chrétienne. Permanences et mutations, intégration et exclusion du I^{er} au VI^e siècle. Mélanges en l'honneur d'Y. Duval* (Paris, 2000), 273-87, who points out that Neustria was avoided due to the lack of diplomatic relations with the Lateran. According to R. Lizzi, 'L'Église' (2010), 78-9, the support of the neighbouring churches – *i.e.*, the Frankish churches – had much to do with the quick success of the Gregorian mission.

¹² Gregory could reply the achievements of Eulogius in his struggle against the Eudoxian heresy through the conversion of an unknown people in the opposite end of the world with some unveiled satisfaction: *quia dum gens Anglorum in mundi angulo posita in cultu lignorum ac lapidum perfida nuncusque remaneret, ex uestrae mihi orationis adiutorio placuit ut ad eam monasterii mei monachum in praedicationem transmittere Deo auctore debuissim (...) in solemnitate autem dominicae Natiuitatis, quae hac prima indictione transacta est, plus quam decem milia Angli ab eodem nuntiati sunt fratre et coepiscopo nostro baptizati*. Gregory the Great, *Ep.* 8,29 (551).

There was a kind of ‘method’ to evangelize them, since Augustine of Hippo¹³ and Martin of Braga¹⁴ had provided some guidelines, but late sixth-century society was quite different to the fourth-century’s, and so was Anglo-Saxon England to its contemporary Mediterranean world. Thus, Gregory adopted ‘conventional’ missionary procedures and added his own pragmatic vision in order to achieve his major goal, emphasizing a really powerful triple approach to reach their hearts: music, image, and relics. One may find traces of this holistic conception in slight evidences in Gregory’s *Registrum* and also in his *Moralia*, but we must rely essentially on Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica* and partially on the three main Gregorian biographies if we want to restore what role may these complementary evangelization procedures have played in the conversion of the Jutes. First of all, we will consider music.

The relation of Gregory with music¹⁵ starts from the very beginning of his pontificate. It is well known that, after being elected as pope, he appealed to the civic sentiment of his community and arranged a sevenfold procession¹⁶ –

¹³ On Augustine, see Vera Paronetto, ‘Une présence augustiniennne chez Grégoire le Grand: le *De catechizandis rudibus* dans la *Regula Pastoralis*’, in Jacques Fontaine, Robert Gillet and Stan M. Pellistrandi (eds), *Grégoire le Grand. Actes du Colloque de Chantilly* (Paris, 1986), 511-9. Robert A. Markus, ‘Gregory the Great’s Pagans’, in Richard G. Gameson and Henrietta Leyser (eds), *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages. Studies Presented to H. Mayr-Harting* (Oxford, 2001), 23-34, 33-4 n. 57, gives some hypothesis about the Augustinian passages resumed by Gregory in his *Regula pastoralis*; this author also reminds us that no homily or treatise was issued after those of Quoduultdeus and Peter Chrysologus in the mid-fifth century. However, in the following century, most of the *pagani* were *barbari* or *rustici*, and for they resided mainly in the countryside, local churches did rely on their patron landowners to correct – and eventually convert – them: R. Lizzi, ‘L’Église’ (2010), 94-5 and 108-9.

¹⁴ The bishop of Braga advocates simple and plain language as the best method to explain the Christian dogmas to the general audience: Martin of Braga, *De correct. rustic.* 1 (ed. C.W. Barlow, *Martini episcopi Bracarenis opera omnia*, Papers and Monographs of the American Academy in Rome 12 [New Haven, 1950], 183). Written as a pedagogical sermon for the *illitterati*, the *De correctione rusticorum* constitutes a really visual discourse even when it does not include any reference to the use of images to teach the neophytes. On this work by Martin, see Alberto Ferreiro, ‘Early Medieval Missionary Tactics: The Example of Martin of Braga and Caesarius of Arles’, *Studia Historica* 6 (1988), 225-38, 232-7.

¹⁵ Before the Gregorian reform of the Roman council of 595, any *cantor* could become sub-deacon just by having a good voice: *Conc. Rom.* (595), c. 1 (*apud* Gregory the Great, *Ep.* 5.57a [*Gregorii I papae Registrum epistolarum. Libri I-VII*, ed. Paul Ewald and Ludwig M. Hartmann, MGH epp 1 (Berlin, 1891)], 363). The pontiff also cares about the influence of Eastern musical traditions on Sicily in an epistle to John of Siracuse: Gregory the Great, *Ep.* 9.26 (586-587); specifically on the use of the Hallelujah chant, see Egon Wellesz, ‘Gregory the Great’s Letter on the Alleluia’, *Annales Musicologiques* 2 (1954), 7-26.

¹⁶ Gregory of Tours, *Hist. Franc.* 10,1 (*Gregorii Turonensis opera*, 1. *Libri historiarum X*, ed. Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, MGH srm 1.1 [Hannover, 1951²], 480). See Paul the Deacon, *Vita Greg.* 11-2 (*Pauli Vita sancti Gregorii*, ed. Maurini, PL 75 [1849], 47); *id.*, *Hist. Lang.* 3,24 (*Pauli Historia Langobardorum*, ed. Ludwig Bethmann and Georg Waitz, MGH srl [Hannover, 1878], 105). The whole of the Roman faithful community was divided into seven groups and each one departed from a different *titulus*.

septiforme letania – departing from seven different churches in which the whole of the Roman people assembled, walked by through the City, and sang litanies for hours. As a result, the lethal plague which struck Rome miraculously disappeared due to the piety and sacrifice of her inhabitants. Besides, he is credited to have definitely organised the *schola cantorum*,¹⁷ a formation school of singers expert in the canonical Roman hymnody whose students shall become reputed masters of chant in the early medieval West. Indeed, two last musical relations would be the creation of the so-called Gregorian chant¹⁸ and the composition of a related *Antiphonarium*,¹⁹ but it is not our intention to argue about these much discussed questions.

Regarding the *missio Britannia*, there is a reminiscence in the *Moralia*²⁰ which reminds us of the encounter at Thanet narrated by Bede and to the episode of the sevenfold procession referred to by Gregory of Tours. In this passage, the pope briefly describes how the conversion of the barbarian *Britannia* reunited the West and the East in the faith of Christ, and the vision of many *Angli* singing together the Hallelujah in his own language stands as the best example of this union as Jacques Chailley²¹ has pointed out. Thus, one may understand

¹⁷ John the Deacon, *Vita Greg.* 2,6 (*Vita Gregorii*, ed. Maurini, PL 75 [1849], 90). Not only do we have to bear in mind that previous popes had already supported the official singers of the Roman church and therefore started to set up a canon of melodies and chants, but also these chants were not definitely established – and not widespreadly known – until the Carolingian renaissance; however, we must grant Gregory the merit of assembling the singers in a school which would lead to the gradual composition of an authorized *corpus* of liturgical hymns. On this, see Juan C. Asensio, *El canto gregoriano. Historia, liturgia, formas*, Alianza Música 84 (Madrid, 2003), 26 and 33-6.

¹⁸ We adhere to the critical considerations concerning the process of formation of the so-called Gregorian chant and its formal attribution to Gregory the Great: Michel Huglo, ‘L’Antiphonaire: archétype ou répertoire originel?’, in Jacques Fontaine, Robert Gillet and Stan M. Pellistrandi (eds), *Grégoire le Grand. Actes du Colloque de Chantilly* (Paris, 1986), 661-9, 661; Juan C. Asensio, *El canto gregoriano* (2003), 36-110, with an extensive summary of the previous musical tradition in the ancient Mediterranean world and its evolution until the definitive establishment in Carolingian times.

¹⁹ There are two well-known testimonies which have attributed to Gregory the Great the authorship of this musical compilation: first, the anonymous poetic preface to the *Antiphonarium* sent by pope Adrian I to Charlemagne in 784-791; second, a biographical passage by John the Deacon of the ninth century. *Antiph., praef.* (ed. Bruno Stäblein, ‘*Gregorius praesul, der Prolog zum römischen Antiphonale*’, in Richard Baum and Wolfgang Rehm [eds], *Musik und Verlag. K. Vötterle zum 65. Geburtstag* [Kassel, 1968], 537-61, 544); John the Deacon, *Vita Greg.* 2,6 (90). None of these allow us to affirm decisively that Gregory himself was the composer but probably its compiler or organiser. About this *Antiphonarium*, see Jacques Chailley, *Histoire musicale du Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1950), 49; J.C. Asensio, *El canto gregoriano* (2003), 26-8.

²⁰ Gregory the Great, *Mor.* 27,11,21 (*Moralia in Iob. Libri XXIII-XXXV*, ed. M. Adriaen, CChr.SL 143B [Turnhout, 1985], 1346): *ecce in una fide Orientis limitem Occidentisque coniunxit; ecce lingua Britanniae, quae nil aliud nouerat, quam barbarum fremdere, iam dudum in diuinis laudibus Hebraeum coepit Alleluia resonare*. A biographical passage insists on the relevance of the ‘Gregorian’ chant in *Britannia*: John the Deacon, *Vita Greg.* 2,8 (91).

²¹ According to Chailley, the ‘conquest’ of Britain to the Roman liturgy and psalmody constitutes the first step to the reunification in Christ of the post-imperial West: J. Chailley, *Histoire musicale* (1950), 50; cf. H. Chadwick, ‘Gregory the Great’ (1991), 199-200.

the special significance which Gregory bestows on chant as identity symbol of Christian self-representation. Let us move on to the second part of the 'method', the images, also a relevant symbol of Christian identity.

The best known case to understand Gregory's attitude towards images is the destruction of paintings in the churches of Marseilles fostered by its own bishop Serenus. In the face of this iconoclast behaviour, the pope addressed twice²² the Gallic prelate commanding him not to destroy any other sacred icon; if it was true that some faithful had become *adoratores imaginum*, Serenus should reprehend them and teach them how to interpret these paintings, even pictoric cycles like those of Tours.²³ For images²⁴ could constitute a significant way to evangelize the *illiterati*.

But, who are those illiterates? Modern authors²⁵ agree in identifying two different groups as possible recipients of that consideration: on the one hand, the uneducated mass of Roman origin – usually Christian by birth –, both in

²² Gregory the Great, *Ep.* 9,209 and 11,10 (768 and 873-876).

²³ Two additional examples demonstrate the presence of mural *picturae* to be understood as *historiae* – *antiquae* and also *sacrae* – in the churches of Tours whose contemplation could be associated with an idolatrous attitude: Gregory of Tours, *Hist. Franc.* 2,17 and 7,22 (64-5 and 341). On these passages, see Luce Pietri, *La ville de Tours du IV^e au VI^e siècle, naissance d'une cité chrétienne*. Collection de l'École Française de Rome 69 (Roma, 1983), 812-22 and 831; *ead.*, 'Serenus de Marseilles et Grégoire le Grand: une première querelle des images', in Mario Maritano (ed.), *Historiam perscrutari. Miscellanea di studi offerti al prof. O. Pasquatto* (Roma, 2002), 327-41, 332, who reminds us that in sixth-century Gaul *pictura* may be interpreted as a fresco, a painted canvas or even a mosaic.

²⁴ Celia M. Chazelle, 'Pictures, Books, and the Illiterate: Pope Gregory I's Letters to Serenus of Marseilles', *Word and Image* 6 (1990), 138-53, 141, considers that the Gregorian epistles to Serenus refer to scenes or pictorial stories rather than 'static portraits of Christ or the saints' relying on the use of plural – *imagines* – in these particular letters. Besides, that pedagogical use of images goes hand in hand with the *sermo humilis*, a pragmatic combined method to teach those who cannot read: Peter R.L. Brown, 'Images as a Substitute for Writing', in Evangelos Chrysos and Ian N. Wood (eds), *East and West: Modes of Communication. Proceedings of the First Plenary Conference at Mérida, Transformations of the Roman World 5* (Leiden-Boston-Köln, 1999), 15-34, 26 and 28-30; see *contra* Ian N. Wood, 'Images as a Substitute for Writing: A Reply', *ibid.*, 35-46, 35, 38-40 and 43-5. See also Ernst Kitzinger, 'The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm', *DOP* 8 (1954), 83-150, 132; Herbert L. Kessler, 'Pictorial Narrative and Church Mission in Sixth-Century Gaul', in *id.* and Marianna S. Simpson (eds), *Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Washington, D.C., 1985), 75-91, 75; Marc van Uytvanghe, 'L'hagiographie antique tardive: une littérature populaire?', *AnTard* 9 (2001), 201-18, 208-10 and 216-7.

²⁵ Although it was not a shame to be an illiterate – even the apostles Peter and John are described as *sine litteris et idiotis* (Act. 4,13) –, its number increased during Late Antiquity among the Roman Christians and rose due to the entrance of Germanic peoples into the Empire. However, H.L. Kessler, 'Pictorial Narrative' (1985), 85, thinks that this is a cultural not ethnic distinction, although the Germanic population would generally ignore education. On her part, C.M. Chazelle, 'Pictures, Books' (1990), 142-3 n. 19-20, observes a relation between the *imagineum adoratores* and the *illiterati*, distinguishing them from the mere *gentiles*; moreover, this scholar believes that the addressees of the epistles to Serenus are members of the Provençal educated high class opposing the arguments by E. Kitzinger, 'The Cult of Images' (1954), 95-6 and 115-28, who insists on the popular and naive character of the iconic cult.

the cities or in the countryside, whose ignorance make them liable to doctrinal mistakes; on the other, the barbarian *gentes* who now rule over the ancient western part of the Empire, often heretics – if Christian – or simply pagans, but always susceptible of redemption through missionary actions. This second interpretation fits well with the Jutes to whom the *imago Saluatoris* was shown on the shores of Thanet and through the streets of Canterbury. And we cannot forget the exhibition of the *crux sancta*, a shiny silver cross which is the essential symbol of Christian religion.²⁶

These Gregorian letters are certainly important because of their influence on the European medieval conception on the meaning and function of images. As Herbert L. Kessler²⁷ remarks, the magic power of sacred images before the believers prevent them from being destroyed since they are the plastic representation of the true faith; and any violent action against them would imply the denial of their condition. This magical nature might explain the reluctances of Aethelbert, and also the display of Augustine.

In the third place, we have the *reliquiae*, a physical reminder of the eternal presence of those martyrs and saints who became the perfect earthly intermediaries with the divinity through their protection and leadership over Christian communities. Gregory's epistolary provides us with two examples concerning these sacred remains. Firstly, a disputed reference to the true relics of pope Sixtus in the *Libellus responsionum*²⁸ directed to Augustine which seems to be spurious. Secondly, the epistle 11, 56 addressed to Mellitus,²⁹ leader

²⁶ On the ubiquitous presence of the cross as the undeniable symbol of Christianity and its relevance as a relic and element of power, see Anatole Frolow, *La relique de la vraie croix. Recherches sur le développement d'un culte*, Archives de l'Orient Chrétien 7 (Paris, 1961), 21-61; Vincenzo Recchia, 'Il simbolo della croce in Gregorio Magno (*Hom. in Eu.* 2, 32)', *GIF* 28 (1976), 181-91.

²⁷ H.L. Kessler, 'Pictorial Narrative' (1985), 85, concludes: 'Whether magical power was extended also to narrative picture is uncertain, though Pope Gregory certainly implied that it was'.

²⁸ In an *obsecratio* of the *Libellus responsionum* – whose authenticity is doubtful – transmitted by Bede, Augustine asks Gregory for true relics of the pope and martyr Sixtus II for there was a previous local cult of a certain Sixtus which did not deserve all his trust: *quatenus populus qui in loco quondam sancti Sixti martyris corpus dixerunt uenerari, quod tuae fraternitati nec uerum nec ueraciter sanctum uidetur, certa sanctissimi et probatissimi martyris beneficia suscipiens, colere incerta non debeat (...) ita reliquiae quas petisti scorsum condendae sunt, ut locus in quo praefatum corpus iacet modis omnibus obstruatur, nec permittatur populus certum deserere et incertum uenerari*. Gregory the Great, *Lib. resp.*, 7a (= Gregory the Great, *Ep.* 11,56a, *Gregorii I papae Registrum epistularum*, ed. Ludwig Hartmann, MGH epp 2 [Berlin, 1899], 337). On the contemporary legislation of relics, see Nicole Herrmann-Mascard, *Les reliques des saints. Formation coutumière d'un droit*, Société d'Histoire du Droit. Collection d'Histoire Institutionnelle et Sociale 6 (Paris, 1975), 35-47, 133-6; John M. McCulloh, 'From Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Continuity and Change in Papal Relic Policy from the 6th to the 8th Century', *JbAC* 8 (1980), 313-24; Éric Rebillard, *Religion et sépulture: l'Église, les vivants et les morts dans l'Antiquité tardive*, Civilisations et Sociétés 115 (Paris, 2003), 7-86.

²⁹ About Mellitus and the second retinue, see: *PCBE* II 2, *Mellitus* 2, 1493. See also notes 10 and 33.

of the second retinue sent to Kent, who received it when on journey through Gaul.

The letter contains precise instructions³⁰ about how to Christianize pagan shrines and these directives enter into contradiction with those³¹ indicated to Aethelbert in the epistle 11, 37, sent to him just five days before. Instead of destroying the heathen temples and persecuting the polytheistic cult, as specified to the king, now Gregory exhorts Mellitus to preserve the buildings and convert them into churches by removing the idols, scattering holy water, erecting altars and placing relics under them – *reliquiae sanctorum et martyrum*, as it is been prescribed. Moreover, local rites such like banquets must be replaced by Christian feasts celebrated on the same date or even better on a saint's day, changes which have been recently studied by George E. Demacopoulos³² from a pastoral perspective. Then, the pope's willingness to adapt himself to new circumstances would explain the remodelling of his attitude, and it may indirectly suggest that Augustine had received different – also precise – commands when he left Rome. On the other hand, Bede³³ confirms that Mellitus brought relics

³⁰ Gregory the Great, *Ep.* 11,56 (961-2): *dicite ei (Augustino) quid diu mecum de causa Anglorum cogitans tractaui: uidelicet quia fana idolorum destrui in eadem gente minime debeant; sed ipsa quae in eis sunt idola destruantur; aqua benedicta fiat, in eisdem fanis aspergatur, altaria construuntur, reliquiae ponantur: quia si fana eadem bene constructa sunt, necesse ut a cultu daemonum in obsequio ueri Dei debeant commutari; ut dum gens ipsa eadem fana sua non uidet destrui, de corde errorem deponat, et Deum uerum cognoscens ac adorans ad loca quae consueuit, familiarius concurrat. Et quia boues solent in sacrificio daemones multos occidere, debet eis etiam hac de re aliqua sollempnitas immutari, ut die dedicationis uel natalicii sanctorum martyrum, quorum illic reliquiae ponuntur, tabernacula sibi circa easdem ecclesias, quae ex fanis commutatae sunt, de ramis arborum faciant et religiosi conuiuuii sollempnitatem celebrent. Nec diabolo iam animalia immolent.*

³¹ Gregory the Great, *Ep.* 11,37 (930-1): *christianam fidem in populis tibi subditis extendere festina, zelum rectitudinis tuae in eorum conuersione multiplica, idolorum cultus insequere, fanorum aedificia euertere, subditorum mores in magna uitae munditia exhortando, terrendo, blandiendo, corrigendo, et boni operis exempla monstrando aedifica.* Following Reydellet and Straw, we can appreciate the assimilation of the secular prince with the monarchic apostolate in this letter: Marc Reydellet, *La royauté dans la littérature latine de Sidoine Apollinaire à Isidore de Séville*, Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 243 (Roma, 1981), 501-2; Carole Straw, 'Gregory's Politics: Theory and Practice', in *Gregorio Magno e il suo tempo. XIX Incontro di studiosi dell'Antichità cristiana*, 2 vols., *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 33 (Roma, 1991), I 47-63, 56-7. In this same letter, Gregory also suggests Aethelbert to convert all his people before the end of times, an eschatological notion always present in the pontiff's thought; on Gregorian eschatology, see Hervé Savon, 'L'Antéchrist dans l'œuvre de Grégoire le Grand', in *ibid.*, 389-405; Robert A. Markus, 'Haec non longe sunt: Gregory the Great on the Antichrist and the End', in Rosanna Barcellona and Teresa Sardella (eds), *Munera amicitiae. Studi di storia e cultura sulla Tarda Antichità offerti a S. Pricoco* (Soveria Mannelli, 2003), 255-64.

³² George E. Demacopoulos, 'Gregory the Great and the Pagan Shrines of Kent', *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1 (2008), 353-69, 361-7.

³³ Bede, *Hist. eccl.* 1,29 (104-5): *praeterea idem papa Gregorius Augustino episcopo (...) misit cum praefatis legatariis suis plures cooperatores ac Verbi ministros, in quibus primi et praecipui erant Mellitus, Iustus, Paulinus, Rufinianus; et per eos generaliter uniuersa, quae ad*

with him together with liturgical vestments, sacred vases or ecclesiastical books.

This clear example of cultural substitution is a good occasion to conclude, for it perfectly demonstrates Gregory's accommodating spirit and proves that he subordinated the strict observance of some canonical norms to the accomplishment of the mission. His evangelization doctrine was not rigid but adaptive, and so was his method, founded, as we have seen, on three axes. In our opinion, Gregory took advantage of the three principal pillars of his method wisely, stressing on the pedagogical sense³⁴ of chants and icons, and creating a new topography of the sacred by means of the deposition of relics in significant churches. His intention would be to provide enough elements of identity – not astonishingly Roman – to a rising Church in the far end of the *Romania* that he decisively promoted by sending two missionary retinues, diverse religious objects, and some changeable principles of what evangelization may imply.

The pontiff had thought much about the *missio Britannia*, a surprisingly successful endeavour³⁵ which became his major religious – and political – achievement; and his long-term concern about this huge task may be perceived in the epistle to Candidus,³⁶ *rector patrimonium Petri* in the Provence, regarding the purchase of Anglo-Saxon slaves, perhaps to instruct them as future missionaries. Furthermore, Gregory compared Aethelbert to Constantine³⁷ and Bertha to Helen,³⁸ topics which confirm their essential role in the conversion of their

cultum erant ac ministerium ecclesiae necessaria, uasa uidelicet sacra et uestimenta altarium, ornamenta quoque ecclesiarum et sacerdotalia uel clericilia indumenta, sanctorum etiam apostolorum ac martyrum reliquias, necnon et codices plurimos.

³⁴ See notes 13-4 and 24.

³⁵ This is the opinion of several scholars: John M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Rome and the Early English Church: Some Questions of Transmission', in *Le Chiese nei regni dell'Europa occidentale e i loro rapporti con Roma sino all'800. VII Settimana di studi sull'alto Medioevo*, 2 vols. (Spoleto, 1960), II 519-48, 521-2; H. Chadwick, 'Gregory the Great' (1991), 206; R.A. Markus, *Gregory the Great* (1997), 185. See also note 8.

³⁶ Gregory the Great, *Ep.* 6,10 (378-9). See note 9.

³⁷ Gregory the Great, *Ep.* 11,37 (930): *sic enim Constantinus, quondam piissimus imperator, Romanam rempublicam a peruersis idolorum cultibus reuocans, omnipotenti Domino Deo nostro Iesu Christo secum subdidit, seque cum subiectis populis tota ad eum mente conuertit. Unde factum est ut antiquorum nomen principum suis uir ille laudibus uinceret, et tanto in opinione praedecessores suos quanto et in bono opere superaret.* On this particular point, see J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship* (1971), 32-3; Eugen Ewig, 'Das Bild Constantins des Grossen in den ersten Jahrhunderten des abendländischen Mittelalters', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 75 (1955), 1-46, 18 and 26-7; Bruno Dumézil, *Les racines chrétiennes de l'Europe. Conversion et liberté dans les royaumes barbares, V^e-VIII^e siècle* (Paris, 2005), 157-8. See also Pere Maymó i Capdevila, 'El τῶπος constantiniano y el apostolado monárquico en Gregorio Magno', in Josep Vilella (ed.), *Constantino, ¿primer emperador cristiano? Religión y política en el siglo IV* (Barcelona, 2015), 529-39, 533-4. See also note 2.

³⁸ Gregory the Great, *Ep.* 11,35 (923-4): *nam sicut per recordandae Helenam matrem piissimi Constantini imperatoris ad christianam fidem corda Romanorum accenderat, ita et per gloriae uestrae studium in Anglorum gentem eius misericordiam confidimus operari (...) itaque mentem*

people and raise them from long-haired kings to models of ideal Christian princes.³⁹ All these facts, and especially the formal adoption of the Roman *cantilena* as the official liturgical chant at the council of Cloveshoe⁴⁰ of 747, help us to understand the high regard that Gregory enjoyed in Anglo-Saxon England for his inspired initiative and the reason why the *Angli* considered him his apostle.⁴¹

gloriosi coniugis uestri in dilectione christiana fidei adhortatione assidua roborate. See also notes 4 and 37.

³⁹ John M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-Haired Kings* (Oxford, 1962), 25-46; *id.*, *Early Germanic Kingship* (1971), 8-20; and the recent study by Stephanie Dick, *Der Mythos vom 'germanischen' Königtum. Studien zur Herrschaftsorganisation bei den germanischsprachigen Barbaren bis zum Beginn der Völkerwanderungszeit*, *Realexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 60 (Berlin and New York, 2008), 150-7 and 203-9, who settles reasonable doubts about some common places in the Germanic ethnogenesis and its monarchy. See also Émilienne Demougeot, 'Grégoire le Grand et la conversion du roi germain au VI^e siècle', in Jacques Fontaine, Robert Gillet and Stan M. Pellistrandi (eds), *Grégoire le Grand. Actes du Colloque de Chantilly* (Paris, 1986), 191-203, 191-2 n. 5; B. Dumézil, *Les racines chrétiennes* (2005), 174-9.

⁴⁰ *Conc. Clou. (747)*, c. 13 (*Concilium Cloueshouiae (747)*), ed. Giovanni D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum noua et amplissima collectio*, 12 [Graz, 1960], 399): *in missarum celebratione, in cantilena modo celebrentur, iuxta exemplar uidelicet quod scriptum de Romana habemus ecclesia. Itemque ut per gyrum totius anni natalitia sanctorum uno eodem die, iuxta martyrologium eiusdem Romanae ecclesiae cum sua sibi conuenienti psalmodia seu cantilena uenerentur*; see *ibid.*, cc. 12 and 15-6 (399-400).

⁴¹ J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Rome' (1960), 519-20, with numerous displays of the British affection for the pope, beginning with the consideration of *apostolus noster* given by Bede, *Hist. eccl.* 2,1 (122). On our part, we would like to quote another canon from the same council of Cloveshoe: *ut dies natalitius beati papae Gregorii, et dies quoque depositionis (...) ab omnibus, sicut decet, honorifice uenerentur. Conc. Clou. (747)*, c. 17 (400).

Scriptural Allusions and the Wholeness of Wisdom in Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*

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ABSTRACT

In spite of the oft-repeated claim that Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* contains only a single reference to Christian scriptures, the text in fact often alludes to Christian scriptures or liturgical texts, especially those that explicate the sapiential character of *Philosophia*. These allusions subtly confirm in religious language the nature of the incarnate, universal Wisdom that the *Consolation* reveals, and complement the text's underlying liturgical character.

Philosophia as Sapientia: The Consolation and the Liber Sapientiae

It is widely recognized that the *Consolation* contains one clear allusion to the Judeo-Christian scriptures: at 3, 12, 22 Philosophy quotes from the *Book of Wisdom* (*Sap.* 8:1)¹ to describe the world's governance: *Est igitur summum, inquit, bonum, quod regit cuncta fortiter suaviterque disponit* ('It is therefore the highest good', she said 'which rules all things firmly, and sweetly disposes them').² The prisoner replies that her conclusion delights him, and that he is especially pleased with the words she has used: *haec ipsa ... verba delectant*.³ Though it has become practically an axiom of modern scholarship that this reference is the text's only clear allusion to Christian scriptures, this common belief is nevertheless mistaken. In a recent landmark analysis, Robert Crouse has shown that although Boethius never cites Scripture directly, either in the *Consolation* or the *Tractates*, he very often weaves into a sentence an allusion that, while subtle enough to be missed by the uninitiated, is quite obvious to any trained ear.⁴

¹ *Sap.* 8:1 reads: *adtingit enim a fine usque ad finem fortiter, et disponit omnia suaviter.*

² All references to Boethius' works are to Claudio Moreschini's edition: *De consolazione philosophiae. Opuscula theologica*, ed. Claudio Moreschini, 2nd ed. (Munich, 2005). Translations, unless noted otherwise, are from Boethius, *The Tractates; The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. S.J. Tester (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1973).

³ *De consolazione philosophiae* 3, 12, 23.

⁴ As at *De consolazione philosophiae* 1, V, 46-8 and 1, 5, 10, which both echo Boethius' paraphrase of the Lord's prayer in *Contra Eutychem* 8. Noted in Victoria Emma Clare Goddard, *Poetry and Philosophy in Boethius and Dante* (Toronto, 2011), 113 n. 225.

After drawing our attention to nearly forty such allusions in only the first few pages of the *Consolation*, Crouse concludes:

An examination of the lamentation of Boethius and the appearance of Philosophy at the beginning of the *Consolation* reveals a text rich in biblical allusions, which, although they are not literary *similia* in the strictest sense, could hardly be missed by any sixth-century Christian closely familiar with the Latin Bible: *divinarum scripturarum mentibus eruditi*, as Boethius puts it in *De fide catholica*.⁵

That is, these allusions are only ‘for those minds learned in the Scriptures’. As Crouse points out,⁶ this is not a casual comment: there are several other places in the *Tractates* where Boethius speaks of the usefulness of veiled language and hidden meaning.

From the *Quomodo substantiae*:

But I think over my *Hebdomads* with myself, and I keep my speculations in my own memory (*ad memoriam meam*) rather than share them with any of those pert and frivolous persons who will not tolerate an argument unless it is made amusing. Wherefore do not you take objection to the obscurities consequent on brevity (*obscuritatibus brevitatis*), which are the sure treasure-house of secret doctrine (*arcani fida custodia*) and have the advantage that they speak only with those who are worthy (*his solis qui digni sunt*).⁷

From the *De trinitate*:

So, apart from yourself, wherever I turn my eyes, they fall on either the apathy of the dullard or the jealousy of the shrewd, and a man who should cast his thoughts before such unnatural creatures of men, I will not say to consider but rather to trample under foot, would seem to bring discredit on the study of divinity (*divinis tractatibus*). So I purposely use brevity and wrap up the ideas I draw from the deep questionings of philosophy in new and unaccustomed words (*stilum brevitate contraho et ex intimis sumpta philosophiae disciplinis novorum verborum significationibus velo*) such as speak only to you and to myself, that is, if you ever look at them. The rest of the world I simply disregard (*submovimus*) since those who cannot understand seem unworthy even to read them (*ut qui capere intellectu nequiverint ad ea etiam legenda videantur indigni*).⁸

⁵ Robert Crouse, ‘*Haec Ipsa Verba Delectant: Boethius and the Liber Sapientiae*’, in Angelo Campodonico (ed.), *Verità nel Tempo, Platonismo, Cristianesimo e Contemporaneità: Studi in onore di Luca Obertello* (Genova, 2004), 54-61, 56. The reference is to *De fide catholica*, ll. 128-30. As the many quotations and references to Crouse make abundantly clear, this section is principally a summary of his work on the topic.

⁶ The following passages are footnoted but not cited in Robert Crouse, ‘St Augustine, Semi-Pelagianism and the *Consolation* of Boethius’, *Dionysius* 22 (2004), 95-109, 101 n. 27.

⁷ *Quomodo substantiae*, Prologue.

⁸ *De sancta trinitate*, Prologue, ll. 11-21. See also John Magee, ‘Boethius, Last of the Romans’, *Carmina Philosophiae* 16, Special Issue, Part 1 (2007), 1-22, 15.

Boethius makes similar comments in the *De fide catholica*.⁹ We should not, then, be surprised to learn that the *Consolation* contains veiled references to Christian scriptures, doctrines, or liturgical texts. But what is their purpose?

As Crouse thoroughly demonstrates, the scriptural allusions in the first pages of the *Consolation* are not arbitrary, but intentionally recall particular Biblical passages in order to weave them subtly into the first portrayals of the prisoner and of Philosophy. For example, the description of the prisoner allusively casts him as Job:

weary of his life (*Job* 9:21; 10:1: *Taedebit me vitae meae*), oppressed by grief (*Job* 16:8: *Nunc autem oppressit me dolor*), his face drenched with tears (*Job* 16:17: *Facies mea intumuit a fletu, Et palpebrae meae caligaverunt*). Untimely age has come upon him (*Job* 17:1: *Spiritus meus attenuabitur, Dies mei breviabuntur, Et solum mihi superest sepulchrum*). He longs only for death, which will not hear his cries (*Job* 3:21): *Qui expectant mortem et non venit, Quasi effodientes thesaurum*.¹⁰

Crouse observes: 'Just as historically the Book of Wisdom is a conscious response to the questions raised by Job, so Philosophy appears as a response to Boethius's Job-like lament.' And so, if the prisoner echoes *Job*, Philosophy echoes *Sapientia*. Crouse locates twenty-four places, in only the *Consolation*'s first few pages, where the description of, and words spoken by, *Philosophia* clearly parallel the description of, and words spoken by, *Sapientia* in the *Liber Sapientiae*. They are too many to cite here, but I will give the first several to convey just how compelling the comparison is:

Sapientia, mistress of all virtues (*Sap.* 7:23: *omnem habens virtutem*), descends from on high, for she would never desert the innocent (*Sap.* 10:13: *Haec venditum justum non dereliquit, . . . Descenditque cum illo in foveam, Et in vinculis non dereliquit eum*). She comes to the sick man unanticipated (*Sap.* 6:14-7: *Praeoccupat qui se concupiscunt, ut illis se prior ostendat*), a figure of awesome countenance, with blazing eyes (*Sap.* 7:26: *Candor est enim lucis aeternae*), with discernment beyond the common powers of men (*Sap.* 7:22-3: *Est enim in illa spiritus intelligentiae . . . acutus . . . omnia prospiciens*), of unexhausted vigour (*Sap.* 6:3: *nunquam marescit sapientia*), although she seems so ancient as not to belong to the present age (*Sap.* 9:9: *Adfuit tunc cum orbem terrarum faceres*).¹¹

Crouse proceeds through many similar allusions with respect to Philosophy's stature, her dress, her purpose, her book and sceptre, her roles as *medicans* and *nurse*, and her diagnosis of the prisoner; the prisoner's true destiny as a likeness of God; the *scintillula* of his true opinion, and so forth. Finally, perhaps

⁹ *De fide catholica*, ll. 90-5 and 137, as noted in R. Crouse, 'St Augustine, Semi-Pelagianism and the *Consolation* of Boethius' (2004), 101 n. 27

¹⁰ R. Crouse, 'Haec Ipsa Verba Delectant' (2004), 57.

¹¹ R. Crouse, 'Haec Ipsa Verba Delectant' (2004), 58.

the clearest indication that Philosophy may be identified with *Sapientia* is that she calls herself by that name in her first words to the prisoner.¹²

Crouse's analysis conclusively dismantles the oft-repeated and highly misleading claim that the *Consolation* has but one reference to Christian scriptures. But he goes on to suggest, however, these scriptural parallels do not mean that Philosophy is Christian *rather* than pagan – indeed, he acknowledges that the tradition of wisdom literature is syncretistic and also that the biblical description of *Sapientia* is itself closely paralleled by Stoic and Neoplatonic descriptions.¹³ 'Still', he writes, 'no sixth-century Latin Christian author or reader could be unmindful of the Christian – indeed the Christological – dimension of the concept of *sapientia*, which had been underlined especially by St. Augustine'.¹⁴ 'That is the understanding of *Sapientia* which informs Boethius's portrait of Philosophy, and that is the ground of his great delight in her reference to the *Liber Sapientiae*: she speaks at last her native tongue, the language of divine revelation'.¹⁵

It is the special genius of Boethius to be able to allude to, and indeed explicate, the Christian revelation precisely with the universal language of wisdom's mediation. Consider the following passage from his commentary on the *Isagoge* of Porphyry, perhaps his most explicit discussion of *Sapientia*, and where his personification of wisdom is deeply resonant with the *Consolation's* *Philosophia*:

Philosophy is the love and study and in a certain way the friendship of wisdom: not indeed of that wisdom which is concerned with various arts and the science and knowledge of mutable things, but of that wisdom which, lacking nothing, is lively mind and alone the primeval reason of all things. Moreover, this love of wisdom is the illumination of the understanding soul by that pure wisdom, and in some way a summoning and recalling of it to itself, so that the study of wisdom seems to be the study of divinity, and the friendship of that pure mind. Therefore, this wisdom impresses the beneficence

¹² *De consolazione philosophiae* 1, 3, 6. The restrictions that seem to be laid on *Philosophia* (e.g. 4, 6, 38 and 53) do not undermine her being generally identified with *Sapientia* any more than Jesus' comments in *John* 14 ('for my Father is greater than I') contradict his being the Son of God. These are deep and difficult theological questions, and Boethius' imagery retains the complexity of the truths it would express.

¹³ R. Crouse, 'St Augustine, Semi-Pelagianism and the *Consolation* of Boethius' (2004), 102.

¹⁴ R. Crouse, 'St Augustine, Semi-Pelagianism and the *Consolation* of Boethius' (2004), 105, where he references Augustine, *De Trinitate* 7, 3, 5: 'When Scripture mentions wisdom either itself speaking, or when something is said concerning it, the Son is especially meant' (trans. Crouse).

¹⁵ R. Crouse, '*Haec Ipsa Verba Delectant*' (2004), 61. It is striking to note how close to the view here expressed by Crouse are the intuitions even of someone like Frederick Denison Maurice who, writing before the (re)discovery of the Anecdota Holderi, did not believe Boethius had authored the theological tractates. See Frederick Denison Maurice, *Mediaeval Philosophy, or, A Treatise of Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy from the Fifth to the Fourteenth Century*, new edn. (London, 1870), 27-8.

of its own divinity upon every kind of soul, and leads it back to the strength and purity of its own nature. Hence arise the truth of thought and speculation, and holy and pure chastity of actions.¹⁶

Resonance with Christian Liturgy

The sometimes esoteric language specific to Boethius' treatment of theological questions should perhaps prepare us to discover that in many places the *Consolation* mirrors the words of the Christian liturgy without referring to it explicitly, as Christine Mohrmann has shown.¹⁷ What is particularly interesting is that, according to Mohrmann, the most emphatic allusions to Christian liturgy occur where Philosophy and the prisoner specifically use the language of prayer: that is, preceding the hexametric prayer of 3, IX; at the prisoner's statement of the crisis for human freedom at the end of 5, 3; and in Philosophy's final words at 5, 6. As Mohrmann persuasively illustrates – just to summarize her analysis of the middle of these three passages – the prisoner's word choices (*deprecandi, supplicandi ratione, commercium, iustae humilitas, pretium, vicem, divina gratia*) clearly allude to Christian liturgical texts.¹⁸

Relative to the *Consolation's* allusions to the book of *Sapientia*, it is fascinating to consider Mohrmann's suggestion that Philosophy's *fortiter suaviterque*, which elicits the prisoner's *haec ipsa ... verba delectant* has, in addition to its

¹⁶ Boethius, *In Isagogen Porphyrii Commenta*, ed. Samuel Brandt, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 48 (Vienna and Leipzig, 1906), 1, 3, p. 7, as translated in R. Crouse, 'Haec Ipsa Verba Delectant' (2004), 55.

¹⁷ Christine Mohrmann, 'Some Remarks on the Language of Boethius, *Consolatio Philosophiae*', in John J. O'Meara and Bernd Naumann (eds), *Latin Script and Letters, A. D. 400-900: Festschrift presented to Ludwig Bieler on the occasion of his 70th birthday* (Leiden, 1976), 54-61. On allusions so intentionally subtle as to evade all but particular readers, see William A. Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire: A Study of Elite Communities*, *Classical Culture and Society* (New York, 2010), 205 and elsewhere. Boethius' allusions to liturgy or Scripture do not however fit Johnson's account of ancient literary elitism.

¹⁸ C. Mohrmann, 'Some Remarks on the Language of Boethius' (1976), 55-9. Of Mohrmann's analysis, Chadwick writes: 'We have too little pagan Latin liturgy to be able assert that such language is distinctively Christian. One would expect such vocabulary to be neutral in itself', Henry Chadwick, *The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology, and Philosophy* (Oxford, 1981), 251. Nonetheless, he agrees, albeit with caution, that Mohrmann's observations give 'marginal reinforcement to the view that there is a latent awareness of Christianity beneath the surface of Boethius's text', 251. Mohrmann, I expect, would not have been dissuaded by Chadwick's scepticism. She acknowledges that the resonance with liturgical language would be tenuous were it based only on solitary, ambiguous words. She writes (in relation to the passage in 5, 3), for example: 'if this parallel [*i.e.*, to Christian liturgical texts] concerning *commercium* is partial, there is in this passage such a concentration of Christian and particularly liturgical terms (and thoughts), that it is not only beyond doubt that Boethius speaks here as a Christian, but also that he had in mind certain liturgical texts'. C. Mohrmann, 'Some Remarks on the Language of Boethius' (1976), 58.

biblical and patristic connotations, an obvious resonance with a Christian liturgical text (the *Antiphona ad Magnificat, Dec. 17*).¹⁹ She asks: 'Is it the Biblical or the liturgical flavour that pleases him so much in these words?' To follow her question with one of our own: is this not to say, therefore, that the only widely-recognized reference to the Christian scriptures, where, as it were, *Sapientia* quotes *Sapientia*, where the Word made flesh quotes the written Word, is from a liturgical text set in the very season that anticipates Christ's incarnation?

The final place Mohrmann finds traces of the Christian liturgy is in the last sentences of the text, in Philosophy's reassurance of the efficacy of prayer, and her exhortation to its practice: *spes precesque, in excelsa, porrigere, humiles preces*. The *Consolation's* final words are therefore not only about prayer but are also themselves richly suffused with liturgical sound. Taken as a whole, Mohrmann's analysis is indeed so compelling she might have been surprised not to have found in the *Consolation* a more overarching liturgical purpose.

I have indeed elsewhere sought to show that the *Consolation*, through its metric-acoustic design, does indeed contain a powerful liturgical pattern, the repetition of which is essential to the text's consolatory work; and that the question of prayer fundamentally underlies both the structure of the *Consolation's* argument and its vision of the human personality.²⁰ All of this resonates wonderfully in the liturgically allusive exhortation to prayer with which the *Consolation* ends.

That final exhortation finds its theological distillation in the magnificent paragraph we read a few moments ago, in which the study and love of wisdom is the recalling of the soul by Wisdom to itself, a recollection that brings the soul into truth of thought and holiness of action. In the *Consolation*, prayer is surely both the seeking and the finding – and indeed the work of – Wisdom herself, who is also called Philosophy. In Boethius' theological vision, the audible allusions to Scripture, as well as the acoustic patterns of sound in the poetry, are not opposed to the intelligible, universal character of Philosophy: indeed, to oppose them is to attempt to tear apart what in truth cannot be torn. The incarnate character of Boethius' Philosophy is precisely the means by which she can be revealed and recognized as the eternal Word.

¹⁹ See C. Mohrmann, 'Some Remarks on the Language of Boethius' (1976), 60. The identification of Philosophy's words with one of great 'O antiphons' of Advent had in fact been made earlier, by J. Allen Cabaniss, who argued that the words more directly echo the antiphon than the Scriptural text on which it is based: '... the order of the words, *fortiter suaviterque disponit* (antiphon: *disponens*), is precisely that of *O Sapientia*, not that of the Bible text'. J. Allen Cabaniss, 'A Note on the Date of the Great Advent Antiphons', *Speculum* 22 (1947), 440-2, 441. The full text of the antiphon reads: *O Sapientia, quae ex ore Altissimi prodiisti, attingens a fine usque ad finem, fortiter suaviterque disponens omnia: veni ad docendum nos viam prudentiae*.

²⁰ See Stephen Blackwood, *The Consolation of Boethius as Poetic Liturgy* (Oxford, 2015); and 'Philosophia's Dress: Prayer in Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*', *Dionysius* 20 (2000), 139-52.

Drawing attention to the *Consolation's* many allusions to Biblical scriptures and to Christian liturgical language definitively puts to rest the ubiquitous, but false, claim that the work contains only one, or at most a few, references to Christian scripture and practice; these subtle references also provide a powerful corroboration of the liturgical character of the *Consolation* as a whole.²¹ But most important, the diverse strands of allusion throughout the text reveal Wisdom herself, not in pieces torn asunder but whole and entire.²²

²¹ To the Christian listener these allusions might have served as an invitation to the *Consolation* as a liturgical act; that is, to the memory already shaped by the Christian scriptures and liturgy, these references intimate, in the language of Christian liturgy and scripture, the anamnesis that is the principal aim of this beautiful book.

²² See Robert Crouse, 'The Doctrine of Creation in Boethius: the *De hebdomadibus* and the *Consolatio*', *SP* 17 (1982), 417-21, 418; and S. Blackwood, *The Consolation of Boethius as Poetic Liturgy* (2015).

A Brief Catalogue of Superstitions in Chapter 16 of Martin of Braga's *De correctione rusticorum**

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ABSTRACT

Martin of Braga wrote *De correctione rusticorum* in order to fight the pagan practices which still persisted among the peasants of the Suevic Kingdom. His aim was to prove to the peasants that the devil was behind every pagan practice, so those who continued practising them departed from the worship of the true God. Chapter 16 of this work is particularly interesting because Martin offered in it a brief catalogue of several superstitions which were theoretically still widespread among the peasantry of his time. Even though he linked all these practices to Roman religion, many of them had their origin in the indigenous cults. We should also remember that, despite the words of Martin, people did not see in these acts a reminiscence of paganism, but only a group of traditions secularly transmitted and completely deprived of all sorts of idolatrous content.

Martin of Braga wrote *De correctione rusticorum*, one of his most famous works, in the third quarter of the sixth century, probably on a date immediately later than 572, the year of the Second Council of Braga, a synod presided by Martin himself.¹ In theory, he wrote it at the request of the bishop Polemius of

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¹ The studies consecrated to Martin of Braga's *De correctione rusticorum* are very abundant. Among them, we should remember: Carl P. Caspari, *Martin von Bracara's Schrift De correctione rusticorum* (Christiania, 1883); Stephen McKenna, *Paganism and Pagan Survivals in Spain up to the Fall of the Visigothic Kingdom*, Studies in Mediaeval History. New Series 1 (Washington, D.C., 1938), 84-107; José Madoz, 'Una nueva recensión del *De correctione rusticorum* de Martín de Braga (Ms. Sant cugat, n. 22)', *Estudios eclesiásticos* 19, 74 (1945), 335-54; Claude W. Barlow, *Martini Episcopi Bracaraensis opera omnia* (New Haven, 1950), 159-81; Michel Meslin, 'Persistances païennes en Galice, vers la fin du VI^e siècle', in Jacqueline Bibauw (ed.), *Hommages à Marcel Renard*, II, Collection Latomus 102 (Bruxelles, 1969), 512-24; Manuel J. Pinheiro, 'O *De correctione rusticorum* de S. Martinho de Dume', *Bracara Augusta* 34, 2 (1980), 483-561; Alberto Ferreiro, 'The Missionary Labors of St Martin of Braga in 6th Century Galicia', *StudMon* 22-3 (1981), 11-26; *id.*, 'St. Martin of Braga's Policy toward Heretics and Pagan Practices', *The American Benedictine review* 34 (1983), 372-95; *id.*, 'Early Medieval Missionary Tactics: The Example of Martin and Caesarius', *SHHA* 6 (1988), 225-38; Rosario Jove,

Asturica (Astorga), in order to provide him with a model to exhort people to abandon their superstitions of pagan origin.² The resulting treatise had the form of a sermon inserted in the epistle addressed to Polemius. In it, Martin set out the various origins of superstitions. At least in theory, people quickly might abandon their pagan practices once the presence of the devil was detected in these superstitions.³

Martín de Braga. Sermón contra las supersticiones rurales (Barcelona, 1981); Ursicino Dominguez del Val, *Martín de Braga. Obras completas*, Corpus Patristicum Hispanum 4 (Madrid, 1990), 24-8; Enza Colonna, 'Il Sermo rusticus di Martino di Braga', *InvLuc* 13, 14 (1991), 121-48; Mario Naldini, *Martino di Braga. Contro le superstizioni, catechesi al popolo*. De correctione rusticorum (Firenze, 1991); Xosé E. López, *Cultura, relixión e supersticións na Galicia sueva. Martiño de Braga*, De correctione rusticorum (La Coruña, 1996); Maria J. Violante, 'St. Martin of Braga, the Sueves and Gallaecia', in Alberto Ferreiro (ed.), *The Visigoths. Studies in Culture and Society*, The Medieval Mediterranean 20 (Leiden, Boston and Köln, 1999), 63-98, 93-6; Pablo C. Díaz and Juana M. Torres, 'Pervivencias paganas en el cristianismo hispano (siglos IV-VII)', in Juan Santos and Ramón Teja (eds), *El cristianismo. Aspectos históricos de su origen y difusión en Hispania*, Revisiones de Historia Antigua 3 (Vitoria, 2000), 235-61, 238-42; Yitzhak Hen, 'Martin of Braga's *De Correctione Rusticorum* and its Uses in Frankish Gaul', in Esther Cohen and Mayke B. de Jong (eds), *Medieval Transformations. Texts, Power, and Gifts in Context*, Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions 11 (Leiden, Boston and Köln, 2001), 35-49.

² In the Second Council of Braga it had been already established that, during the pastoral visit to the churches of their dioceses, bishops should meet a specific day the people in the church and instruct them on how to avoid the error of idolatry; *Conc. Bracc.* II 1, ed. Claude W. Barlow (New Haven, 1950), 119. That could be the reason why Polemius asked for Martin of Braga's help.

³ It has been often said that the model for the composition of *De correctione rusticorum* was *De catechizandis rudibus* of Augustine of Hipone (written about 405); see J. Madoz, 'Una nueva recensión' (1945), 336; Cl.W. Barlow, *Martini Episcopi Bracarenensis* (1950), 163-4; M.J. Pinheiro, 'O *De correctione rusticorum*' (1980), 504 and 521-4; R. Jove, *Martín de Braga* (1981), 12; A. Ferreiro, 'St. Martin of Braga's Policy' (1983), 379; U. Dominguez del Val, *Martín de Braga* (1990), 27; M. Naldini, *Martino di Braga* (1991), 21; X.E. López, *Cultura, relixión e superstitions* (1996), 47; Y. Hen, 'Martin of Braga's' (2001), 35; José C. Martín, 'La biblioteca cristiana de los padres hispanovisigodos (siglos VI-VII)', *Veleia* 30 (2013), 259-88, 261; Jamie Wood, 'Predicación, pedagogía y persuasión: la educación cristiana en Occidente durante la Antigüedad Tardía', in José Fernández Ubiña, Alberto J. Quiroga and Purificación Ubric (eds), *La Iglesia como sistema de dominación en la Antigüedad Tardía* (Granada, 2015), 231-53. This is mainly true for the general scheme of Martin's work, where he explained the diabolical origins of idolatry from the beginning of the world to his days, in the same way as Augustine had previously done (Martinus Bracc., *De corr. rust.* 1, ed. Claude W. Barlow [New Haven, 1950], 183). Moreover, the idea of inserting the sermon inside an epistle addressed to another person comes also from Augustine. Nevertheless, both of these works present important differences too. In the first place, Augustine addressed his treatise to catechumens (Augustinus, *De cat. rud.* 1, 1, ed. Johannes B. Bauer, CChr.SL 46 [Turnhout 1969], 121), while Martin addressed his to baptised believers or *fideles* (Martinus Bracc., *De corr. rust.* 16, ed. Cl.W. Barlow, 198-9). In the second place, the book of Augustine belongs to an eminently urban environment (Augustinus, *De cat. rud.* 16, 24, ed. J.B. Bauer, 148), whereas the treatise of Martin belongs to the rural world (Martinus Bracc., *De corr. rust.* 1, ed. Cl.W. Barlow, 183). And in the third place, and directly related to this last point, Augustine warns his parishioners about the dangers of the worldly pleasures of urban life (especially shows of the theatre) (Augustinus, *De cat. rud.* 16, 25, ed. J.B. Bauer, 149-50); while Martin warns about the dangers of the idolatrous rituals settled in the daily habits of farmers of his time.

Chapter 16 of *De correctione rusticorum* presents a magnificent example of a brief catalogue of these superstitions of pagan origin disguised as everyday customs.⁴ The passage in translation is as follows:

To light candles beside rocks and beside trees and beside fountains and at crossroads, what else is this but worship of the devil? To observe divinations and auguries and days of idols, what else is this but worship of the devil? To observe Vulcan's day and the Kalends, to set out tables, to put up laurel wreaths, to watch the foot, to pour fruit and wine on a log in the hearth, to throw bread into a fountain, what else is this but worship of the devil? For women at their weaving to call on the name of Minerva and to observe the day of Venus in weddings and to be careful about the day on which one commences a journey, what else is this but worship of the devil? To chant over herbs to make poisons, and to invoke the names of demons in incantations, what else is this but worship of the devil? And many other things which it would take too long to mention here.⁵

As we shall argue, within the various pagan customs denounced by Martin, there are some which are of Roman origin, others related to the mythology of the Sueves,⁶ and, finally, other traditions which have an indigenous origin and therefore correspond to a pre-Roman paganism type.⁷ The former include those related to the celebration of the Kalends of January. In this passage Michel Meslin has identified three types of practices of pagan origin linked to the celebrations of the Kalends of January: to adorn the tables, to decorate the houses with branches of laurel, and to make offerings of grain and wine on a

⁴ Martinus Bracc., *De corr. rust.* 16, ed. Cl.W. Barlow, 198: *nam ad petras et ad arbores et ad fontes et per triuia cereolos incendere, quid est aliud nisi cultura diaboli? Diuinationes et auguria et dies idolorum obseruare, quid est aliud nisi cultura diaboli? Vulcanalia et Kalendas obseruare, mensas ornare, et lauros ponere, et pedem obseruare, et fundere in foco super truncum frugem et uinum, et panem in fontem mittere, quid est aliud nisi cultura diaboli? Mulieres in tela sua Mineruam nominare et Veneris diem in nuptias obseruare et quo die in uia exeatur adtendere, quid est aliud nisi cultura diaboli? Incantare herbas ad maleficia et inuocare nomina daemonum incantando, quid est aliud nisi cultura diaboli? Et alia multa quae longum est dicere.*

⁵ Translated by Claude W. Barlow, *Iberian Fathers, I: Martin of Braga, Paschasius of Dumium, Leander of Seville* (Washington, D.C., 1969), 81-2.

⁶ The existence of some Suevic beliefs in the list of superstitions collected in chapter 16 of *De correctione rusticorum* should not lead us to think that they all have the same origin, as António Ambrósio de Pina has postulated. For this author, the Suevic mythology appears frequently in the work of Martin of Braga, filtered through Roman mythology. When Martin arrived in the Iberian Peninsula, the Sueves had been Christians for a long time, so the few remnants of their particular beliefs were already very diluted and syncretised with local beliefs. About this, see António Ambrósio de Pina, 'S. Martinho de Dume e a sobrevivencia da mitología suéuica', *Bracara Augusta* 9-10 (1958-1959), 58-66.

⁷ In this sense, it should be noted that the peasant population, whom *De correctione rusticorum* was addressed to, was ethnically varied and was made up of both native inhabitants and the descendants of the Roman conquerors, as well as of the Sueves arrived a few centuries ago. The Sueves had transmitted Germanic mythology to the Hispano-Roman population and, at the same time they received influences of indigenous and Roman paganism. About this, see M.J. Pinheiro, 'O *De correctione rusticorum*' (1980), 517.

fire.⁸ According to Meslin, with the expression of *mensa ornare*, Martin de Braga was alluding to the rite of *mensa fortuna*, a Roman belief according to which a table could never remain entirely empty as it was a *res sacra*: an empty table was a terrible symbol of drought and famine. For this reason, the *mensa fortuna* acquired the nature of an apotropaic rite: filling the table at the beginning of the year with all that is desired to possess in abundance, scarcity disappeared and the future was ensured. On the other hand, according to Meslin decorating houses with laurels derived from an ancient rite of spring which passed from the Kalends of March to the Kalends of January, when the beginning of the year changed of date.⁹ With regard to the offerings of grain and wine on fire, Meslin considered it a very old ritual related to the home flame. However, in our opinion, there is nothing in this last ritual linking it directly to the New Year celebrations. It could be just another ritual aspect of the worship to the fire practised among the Celtic peoples.¹⁰ Therefore, this practice would not be of Roman origin, but it would probably have a pre-Roman origin, and it would be addressed to foster the abundance of the harvest.

Also related to the Christianization of time is Martin's criticism of keeping 'days of idols'. With this expression he was denouncing the practice of naming the days of the week after the names of pagan gods, a tradition inherited from the Romans.¹¹ Indeed, except Sunday, every day received the name of a Roman god or goddess.¹²

⁸ M. Meslin, 'Persistances païennes' (1969), 521-2.

⁹ This practice is also condemned in *Cap. Mart.* 73, ed. Claude W. Barlow (New Haven, 1950), 141. See Jesús Taboada, 'El canon 73 de los *Capitula Martini* y los ramos precautorios actuales', *Bracara Augusta* 9-10 (1958-1959), 153-7. According to António Ambrósio de Pina it was a Suevic ritual again: tables were adorned in order to turn beneficial the spirits of the dead and their god, Wotan; see A. Ambrósio de Pina, 'S. Martinho de Dume' (1958-1959), 64. See also M.J. Pinheiro, 'O *De correctione rusticorum*' (1980), 554.

¹⁰ In this sense, see M. Naldini, *Martino di Braga* (1991), 111-2. See also A. Ambrósio de Pina, 'S. Martinho de Dume' (1958-1959), 64 (who considered that it was a custom of Suevic origin again); M.J. Pinheiro, 'O *De correctione rusticorum*' (1980), 555.

¹¹ A. Ambrósio de Pina, 'S. Martinho de Dume' (1958-1959), 64 thought that in the Suevic Kingdom every day of the week was consecrated to a Suevic divinity, and not to a Roman god or goddess.

¹² It should be noted that Martin of Braga succeeded in this fight against the pagan vestiges in the naming of week days. We can read this criticism in Martinus Bracc., *De corr. rust.* 8-9, ed. Cl.W. Barlow, 188-9. In fact, while most of the Romance languages (Spanish, Catalan, French, Italian and Romanian) have maintained the nomenclature based on the names of Roman gods, in Portuguese and Galician (languages which occupied the territory of the Suevic Kingdom) the days of the week – with the exception of Saturday and Sunday – are identified by their cardinal number: *segunda, terça, quarta, quinta* and *sexta feira*, probably due to the influence of Martin. About this, see St. McKenna, *Paganism and Pagan Survivals* (1938), 92-4; M. Meslin, *La fête des Kalendes* (1969), 128; Víctor Martínez, 'El paganismo en la España visigoda', *Burgense* 13, 2 (1972), 489-508, 496; M.J. Pinheiro, 'O *De correctione rusticorum*' (1980), 554; R. Jove, *Martín de Braga* (1981), 61; M. Naldini, *Martino di Braga* (1991), 92-3; X.E. López, *Cultura, religión e superstitions* (1996), 51-4 and 57-8; P.C. Díaz and J.M. Torres, 'Pervivencias paganas' (2000), 239-40.

As for Vulcanalia, mentioned in this passage by Martin, the Bishop of Braga probably was not referring here to the Roman festival which every year took place on August 23.¹³ Actually, as some authors have pointed, it would be some kind of pre-Roman ritual consecrated to fire. In this tradition, the role of bonfires would have been important (in some ways similar to the bonfires lighted in many countries during the modern feast of Saint John's Eve).¹⁴ However, this did not matter to Martin, who, from an Euhemerist explanation of the pagan gods, attributed to the Greco-Roman paganism all those elements foreign to the Christian religious system.¹⁵

Perhaps something similar could be said about the custom of many women of invoking Minerva while they were weaving. Probably, this is a new example of religious syncretism. We should not dismiss the idea that ritual invocations during weaving would have an indigenous origin of pre-Roman type. It is true that in ancient Rome, young girls invoked Minerva while learning how to card wool and handling the distaff.¹⁶ This Roman custom could lead Martin to think that this goddess was the one who women of his diocese invoked when they were weaving wool. And thus he included in his canonical collection, the *Capitula Martini*, a canon of uncertain origin which also recalled this prohibition and authorized the invocation of God alone who (continues this text) was the one that gave women the wisdom of weaving.¹⁷

¹³ Vulcan's worship was known in the Northwest of the Iberian Peninsula, as it is evidenced by the discovery of a statue of this god near Santiago do Cacém, although, given the paucity of proofs, this cult will not have been very widespread. See José Leite de Vasconcellos, *Religiões da Lusitania na parte que principalmente se refere a Portugal*, III (Lisboa, 1913), 287.

¹⁴ A. Ambrósio de Pina, 'S. Martinho de Dume' (1958-1959), 64-5 (who, again, connected this custom with a tradition of Suevic origin); M.J. Pinheiro, 'O *De correctione rusticorum*' (1980), 554; M. Naldini, *Martino di Braga* (1991), 110; P.C. Díaz and J.M. Torres, 'Pervivencias paganas' (2000), 241.

¹⁵ X.E. López, *Cultura, religión e superstitions* (1996), 58. Martin of Braga had a deep knowledge of many classic authors – specially of Seneca –, what allowed him to be acquainted with the Greco-Roman mythology. Regarding the literary culture of Martin and his use of classical writers, see Antonio Fontan, 'Martín de Braga, un testigo de la tradición clásica y cristiana', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 9 (1974), 331-41; A. Ferreiro, 'St. Martín of Braga's Policy' (1983), 390-4; *id.*, 'Early Medieval Missionary Tactics' (1988), 236-7; Pablo C. Díaz, *El reino suevo (411-585)* (Madrid, 2011), 223.

¹⁶ Ovidius, *Fast.* III 815-22, ed. Robert Schilling (Paris, 2003), I 95.

¹⁷ *Cap. Mart.* 75, ed. Cl.W. Barlow, 141. See St. McKenna, *Paganism and Pagan Survivals* (1938), 101; M. Meslin, 'Persistences païennes' (1969), 520; V. Martínez, 'El paganismo' (1972), 500; M.J. Pinheiro, 'O *De correctione rusticorum*' (1980), 519; R. Jove, *Martín de Braga* (1981), 72; José M. Blázquez, 'Magia y religión entre los pueblos indígenas de la Hispania antigua', in *Religión, superstición y magia en el mundo romano* (Cádiz, 1985), 137-58, 154; P.C. Díaz and J.M. Torres, 'Pervivencias paganas' (2000), 241. For his part, António Ambrósio de Pina considered that it was a ritual of Suevic origin: under the name of Minerva women actually invoked Frigg, wife of Wotan, who, according to popular belief, came into the houses to help with housework; see A. Ambrósio de Pina, 'S. Martinho de Dume' (1958-1959), 66; in the same sense: M.J. Pinheiro, 'O *De correctione rusticorum*' (1980), 555.

The habit of invoking certain spirits to enchant herbs which were used to make some incantations should be also of pre-Roman origin. In this case, the purpose was evil. Nevertheless, when Martin himself collected the same prohibition in the *Capitula Martini*, he referred to medicinal herbs. In fact, the canon prohibited carrying out certain spells when collecting medicinal herbs. These superstitious acts were surely conducted in order to increase, or even cause, the curative potential of these herbs. The only thing the canon allowed during harvest was the Lord's Prayer designed to honour God.¹⁸

Martin also criticizes the custom of lighting candles close to stones, trees,¹⁹ fountains and near crossroads.²⁰ Some modern authors have associated this behaviour with beliefs of the Sueves, who thought that every rock, tree and fountain kept within itself a spirit of Nature.²¹ However, it does not necessarily have to be that way.²² We find again a vague and general reference. Martin only mentions a cult of natural elements existent in many animist religions, and which is mentioned by other authors like Caesarius of Arles²³ or conciliar canons,²⁴ but he does not specify anything more about it.

Something similar could be said about the custom of throwing bread to the fountains, an act which could also be interpreted as an offering to the gods (usually nymphs) who lived in them.²⁵

¹⁸ *Cap. Mart.* 74, ed. Cl.W. Barlow, 141. See St. McKenna, *Paganism and Pagan Survivals* (1938), 102-3; Luis de Pina, 'Os cânones de S. Martinho de Dume e a Medicina Luso-germânica', *Bracara Augusta* 8 (1957), 328-66, 345; A. Ambrósio de Pina, 'S. Martinho de Dume' (1958-1959), 65; M.J. Pinheiro, 'O *De correctione rusticorum*' (1980), 555; J.M. Blázquez, 'Magia y religión' (1985), 154.

¹⁹ Jesús Taboada, 'El culto a los árboles en Galicia', in *Homaxe a Florentino L. A. Cuevillas* (Vigo, 1957), 125-33; X.E. López, *Cultura, religión e superstitions* (1996), 61-2; P.C. Díaz and J.M. Torres, 'Pervivencias paganas' (2000), 240.

²⁰ To light candles on the crossroads was an ancient superstition related to the belief in the *lares* of the roads (*lares viales*), probably old native divinities who were later assimilated into the Roman religion. See Jesús Taboada, 'Nuevos testimonios del culto a los lares viales en la Gallaecia', *Gallaecia* 2 (1976), 193-200, 196-7.

²¹ A. Ambrósio de Pina, 'S. Martinho de Dume' (1958-1959), 63; M.J. Pinheiro, 'O *De correctione rusticorum*' (1980), 553; R. Jove, *Martín de Braga* (1981), 64.

²² P.C. Díaz and J.M. Torres, 'Pervivencias paganas' (2000), 240, connect the worship to stones with Iberian and Celtic religious practises.

²³ Caesarius Arel., *Serm.* 1, 12, ed. Germain Morin, CChr.SL 103 (Turnhout, 1953), 8; 13, 5, *ibid.* 68; 14, 4, *ibid.* 71-2; 53, 1, *ibid.* 233; 54, 5, *ibid.* 239.

²⁴ *Conc. Turon.* II 23, ed. Charles de Clercq, CChr.SL 148A (Turnhout, 1963), 191; *Syn. Dioc. Autissiod.* 1, ed. Ch. de Clercq, 265; *Conc. Tol.* XII 11, ed. Félix Rodríguez (Madrid, 2002), VI 182-3; *Conc. Tol.* XVI 2, ed. Francisco A. González, PL 84, 537.

²⁵ A. Ambrósio de Pina, 'S. Martinho de Dume' (1958-1959), 63-4 (who considered that the objective of this act was to turn more beneficial the spirit who lived into the fountain, or to feed a deceased's soul that was wandering there); R. Jove, *Martín de Braga* (1981), 72 (this author linked the habit mentioned by Martin to popular beliefs which existed in the Northwest of the Iberian Peninsula up to relatively recent dates, such as throwing bread to the Cabroña and Caurín fountains, both in Asturias, to disenchant the mouras, enchanted women who lived in them; this

The last set of beliefs of pagan origin mentioned by Martin in chapter 16 is related to acts of divination and of taking auguries, such as paying attention to the foot that is used to leave home, choosing the Venus' day to marry,²⁶ or taking notice of the best day to set out. The first case probably deals with the popular belief which associates the right side (in this case the foot) with something favourable and the left side with something unfavourable and harmful, so to start walking with the left foot could bring bad luck.²⁷ The second case refers to the secular belief that certain days brought good or bad luck, so they had to be avoided or searched when performing certain ceremonies or starting a journey. Although these superstitions are rooted in the oldest and deepest Roman paganism, we could hardly accept that peasants of the Suevic Kingdom carried them out with idolatrous intention. Their perpetuation in time, within a nominally Christian society, would be only a result of habit.²⁸

At this point, the question we face is the degree of reliability of Martin of Braga in his description of the survival of pagan rituals in his time. Indeed, an analysis of his sources could help us to solve the issue, as it would allow us to check how much in his words was due to the observation of the surrounding reality, and how much was due to the influence of other writers sometimes relatively distant in space and time. The problem of the sources of Martin has

author also recalls that in certain fountains the offering had a doodlebug character: if the bread floated on the water, the request formulated at the time of throwing the bread would be heard and would be fulfilled). For his part, M. Meslin, 'Persistances païennes' (1969), 521, considered that it was a 'rite d'ordalie, d'origine celtique'.

²⁶ A. Ambrósio de Pina, 'S. Martinho de Dume' (1958-1959), 64, thought that in the Suevic Kingdom the custom of marrying on the day of Venus (Friday) persisted because in the mythology of the Sueves this day was consecrated to Frigg, wife of Wotan and goddess of home and marriage. In the same sense, see M.J. Pinheiro, 'O *De correctione rusticorum*' (1980), 555. For their part, M. Meslin, 'Persistances païennes' (1969), 520, and P.C. Díaz and J.M. Torres, 'Pervivencias paganas' (2000), 241, share the view that she was actually the Roman goddess; the last authors add: 'nada tendría de anormal que fuera invocada en el día de la boda Venus, la diosa del amor, ni que se procurara contraer matrimonio ese día'.

²⁷ We can observe this in a chapter of the *Satyricon*, where the guests who were about to gain access to the triclinium of Trimalchio were compelled to enter with the right foot; Petronius, *Sat.* 30, ed. Alfred Ernout (Paris, 1982), 26. See J. Leite de Vasconcellos, *Religiões da Lusitania* (1913), 571 n. 5 (Leite de Vasconcellos rightly corrected C.P. Caspari, *Martin von Bracara's Schrift* [1883], 31 n. 6, who, on the basis of Burchard of Worms – beginning of the eleventh century – [Burchardus Worm., *Decr.* XIX, 5, PL 140, 974], had interpreted that it was a magical belief addressed to deprive certain people of health or even life by observing their footsteps, *pedem obseruare*); St. McKenna, *Paganism and Pagan Survivals* (1938), 100-1; M.J. Pinheiro, 'O *De correctione rusticorum*' (1980), 554-5; R. Jove, *Martín de Braga* (1981), 71-2; P.C. Díaz and J.M. Torres, 'Pervivencias paganas' (2000), 242.

²⁸ Some of these superstitious beliefs have persisted until today. In this way, in many cultures Friday 13 is supposed to be a day of bad luck. On the other hand, in Greece, Spain and other Spanish-speaking countries, the unlucky day corresponds to Tuesday 13. In fact, a Spanish proverb – 'en martes, ni te cases ni te embarques' – still directly alludes to the cases mentioned by Martin: to marry and to set out a journey.

not been satisfactorily resolved yet. Some authors, like Claude W. Barlow, consider that Martin took his arguments from the writings of Caesarius of Arles.²⁹ Instead, Alberto Ferreiro believes that research has not yet been able to prove any specific borrowing.³⁰ Anyway, the similarities between them are obvious (such as the condemnation of worship elements of nature, or the criticism of the celebration of the Kalends of January), but that must not lead us to regard Martin as a mere emulator of the bishop of Arles.³¹ As Yitzhak Hen revealed, when Polemius asked Martin how to punish the wrong behaviour of his parishioners, the bishop of Braga proceeded to make an explanation of Christian dogma, after which he explained the most relevant pagan practices condemned by the Church (and largely included in chapter 16 of his *De correctione rusticorum*). Martin perhaps considered these practices as the most relevant ones, so Polemius could choose among them the examples he wanted to preach to his congregation.³² Thus, the list of superstitions collected by Martin would be the fruit of his own fears and concerns, resulting from his deep knowledge of Patristic and canonical literature on topics of paganism, as well as from his personal experience on the land of the Sueves.

²⁹ Cl.W. Barlow, *Martini Episcopi Bracarenensis* (1950), 164, although he admits that 'direct parallels are less easy to establish'. See also J.C. Martín, 'La biblioteca cristiana' (2013), 266. A basic difference in attitude between Caesarius of Arles and Martin of Braga resides in that the former did not hesitate to use coercive measures (even physically ones) in order to correct those individuals who persisted in idolatrous practices, while Martin considered that maintenance of idolatry was due to the ignorance of the people, not malice, so to put an end to paganism it was not necessary to punish but to educate by reading the Scriptures. About this, see A. Ferreiro, 'St. Martin of Braga's Policy' (1983), 381-90; *id.*, 'Early Medieval Missionary Tactics' (1988), 233 (where this author judges that Martin's 'pacifism' has to be qualified due to the paucity of evidence); Edward K. Follis, *St. Martin of Braga: Sources for his Tolerance toward the Rustici in Sixth Century Galicia* (Vancouver, 1992), 79-91; P.C. Díaz, *El reino suevo* (2011), 234-5.

³⁰ A. Ferreiro, 'Early Medieval Missionary Tactics' (1988), 233. We should not dismiss that both Caesarius and Martin took their arguments from some common unknown source, which has not reached us.

³¹ The repetition of arguments to the extent that they became a literary cliché appears in others writers in the sixth and seventh centuries, such as Eligius of Noyon (Audoenus, *Vit. Elig. episc. Nouiom.* II 16, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH srm 4 [Hannover and Leipzig, 1902], 705-8), the author of the *Indiculus superstitionum* (*Indic. superst. et pag.*, ed. Alfred Boretius, MGH leg. 2, 1 [Hannover, 1883], 223), Pirminius and his *Scarapso* (Pirminius, *Scar.* 22, ed. Eckhard Hauswald, MGH qgm 25 [Hannover, 2010], 74-82), and the anonymous author of the *Homilia de sacrilegiis* (*Hom. de sacril., passim*, ed. Carl P. Caspari [Christiania, 1886], 5-16), who repeated (sometimes almost literally) a stereotyped catalogue largely created by Martin of Braga. This prevents us from knowing with absolute certainty what part of the condemned superstitions was still alive in the respective territories of these preachers. See J. Madoz, 'Una nueva reseñación' (1945), 337; Cl.W. Barlow, *Martini Episcopi Bracarenensis* (1950), 165-8; M.J. Pinheiro, 'O *De correctione rusticorum*' (1980), 525-7; Y. Hen, 'Martin of Braga's' (2001), 37-46.

³² Yitzhak Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul, A.D. 481-751*, Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions 1 (Leiden, New York and Köln, 1995), 172; *id.*, 'Martin of Braga's' (2001), 36.

So, to what extent are Martin's words true? Some authors argue that almost all superstitions mentioned by the bishop of Braga in his work surely existed in the Galicia of his time, and that consequently *De correctione rusticorum* could be seen as a reflection of pagan survivals among peasants of the Northwest of the Iberian Peninsula.³³ By contrast, other authors, such as Yitzhak Hen, believe that we should not interpret the words of Martin literally. Indeed, in his condemnations of paganism, the bishop of Braga largely reproduced the same standard and very general criticisms already made by Caesarius of Arles years earlier. According to Hen, the repetition of these condemnations would not necessarily indicate the continued existence of these superstitious practices. Actually, it could be simply due to a combination of two factors: firstly, the perpetuation of a speech against paganism would have developed into a literary cliché; and secondly, the influence of an existing reality, although it would rather correspond to the reality which ecclesiastical authorities had in mind, and, therefore, would be a reflection of their fears and concerns about a potential threat of paganism.³⁴

Surely, the most prudent position lies at a midpoint. Indeed, we should not blindly believe everything exposed by Martin, since in certain cases, and due to literary loans, he attributed to farmers of the Suevic Kingdom some vague, and even obsolete, pagan practices, in addition to ascribe to Greco-Roman paganism all mentioned customs, regardless of their true origin.³⁵ However, we should not completely reject his words on the basis that these would only be a reflection of his fears, so that none of the rituals reported at *De correctione rusticorum* existed in Galicia in his time. Actually, studies on the folklore in the Northwest of the Iberian Peninsula have shown the continuity of many

³³ Among the authors which accepted the literalness of the words of Martin we have to note Stephen McKenna, Rosario Jove, and Mario Naldini, mentioned in note 1.

³⁴ Y. Hen, *Culture and Religion* (1995), 171-2. For this author, 'paganism remained a "threat" in the eyes of the Christian authorities, and its condemnations in the sources reflect it. But potential threats are a very different matter from actuality and should not be confused with it'. Another of the major problems when considering the reliability of the words of Martin of Braga is that this author is the only important source for the knowledge of pagan survivals in the Suevic Kingdom. Another significant source may correspond to *Capitula Martini*, but also here the bishop of Braga was the one who compiled the canons of the Eastern councils which he considered the most essential ones, and furthermore he retouched them to adapt them to the casuistry of his space and his time. Most of the time, the documented superstitions are identical in both sources. Moreover, we do not document anything similar in other contemporary sources from the Northwest of the Iberian Peninsula, which generates a certain shadow of doubt about the veracity of some of the denounced practices.

³⁵ M. Meslin, 'Persistances païennes' (1969), 523, considered that the testimony of Martin, rather than being based on close observation, revealed a more literary knowledge of the pagan practices which he was denouncing. For Meslin, the paganism mentioned in the *De correctione rusticorum* is a 'paganisme rural, a-théologique, fondé sur l'adoration de sacralités naturelles'.

traditional customs similar to those censored by Martin, which therefore were surely rooted in Late Antiquity.³⁶

Finally, despite the words of Martin, we should not think that people were really aware of carrying out idolatrous acts. Therefore, for people it might only be traditions transmitted for centuries and completely devoid of any kind of pagan content.³⁷ Martin's parishioners might sincerely be devout Christians.³⁸ However, in their ignorance they carried out acts which were rooted in the most ancient paganism (like offerings to stones, trees and fountains), and which would become habits that became part of the acquired cultural heritage. Thus, certain superstitious practices only survived as the result of habit, completely decoupled from their original religious meaning. People perpetuated them by ignorance or, in the case of certain festivities, for fun, but not as part of an idolatrous ritual (as it also happens in our day, and that does not mean that we are pagans).

For Martin and other contemporary ecclesiastical authorities this behaviour was foreign to the Christian ideals and had no reason to be. Churchmen did not bother to understand the background of the set of beliefs of their time. On the contrary, churchmen who attacked superstitious and idolatrous practices did not distinguish pre-Roman paganism (of local character) and German paganism (imported) from Roman paganism. Regardless of the sort of idolatry, they gave Latin names to all deities, as the result of an education imbued with classicism. In essence, they did not care about their origin, as they felt that the devil and his angels were behind all of them.

³⁶ This is the cautious stance of José Leite de Vasconcellos, who in principle recognised that we should not take the text of Martin of Braga literally, as, like other fathers of the Church, he attributed to the Greco-Roman paganism everything which was not Christian, regardless of its indigenous or Germanic origin. However, Leite de Vasconcellos admits that 'todavía, algumas cousas ahí temos realmente galegas, visto que (...) ellas andam hoje na tradição popular, e não podem pois deixar de provir directamente da idade-média'; J. Leite de Vasconcellos, *Religiões da Lusitania* (1913), 573. See also Eugénio de Andrea da Cunha e Freitas, 'Costumes e tradições do século VI e da actualidade', *Bracara Augusta* 8 (1957), 295-313; Luís Chaves, 'Costumes e tradições vigentes no século VI e na actualidade. S. Martinho de Dume: *De correctione rusticorum*', *Bracara Augusta* 8 (1957), 243-77; Maria J. Violante, 'St. Martin of Braga' (1999), 93-4.

³⁷ In this sense, see P.C. Díaz and J.M. Torres, 'Pervivencias paganas' (2000), 242.

³⁸ About the slow and late process of Christianization in *Gallaecia*, see Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz, 'La cristianización en Galicia', in *La romanización de Galicia*, Cuadernos del seminario de estudios cerámicos de Sargadelos, 16, 2nd ed. (La Coruña, 1992), 105-20.

**‘*Sufficit septem diebus*’:
Seven Days Mourning the Dead in the *Letters* of
St. Braulio of Zaragoza***

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ABSTRACT

This brief study explores why Saint Braulio of Zaragoza admonished his friends Hojo and Eutrocia that seven days was sufficient time – ‘*sufficit septem diebus*’ – to mourn the death of their loved one, Hugnan also friend of Braulio. So this was a personal matter for Braulio. It also explores the biblical foundation to this ‘seven days’ as well as some relevant sources from antiquity and the Church Fathers. The two principal biblical guiding texts for the Church Fathers were *John* 11:35 and *1Thess.* 4:13-4. This background helps to determine to what extent Braulio was either an innovator or a conformist in comparison to the teachings of other Church Fathers. The letters that Braulio wrote to his friends reveal him to have been a compassionate and understanding pastor in dealing with this very delicate issue. The Bishop of Zaragoza wrote these words in a letter that is part of a collection that is unique from Visigothic Hispania. While conciliar sources are more abundant for this period in Hispania, the same cannot be said of letters and sermons that are scarce in comparison to contemporary Gallia. The letters open up a rare personal glimpse into the mind and culture of the seventh century church on mourning the dead that Braulio had to confront several times. There is yet another reason why these letters are so valuable; from no other writer of the entire Late Antique-Visigothic period do we have a comparable collection. Dom Anselmo Lambert long ago recognized the value of Braulio’s letters, ‘*L’Epistolarium de saint Braulio est la seule source, à peu près, qui nous fasse pénétrer dans l’intimité de l’église wisigothique, durant la première moitié du VII^e siècle*’.¹ These letters were not intended to be decrees to clergy under him containing directions on how to give pastoral guidance to Christians in mourning. They reflect heartfelt words of comfort and catechesis from Braulio to people close to him. In the midst of other concerns, he sought to explain

* I want to thank the organizers of the conference for their kind invitation to attend. I also thank the Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca for generous use of their library to research this topic. Lastly, I extend my gratitude to the *Centro Fray Luis de León*, Seattle-Salamanca, for the financial support to carry out the research in Salamanca and attend the Oxford congress.

¹ The quote is in Charles H. Lynch and Pascual Galindo, *San Braulio, Obispo de Zaragoza (631-651) Su Vida y sus Obras* (Madrid, 1950), XI; the quote was originally published in Anselmo Lambert, ‘La famille de Saint Braulio et l’expansion de la règle de Jean de Biclar’, *Revista Zurita* 1 (1933), 79-94, 80, = *Universidad* 10 (1933), 65-80.

why the proper amount of time for a Christian to mourn the dead was seven days.² The letters in question are nine that were written to family and friends: his sister Basilla, a high born woman Apicella, Abbess Pomponia, Count Ataulfus, the nobles Gundeswindia and Givarius, two letters to Hojo and Eutracia, a Goth noble Wistremir, and Nebridius (possibly a noble).³

The biblical background to Braulio's advice rested on the well-established belief that the dead were as Lazarus not dead but asleep and that Jesus had wept for him (*John* 11:35). Another crucial text is *1Thess.* 4:13-4 where Paul taught that Christians should not weep for their dead as those who have no hope. In summary, Braulio in his advice in all of the letters emphasized the following: death is a portal to a better life, separation is only temporary, death strikes everyone, mourning is normal, excessive display of mourning of anyone was to be avoided – especially by men – rejoice in the temporal life shared together, Christ has conquered death, death is not to be feared, and mourning beyond seven days is unacceptable.

This last teaching to mourn the dead for only seven days *septem diebus* is the subject of this short communication. It raises several questions regarding the length of time Christians were allowed to mourn the dead.⁴ One, was the seven days the norm across Christendom? Second, why did Braulio settle upon seven days and not another period of time? Lastly, what were the consequences and implications about one's faith, if any, if a Christian did not adhere to the seven days?

In *Letter* 19 (635-638) Braulio wrote to his close friends, the women Hojo and Eutrocia, on the occasion of the death of Hugnan. He was the son of Hojo

² Brief discussion on the letters is in C.H. Lynch and P. Galindo, *San Braulio, Obispo de Zaragoza (631-651)* (1950), 97-100; Rodrigo dos Santos Rainha, *A Educação no Reino Visigodo: As relações de poder e o epistolario do bispo Bráulio de Saragoça (631-651)* (Rio de Janeiro, 2007), 77-9.

³ I am using Luis Riesco Terrero, *Epistolario de San Braulio: Introducción, edición crítica y traducción*, Anales de la Universidad Hispalense: Serie: Filosofía y Letras 31 (Sevilla, 1975), 94-7, 100-6, 126-31, and 136-7 = Riesco Terrero, *Epistolario de San Braulio*. There is an earlier edition by José Madoz based upon a manuscript in León, *Epistolario de San Braulio de Zaragoza: Edición crítica según el códice 22 del Archivo Capitular de León*, Biblioteca de antiguos escritores cristianos españoles I (Madrid, 1941). These editions are difficult to consult first-hand. More accessible, although somewhat deficient, is the edition in PL 80, 649-700. The only translation to date into English is the excellent one by Claude W. Barlow, *Iberian Fathers, volume 2: Braulio of Saragossa/Fructuosus of Braga*, The Fathers of the Church 63 (Washington, 1969) = Barlow, *Iberian Fathers*. A new translation without the Latin text that has recently appeared with an informative introduction that I did not have access to at the writing of this article is by Ruth Miguel Franco, *Braulio de Zaragoza, Epístolas*, Akal./ Clásicos Latinos Medievales y Renacentistas 30 (Madrid, 2015). In the citations of the ACCS in the notes, the second reference preceded by = are from the ACCS to identify other editions.

⁴ This short article is only a portion of an extensive study on the topic that I have carried out elsewhere.

and the husband of Eutrocia. Another person named Hermenfred is mentioned but his relation to the others is not made clear.⁵ Braulio, nevertheless, reminded them that death is the bitter consequence of the Fall and that all people are under sentence of death. In other words, everyone experiences the loss of loved ones and in time their own death.⁶ Their situation is hardly exceptional and should be kept in its proper perspective. These inevitable realities aside, they would do better to place their hope in Christ who announced that the dead were only sleeping, recalling Lazarus (*Lazarus amicus noster dormit*). Paul, moreover, used the same expression when he enjoined believers not to weep for those who sleep; strictly speaking Hugnan was not dead, bodily death is not final for believers.⁷ Hojo and Eutrocia could confidently trust that they would see Hugnan again; they have lost him only in this life. Most importantly, just as *Hosea* cried out, 'O death, I will be your bite' (13:14), Paul taunted death with, 'O death, where is your victory, O death, where is your sting'? (1*Cor.* 15:55).⁸ Braulio restricted Hojo and Eutrocia to seven days of mourning that as Christian women of wisdom they should embrace; any mourning beyond the seventh day would be excessive. While on the surface this may seem unreasonably harsh, if not insensitive, Braulio had deeper concerns in mind as will become evident.⁹

⁵ We do not know if Hermenfred was a family relation or simply a friend, Barlow, *Iberian Fathers*, 47-9, 47 n. 1, and Riesco Terrero, *Epistolario de San Braulio*, 102-5. C.H. Lynch and P. Galindo, *San Braulio, Obispo de Zaragoza* (1950), 97.

⁶ Barlow, *Iberian Fathers*, 47: *Sed tamen quia, peccante homine, hec lex mundo data est et ista sententia Dei est ut, quodquod hominum natiuitas in lucem producit, mors amara succidat, necesse est ut tam mihi quam uobis hoc ad solacium occurrat, scilicet quia in funere Hugnanis nostri nec primi ista nec nouissimi sustinemus*, Riesco Terrero, *Epistolario de San Braulio*, 102.

⁷ Barlow, *Iberian Fathers*, 47: *Ac per hoc, si fides nostra hoc habet, quia omnes credentes in Cristo secundum uocem euangelicam non morientur in eternum, fidi simus quia nec ille mortuus est nec nos moriemur*, Riesco Terrero, *Epistolario de San Braulio*, 102.

⁸ Barlow points out that this section has several references to Jerome, *Iberian Fathers*, 48 n. 11. They are *Letter* 60, 2, I: 530; *Letter* 60, 13, I: 563; *Letter* 75, 1, II: 29-30, in *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, pars I et II, *Epistulae* I-LXX, LXXI-CXX. I. Hilberg (ed.), CSEL 54-5 (Vindobonae, 1996), II. See also on *Letter* 75, Peter J. Gorday (ed.), *Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament IX (Downers Grove, Illinois, 2000), 84-8 = *Nicene Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2, 6: 155.

⁹ Barlow, *Iberian Fathers*, 48: *Unde queso uos ut et uosmetipsas ut cristiane, ut sapientes, ut fortes consolemini et illas orfanas uestras lamentis interire non patiamini. Nam sapienti luctus sufficit septem diebus ad instar uidelicet presentis mundi, qui in hoc numero cotidie currit*, Riesco Terrero, *Epistolario de San Braulio*, 104. For a discussion on the variety of days allowed for mourning by non-Christians and Christians and related customs see, Éric Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, trans. Elizabeth T. Rawlings and Jeanine Routier-Pucci, Cornell Studies in Classical Philology 59 (Ithaca and London, 2009), 135-7. For the Greek tradition, Margaret Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition*, revised by Dimitrios Yatromanolakis and Panagiotis Roilos, 2nd ed. (Lanham, 2002), 32. Also, the insightful essays in Achille M. Triacca and A. Pistola (eds), *La Maladie et la Mort du Chrétien dans la Liturgie. Conférences Saint-Serge*

The limitation of seven days as the preferred time for a Christian to mourn was also recommended by some Church Fathers. There is, however, a rich pre-Christian background from which it developed and which we need to consider.¹⁰ For an important source from antiquity we are indebted to the study by Cyrille Vogel who brought to our attention some rare anonymous Greek texts that shed considerable light on the topic. Three were edited by Karl Krumbacher and translated into French by Vogel. The days consecrated for Christians to celebrate the deceased, he instructs us, correspond exactly to those of the ancient world and Judaism. Equally fascinating, some of the texts associated the days of mourning to the stages of conception of the human embryo through the final decomposition of the body: 'Les jours de commémoration funéraire y sont mis en relation aussi bien avec la formation de l'embryon humain qu'avec la décomposition du cadaver'.¹¹

The next step was to apply this paradigm of conception of life up through the decomposition of the body at death to the Christian journey of the soul to Paradise. The second text that Vogel reproduced reflects the Christianization of this late antique belief and is entitled, 'De la conception de l'homme, de sa constitution, sa naissance, ainsi que de sa mort et de son apparition devant le trône de Dieu'. In brief, this is the description of the early stages of the life cycle numbered in days: the male deposits the sperm in the woman and on the third day the blood of the woman and the sperm coalesce into a mass of flesh and remains as such until the ninth day. On that ninth day it becomes an embryo. On the fortieth day it has developed into a fetus at which time it is infused with a soul. The text then describes the process of what happens to the body at the time of death and after. On the third day, the internal organs begin to decompose, on the ninth the external body is in an advanced stage of corruption and decomposition, and by the fortieth the body is fully decomposed and corrupted. The last application of these stages is the most relevant for the purpose of this study. In both cycles, the development is ordered by 3, 9, and 40 days. The anonymous author proceeded to expound the eschatological Christian interpretation of the three day stages. The soul sleeps in the grave three days, at the end of the last day angels carry it to high places. On the ninth

XXI^e semaine d'études liturgiques, Paris, 1^{er}-4^e juillet, 1974, Bibliotheca 'Ephemerides Liturgicae' Subsidia 1 (Roma, 1975).

¹⁰ Bernard Botte, 'Les plus anciennes formules de prière pour les morts', in *La Maladie et la Mort du Chrétien dans la Liturgie* (1975), 87-8 and C. Vogel, 'L'environnement culturel du défunt durant la période paléochrétienne', in *La Maladie et la Mort du Chrétien dans la Liturgie* (1975), 381-413, 391, 395-400.

¹¹ We find this in text one, entitled 'De l'origine de l'homme et de la raison d'être de la commémoration du 3, 9, et 40 jour', published in *Texte vulgate de l'explication physiologique des commémorations funéraires, d'après 18 manuscrits*, ed. Karl Krumbacher, 345-7, reproduced in and translated by C. Vogel, 'L'environnement culturel du défunt durant la période paléochrétienne' (1975), 396-7.

day the soul is separated from the ‘spirits of the air’ and angels. There is no clarification just exactly what or who are the spirits of the air. On the fortieth day, the soul is taken to the divine throne of God to face its particular judgement and then wait for the general resurrection at the Last Judgement.¹²

Among the Church Fathers: Augustine, Ambrose, and John Chrysostom are the most relevant. Augustine argued from *Gen.* 50:10 – ‘When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they lamented there with a very great and sorrowful lamentation; and he made a mourning for his father seven days’ – since Joseph mourned his father for seven days and in view that no saint from scripture was ever mourned for nine days, seven is the desirable length of time to mourn. Augustine’s remark about the nine days was in reference to the Roman pagan practice that was called the *novendial*. It was clear to Augustine that Christians should not mourn for nine days as was the custom of pagan Romans (*Quaestiones in Heptateuchum* 1, 172).¹³ Ambrose in passing related how he visited the tomb of his brother on the seventh day, the day of Sabbath that for him was symbolic of eternal rest (*De excessu fratris* 2, 2). The lesson is clear; those in the state of mourning on the seventh day were to ‘rest’ from it and move on with their lives. Ambrose endorsed the seven days by his example; he did not expound on it further in this text.¹⁴ John Chrysostom in *Homilies on Genesis* 67, 17 expressed a stern and intractable position on this question. He censured Joseph’s seven days of mourning which he did not see as salutary for Christians to imitate. He reasoned that Joseph acted this way because of ignorance, this was before ‘the gates of the underworld were still not broken or the bonds of death loosed. Nor was death yet called sleep. Hence,

¹² The manuscript was originally published in *Texte contenant une explication physiologique et eschatologique d’après le Parisinus graec. 1140 A*, f.82 r-v, ed. K. Krumbacher, 348-50, reproduced in and translated by C. Vogel, ‘L’environnement culturel du défunt durant la période paléochrétienne’ (1975), 397-400.

¹³ *Et fecit luctum patri suo septem diebus. Nescio utrum inueniatur alicui sanctorum in scripturis celebratum esse luctum nouem dies, quod apud Latinos nouendial appellant. Vnde mihi uidentur ab hac consuetudine prohibendi, si qui christianorum istum in mortuis suis numerum seruant, qui magis est in gentilium consuetudine. Septimus uero dies auctoritatem in scripturis habet. Vnde alio loco scriptum est: luctus mortui septem dierum, fatui autem omnes dies uitae eius. Septenarius autem numerus propter sabbati sacramentum praecipue quietis indicium est: unde merito mortuis tamquam requiescentibus exhibetur. Quem tamen numerum in luctu Iacobi decuplauerunt Aegyptii, qui eum septuaginta diebus luxerunt, Quaestionum in Heptateuchum, Libri VII, ed. Iohannes Fraipont, CChr.SL 33 (Turnhout, 1958), 67-8. É. Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead* (2009), 136.*

¹⁴ *Ergo quia dudum dies mortis inter lacrymabiles aspectus debuit animum declinare fraternum, quia totum tenebat; nunc quoniam die septimo ad sepulcrum redimus, quae dies symbolum futurae quietis est, De excessu fratris sui Satyri* 2, 2, PL 16, 1315. Consult É. Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead* (2009), 136. Also, St. Gregory of Nazianzen and St. Ambrose, *Funeral Orations*, ed. Leo P. McCauley, *The Fathers of the Church* 22 (Washington, D.C., 2004), 197-8, and Anthony C. Thiselton, *1 & 2 Thessalonians Through the Centuries*, Blackwell Biblical Commentaries (Chichester, 2011), 124.

because they feared death, they acted this way; today on the contrary, thanks to the grace of God, since death has been turned into slumber and life's end into repose, we rejoice and exult at death like people moving from one life to another'.¹⁵ Even though Chrysostom did not accept even seven days as acceptable for Christians to mourn; it appears, however, that his stern narrow view was an exception among the bishops. He even rejected the custom of bringing food, clothing, and lit candles to the tomb on the third, ninth, and fortieth days after death on the basis that the dead have no need of such things. Chrysostom recommended that these offerings were best used if given to the poor and the Church.¹⁶ It is obvious that Braulio based his recommendation of seven days, as Ambrose did, on the symbolic meaning of the seventh day in *Genesis*. Bernard Botte confirms for us that the seventh day of mourning is inspired by the creation account in *Genesis* where God rested on the seventh day. The repose of the soul in death which is described as being asleep mirrors, as it were, the day when God rested: 'Le repos est sans doute l'image plus naturelle, puisque la mort apparaît comme un sommeil. Pour annoncer aux disciples la mort de Lazare ... La Genèse nous parle de repos de Dieu: il créa le monde en six jours, et le septième "il se reposa de toute l'œuvre qu'il avait faite (Gn 2,2)'''.¹⁷ Braulio had this meaning of the seventh day in mind in his advice to Hojo and Eutrocia.

Among Christians there developed as much diversity as there had been with the Greeks. This was less so among the pagan Romans on the question of the day or number of days to mourn. The Greeks, for example, mourned their dead on the third, ninth, and thirtieth days; the Romans, on the other hand, observed only the ninth day, the *novemdial* as stated earlier. Some Christians, moreover, added the thirtieth or fortieth days. Ambrose approved these days because Jacob was mourned for forty days and Moses thirty, respectively.¹⁸ Over time the eastern churches settled on the ninth day; the western churches maintained their opposition to it as being an undesirable custom of pagan Rome and thus promoted the seventh day and more.¹⁹ Rebillard's observation is instructive, 'it

¹⁵ This quote is from Mark Sheridan (ed.), *Genesis 12-50, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament II* (Downers Grove, Illinois, 2002), 350 = St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis, 46-67*, ed. Robert C. Hill, *The Fathers of the Church 87* (Washington, 2006), 265-78, 274-5.

¹⁶ M. Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (2002), 32.

¹⁷ B. Botte, 'Les plus anciennes formules de prière pour les morts', in *La Maladie et la Mort du Chrétien dans la Liturgie* (1975), 87-8.

¹⁸ É. Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead* (2009), 136.

¹⁹ É. Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead* (2009), 136. Additional background is in M. Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (2002), 214-5. C. Vogel, informs us that the oriental churches observed the third, ninth, and fortieth day, 'L'environnement culturel du défunt durant la période paléochrétienne' (1975), 399-400. He clarifies the substitution in the West of the ninth for the seventh day, 'En Occident, au neuvième jour célébré pour les commémoraisons, et malgré le *novemdiale* funéraire de la Rome antique, fut systématiquement opposé le septième jour avec une justification scripturaire *a posteriori*', *ibid.* 400.

is important to mention here the great variety of customs followed and to point out that these practices were part of very longstanding local traditions to which the Church accommodated itself with relative good grace'.²⁰ By the fifth to seventh centuries the diversity of custom was the norm in the western church. The deposition of the body of a Christian that included a funerary banquet and/or the Eucharist was reenacted at the gravesite on the third, seventh/or ninth, thirtieth/or fortieth day and in a few cases a possible fiftieth day of visitation. C. Vogel explains: 'La situation dans les Eglises d'Occident est la suivante: Eglises romaine, 'gallicane' et anglo-saxonne: 3^e, 7^e et 30^e jour. – Eglise milanaise: 7^e, ...? 40^e jour. – Eglise wisigothique: ...? ...?, 50^e jour. – Eglise d'Afrique: 3^e, 7^e ...? Jour'.²¹ For the Visigothic era in Hispania, Vogel obviously missed Braulio's reference to the seventh day that must add to his inventory. At the local level it was left at the discretion of individual bishops to decide what they would recommend to their priests to teach or directly to individuals as did Braulio. In our examples, Braulio intervened directly because this involved people close to him. Socially and culturally I believe that the Church was not just accommodating itself to local customs; it was adapting the ancient practice to conform to a new worldview that viewed death and the afterlife in a different way, as the pagan paradigm faded. On this point, I concur with Vogel's insight: 'Dans l'ensemble, les us et coutumes funéraires chrétiens sont les mêmes que les usages funéraires païens, y compris le banquet funéraire, élimination faite des éléments mythologiques et érotiques'.²²

Notwithstanding the scriptural admonition from Paul in *1Thess.* 4:13-4 that some interpreted to dissuade any mourning, Braulio dissented that it was normal to be grief stricken at the remembrance of Hugnan. After all, Jesus wept over Lazarus and it was not the only time that he shed tears.²³ It is relevant for us here to note that Braulio tempered in *Letter 15* what appeared to be harsh words from Paul by reminding his sister that the apostle was joyful that Epaphras was restored to him from death. Braulio added that he was sure that Paul wept at his death.²⁴ As for Hugnan, Braulio lamented that one had lost a son, the other a husband, and he and others a good friend. He cited the lamentation of *Job*: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the

²⁰ É. Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead* (2009), 137.

²¹ C. Vogel, 'L'environnement culturel du défunt durant la période paléochrétienne' (1975), 400 n. 46.

²² *Ibid.* 412.

²³ Jesus wept in *Luke* 19:41: 'And when he drew near and saw the city [Jerusalem] he wept over it'. In *Heb.* 5:7 the tears of Jesus are remembered, some exegetes believe it refers to the agony in Gethsemane.

²⁴ Barlow, *Iberian Fathers*, 41: *Nam ipse uas electionis gaudet quod Epaphras sibi fuerit restitutus de uicini[a] mortis*, Riesco Terrero, *Epistolario de San Braulio*, 94. *Phil.* 2:25-8, also mentioned in *Col.* 1:7.

name of the Lord (1:21).²⁵ Braulio encouraged Hojo and Eutrocia to have complete trust in God's providence and the promise of eternal life for Hugnan and themselves.

Letter 20, written soon after *Letter 19*, was the second addressed to Hojo and Eutrocia in response to some unsettling news that Braulio received about them.²⁶ Braulio was informed by an unnamed source that both had not received any consolation after mourning for seven days. Braulio was concerned that they had not set aside their grief and had adopted an attitude of incredulity about the afterlife. Instead, he informed them that their continued grieving was an impiety against God; that is, expressing doubts about the promises of God about death and resurrection. Worse still, extended mourning was contrary to the will of the Creator. Did they really believe or not that they would soon hasten to Hugnan who was in heaven. Furthermore, ceaseless grieving is pointless, it can never bring Hugnan back again to this life. They were to view him only as temporarily absent from their presence. A more salutary attitude approach would be to keep vigil until the day of the resurrection.²⁷ Braulio warned them that if they did not lay aside their grief and accept God's consolation, they ran the risk of falling into despair. Even more ominous, it could arouse the anger of God against them. In the larger scheme of Providence Hugnan finished the work that God ordained for him in this life. Braulio quoted two passages to emphasize the sovereignty of God: 'For who shall say to him: "What have you done?" or who can oppose His decree?' (*Wisd. 12:12*), and *Isaiah*, 'Does the clay say to him who fashions it, What are you making?' (45:9). Like the molder, God has the power to mold or to break his vessels. This image was taught by Paul in *Rom. 9:21*: 'Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for beauty and another for menial use?' Braulio encouraged Hojo and Eutrocia to recover their God-given Reason, their ongoing affliction accomplishes nothing for God or Hugnan. A second time he cautioned Hojo and Eutrocia that God could become angry at them and curiously even with Hugnan.²⁸ Braulio did not elaborate why Hugnan would have any culpability for the attitude of Hojo and Eutrocia. In closing, Braulio suggested they pray to God for Hugnan's repose; desist from mourning and most important pay

²⁵ Barlow, *Iberian Fathers*, 49: *Nobi quippe quod uos in illo dignitatis amisse recordatio cruciet: altera enim prolem, altera amisit coniugem. Sed et nos ipsi amicum*, Riesco Terrero, *Epistolario de San Braulio*, 104.

²⁶ Barlow, *Iberian Fathers*, 50 and Riesco Terrero, *Epistolario de San Braulio*, 106-7. It was written soon after *Letter 19*; C.H. Lynch and P. Galindo, *San Braulio, Obispo de Zaragoza (631-651)* (1950), 97.

²⁷ Barlow, *Iberian Fathers*, 50: *Contra uoluntatem creatoris agitis si ultra modum lugetis. Nos enim ad Hugnanem properauimus; porro ille non reuertetur ad nos et ideo sustinendus a nobis est quasi absens, non quasi motuus omittendus, ut illum expectare non amisisse uideamur*, Riesco Terrero, *Epistolario de San Braulio*, 106.

²⁸ Barlow, *Iberian Fathers*, 50: *Et caueat ne forte, dum contra Dei uoluntatem agentibus deuita [ira] irascitur, etiam illi indignetur*, Riesco Terrero, *Epistolario de San Braulio*, 106.

attention to those around them also mourning for Hugnan. They should celebrate that Hugnan had found his eternal rest in heaven.²⁹

These moving personal letters from the pen of Braulio offer us an unusual window into pastoral care in Visigothic Hispania. The two letters that we have analyzed were not written in formulaic form, nor does Braulio appear aloof from Hojo and Eutrocia. He did not resort to pedantic speeches or complex theological explanations. Hojo and Eutrocia were friends that were dear to his heart to whom he extended comfort and hope in the midst of their deep mourning. Braulio, moreover, let them know that he too mourned Hugnan's death. Braulio did not hold back that his grief almost left him at a loss of words. He empathized with them in the deepest manner so that his consoling words were as much for himself as it was for them. The hope of the resurrection in *1Thess.* 4:13-4 and Paul's tears for Epaphras in *Phil.* 2:25-8 were the biblical foundation that he rested upon and promoted to overcome grief. Braulio, an already renowned bishop, emerged as a tenderhearted pastor for those under his care who suffered with his flock in their most vulnerable moments.

²⁹ Barlow, *Iberian Fathers*, 51: *Quapropter obsecro per Dominum ut consoletis uobis et potius pro his qui remanserunt, quam pro eo cui subuenire non potestis, curam portetis*, Riesco Terrero, *Epistolario de San Braulio*, 106.

Bede's Interpretative Practice in his Homilies on the Gospels

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ABSTRACT

In the *Homiliae euangelii*, Bede's preaching conveys that he wishes the gospel reading to be appropriately understood as well as received to good effect. He described the fourfold method of scriptural interpretation in his treatise *De schematibus et tropis*, and while scholars contend that Bede did not practise this schema systematically, an analysis of his preaching illustrates that all four senses of Scripture are enfolded within the homiletic format. In this article, Bede's exposition of the gospel is explored in extracts from two of his homilies. His explanation of the gospel reading is examined in relation to the interplay of different senses of Scripture, doctrinal and Christological themes, and the varied understanding of events from sacred history, particularly their interpretation in the light of Christ, the Church and the sacraments. Henri de Lubac's work on the four senses of Scripture in patristic and medieval exegesis is then briefly discussed. Aspects of de Lubac's reflections on the New Testament and the Mystery of Christ are a useful resource in the investigation of Bede's exegetical outlook and method. The paper concludes with observations on Bede's Christology and his interpretative practice.

Introduction

In the autobiographical addendum to his most famous work, the *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede described the pre-eminent occupation of his monastic life as applying himself entirely to the study of the Scriptures. He followed with his well-known declaration: 'It has always been my delight to learn or to teach or to write' (*semper aut discere aut docere aut scribere dulce habui*).¹ This description of his own vocation is borne out in his *Homiliae euangelii* where his preaching communicates the objective of having the gospel reading both appropriately understood and received to good effect.² As he observed in one sermon:

... when things sent in advance in the former figurative way are at last spiritually clarified by a new explanation, such things have a tendency to be implanted in the

¹ Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* 5.24, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and Roger A.B. Mynors, *Bede: Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1969, repr. with corr. 1991), 566-7.

² Bede, *Homiliae euangelii*, ed. David Hurst, CChr.SL 122 (Turnhout, 1955). The English translations are from Lawrence T. Martin and David Hurst, *Bede the Venerable: Homilies on the Gospels*, 2 vols., Cistercian Studies Series 110-1 (Kalamazoo, 1991).

hearts of hearers much more firmly, and sometimes more sweetly (*dulcius*), than things which we are admonished to believe or to do without any figurative examples, but only by simple telling.³

It is a view on Christian instruction that corresponds with that of Augustine, an important Father for Bede. In book four of *De doctrina christiana*⁴ Augustine advised: 'For the sweeter we try to make such things, the easier it is to make their wholesomeness serviceable'.⁵ In particular, Bede's observation also voices an idea of allegory that is reflected in Augustine's letter to Januarius, a work known to Bede, where Augustine submitted: '... it is true that any doctrine suggested under allegorical form affects and pleases us more, and is more esteemed, than one set forth explicitly in plain words'.⁶

Bede discussed allegory in greater detail than any other trope in his treatise, *De schematibus et tropis*, and as part of his delineation he expounded the fourfold method of scriptural interpretation.⁷ Giving examples from Scripture to model his explanations, he taught that allegory functioned through both facts and words. He described how verbal and factual allegory could represent different meanings according to four interpretative categories. These were, 1) a historical understanding, 2) a figurative sense pertaining to Christ and the Church – a category which among other terms he also called allegorical following Gregory the Great's exegetical mode, 3) the tropological or moral sense and 4) the anagogical sense: 'In the same way a factual or verbal allegory may now denote a historical fact, now have a figurative meaning, now a tropological or moral interpretation, and still again an anagogical explanation leading us figuratively to higher things'.⁸ With further sets of biblical examples he

³ Bede, *Hom.* 1.16, (CChr.SL 122, 117-8).

⁴ On Bede's non-acquaintance with book four of *De doctrina christiana* see Roger Ray, 'Bede, rhetoric, and the creation of Christian Latin culture', *Jarrow Lecture* (1997), 5; *id.*, 'Who did Bede think he was?', in Scott DeGregorio (ed.), *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede* (Morgantown, 2006), 11-35, 23; see however Alan Thacker, 'Bede and Augustine of Hippo: history and figure in sacred text', *Jarrow Lecture* (2005), 10 and n. 47.

⁵ Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 4.5.8, ed. Joseph Martin, CChr.SL 32 (Turnhout, 1962), 121. The English translation is from NPNF 2, ser. 1, 577. See John C. Cavadini, 'The sweetness of the word: salvation and rhetoric in Augustine's *de doctrina christiana*', in Duane W.H. Arnold, Pamela Bright (eds), *De doctrina christiana: A Classic of Western Culture* (Notre Dame, London, 1995), 164-81, 164-5. For an analysis of Bede's rhetorical approach in a homily see John Bequette, 'Bede's Advent homily on the gospel of Mark: an exercise in rhetorical theology', *American Benedictine Review* 57 (2006), 249-66 and in relation to Augustine's attitude to rhetoric and the similarity of Bede's position, 255-7. On Bede's approach to biblical commentary in relation to his intended audience see Roger Ray, 'What do we know about Bede's commentaries?', *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 49 (1982), 5-20, 9-12.

⁶ Augustine, *Epistulae I-LV, Ep.* 55.21, ed. K.D. Daur, CChr.SL 3I (Turnhout, 2004), 250. The English translation is from FC 12, 277.

⁷ Bede, *De schematibus et tropis*, ed. Calvin B. Kendall, CChr.SL 123A (Turnhout, 1975).

⁸ Bede, *De schematibus et tropis* (CChr.SL 123A, 166): *Item allegoria uerbis siue operis aliquando historicam rem, aliquando typicam, aliquando tropologicam, id est, moralem rationem,*

demonstrated both factual and verbal allegory according to this fourfold interpretative scheme. Bede's rhetorical labels for interpreting Scripture spiritually were interchangeable, in *De schematibus et tropis* the allegorical sense is also referred to as figurative, spiritual and mystical. His lexis for the different spiritual senses of Scripture was similarly flexible in his homilies.⁹ In relation to his practice, scholars have noted that Bede didn't interpret every scriptural verse according to the fourfold schema in his biblical commentary, but he engaged with the literal or historical sense of the text and a particular spiritual significance.¹⁰

In this article, I examine how all four senses of scriptural understanding are woven into the fabric of Bede's preaching. I consider the interplay of different senses of Scripture in Bede's handling of the gospel text and explore how his exegetical thought and practice were fundamentally informed and orientated by his Christology which included the redemptive events of the Incarnation. These perspectives are analysed in two representative extracts from his homiliary selected from different points of the liturgical calendar. I first look at his homily on *John* 3:1-16 for the Octave of Pentecost where his commentary on *John* 3:13-5 demonstrates a fundamental doctrinal theme running throughout the

aliquando anagogen, hoc est, sensum ad superiora ducentem figurate denuntiat. The English translation is from Gussie Hecht Tanenhaus, 'Bede's *De schematibus et tropis* – a translation', *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 48 (1962), 237-53, 251.

⁹ On Bede's exegetical tenets and method see remark by Charles W. Jones which has since been noted consistently by scholars, 'Some introductory remarks on Bede's commentary on Genesis', *Sacris Erudiri* 19 (1969-1970), 115-98, 151 [article repr. in Wesley M. Stevens (ed.), *Charles W. Jones: Bede, the Schools and the Computus* (Aldershot, Brookfield VT, 1994), no. 4]: 'Terms normally considered technical have no definite or consistent meaning in Bede's exegesis'; George Hardin Brown, *A Companion to Bede* (Woodbridge, 2009, paperback 2010), 37 and n. 19; Calvin B. Kendall, *Bede: On Genesis*, Translated Texts for Historians 48 (Liverpool, 2008), 57 and n. 267; Arthur G. Holder, 'Bede and the tradition of patristic exegesis', *Anglican Theological Review* 72 (1990), 399-411, 407; R. Ray, 'What do we know' (1982), 14 and n. 47.

¹⁰ For example see R. Ray, 'What do we know' (1982), 14; see also, C.B. Kendall, *Bede: On Genesis* (2008), 11; O.C. Edwards Jr., *A History of Preaching* (Nashville, 2004), 147; Jennifer O'Reilly, 'Introduction', in Sean Connolly, *Bede: On the Temple*, Translated Texts for Historians 21 (Liverpool, 1995), xvii-lv, xxviii-xxix; Arthur G. Holder, *Bede: On the Tabernacle*, Translated Texts for Historians 18 (Liverpool, 1994), xiii, 25 n. 5. See related discussion that includes Bede's exegetical practice by C.W. Jones, 'Some introductory remarks' (1969-1970), 131-51; see also Scott DeGregorio, 'Bede and the Old Testament', in *id.* (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Bede* (Cambridge, 2010), 127-41, esp. 132-5; Arthur G. Holder, 'Bede and the New Testament', in S. DeGregorio (ed.), *Cambridge Companion* (2010), 142-55, esp. 148-9; Alan Thacker, 'Bede and the ordering of understanding', in S. DeGregorio (ed.), *Innovation and Tradition* (2006), 37-63, 52-60; A.G. Holder, 'Bede and the tradition' (1990), 406-7; Benedicta Ward, *The Venerable Bede* (London, 1990), 41-87; George Hardin Brown, *Bede the Venerable* (Boston, 1987), 42-61. On Bede's exegetical method in *In Genesim* see Calvin B. Kendall, 'The responsibility of *auctoritas*: method and meaning in Bede's *Commentary on Genesis*', in S. DeGregorio (ed.), *Innovation and Tradition* (2006), 101-19 and see also C.B. Kendall's remarks on allegorical exegesis in *Bede: On Genesis* (2008), 8-14.

homilies, the agency of Christ's humanity and divinity within the process of salvation. Bede's sermon for After Epiphany on *John* 2:1-11, the Marriage of Cana, is then considered, specifically his interpretation of *John* 2:6 which includes an extended reflection on the allegorical interpretation of scriptural events. Before concluding, I briefly discuss certain observations on scriptural interpretation by Henri de Lubac, the renowned French patristic scholar and theologian, from his comprehensive work on the four senses of Scripture in patristic and medieval biblical commentary. De Lubac's cogent insights provide a valuable framework of ideas from which one can draw on to understand the exegetical principles that informed and structured Bede's thought and method in his homilies.

Homily on *John* 3:1-16 for the Octave of Pentecost¹¹

In his sermon for the Octave of Pentecost, Bede defines verses *John* 3:13-4 as Christ's discourse on heavenly and earthly mysteries which pertained respectively to the heavenly mystery of his ascension and the earthly mystery of his death:

His ascension to eternal life is a heavenly [mystery]; his being lifted up to temporal death is an earthly one. He says of the heavenly [mystery], 'And no one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven' (*John* 3:13). He adds about the earthly [mystery], 'and just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up' (*John* 3:14)¹²

Bede expounds *John* 3:13 as Christ in his divinity descending to take on humanity in order to fulfil the plan of redemption through his death, resurrection and ascension, where in his humanity Christ was reunited with his pre-existing divinity. He begins his exposition by asking 'how the Son of man can be said both to have descended from heaven, and still to be in heaven while he was speaking these things on earth'? He answers this by stating the 'article of the Catholic faith' which encompasses the principal incarnational events of Christ's birth, death, resurrection and ascension. He concludes with the doctrinal statement: 'it was not Christ's flesh that descended from heaven, nor was it in heaven before the time of his ascension'. He then asks the reason why therefore the gospel states: '[And no one has ascended into heaven] except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven' and he locates the answer in the one person of Christ, 'existing in two natures'.¹³ *John* 3:13 was

¹¹ This homily, including the material discussed in this section, is the subject of a chapter in my PhD thesis, Susan D. Foley, *Bede, St. John and the Liturgical Year: Studies on the Homilies on the Gospels* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University College Cork, 2010), 215-61.

¹² Bede, *Hom.* 2.18 (CChr.SL 122, 314).

¹³ Bede, *Hom.* 2.18 (CChr.SL 122, 314).

referenced in relation to the hypostatic union in patristic theology¹⁴ and the issue of Christ's human and divine nature is central to Bede's discussion here of Christ's mediation in the process of redemption.¹⁵ Bede affirms both Christ's descent to become man and his pre-existing and on-going divinity even while he took up flesh on earth.¹⁶ Developing his theme, he observes that because of the 'single personality of Christ, which comprises two natures', St. Paul stated that the Church was purchased with God's blood (*Acts* 20:28). With reference to this, Bede explains that Christ shed his blood for the Church not in his divine but in his human nature.¹⁷ With a quote from *Ps.* 47:5 (46:6), 'God ascends with a shout of joy!', and drawing on the psalm's imagery of ascension, he poses the rhetorical question, how else could God ascend except as a human being since he was ubiquitous anyway in his divinity?¹⁸ The psalm-text's image of God ascending was expounded by both Augustine¹⁹ and Cassiodorus²⁰ in relation to the joyful witness by the apostles of Christ's ascension to heaven, a theme connected to the interpretation given here of *John* 3:13.²¹

Presenting an ostensible contradiction, Bede now queries the meaning of Christ's words at *John* 3:13, 'And no one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven', since the elect are 'truly confident' of going to heaven, as Christ affirmed at *John* 12:26.²² He then resolves this question in the concept of Christ as the redemptive agency of mediation between God and human beings citing *1Tim.* 2:5 and contending that Christ the mediator 'is the head of all the elect ... all the elect are members of this head'.²³ *1Tim.* 2:5 was

¹⁴ See for example Origen, *In Genesim homiliae*, *Hom.* 4.5, ed. and trans. Louis Doutreleau, SC 7bis (Paris, 1976, 2nd ed. repr. & rev. with corr. 2003), 154-7; Cassian, *De incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium* 7.22, ed. Michael Petschenig, CSEL 17 (Vienna, reissued 2004), 380-1.

¹⁵ For Anglo-Saxon awareness in Bede's work of the Christological controversies and heresies that had beset the Church in preceding centuries see S.D. Foley, *Bede, St. John* (2010), 22-5 and notes.

¹⁶ Bede, *Hom.* 2.18 (CChr.SL 122, 314): 'And so it is rightly said of the Son of man that he descended from heaven, and that before his passion he was in heaven, because what he could not possess in his own nature he possessed as God's Son, by whom [his human nature] was assumed'.

¹⁷ Bede, *Hom.* 2.18 (CChr.SL 122, 314). In his *Acts* commentary at the same passage, Bede explains that this purchase was possible because of Christ's dual nature, both human and divine, quoting *John* 3:13 and condemning Nestorius' view of two Christs, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum* 20.28, ed. Max L.W. Laistner, CChr.SL 121 (Turnhout, 1983), 83.

¹⁸ Bede, *Hom.* 2.18 (CChr.SL 122, 314).

¹⁹ Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos I-L*, *In Ps.* 46.7, ed. D. Eligius Dekkers and Iohannes Fraipont, CChr.SL 38 (Turnhout, 1956), 533.

²⁰ Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum I-LXX*, *In Ps.* 46.6, ed. Marc Adriaen, CChr.SL 97 (Turnhout, 1958), 422.

²¹ While Bede did not usually overtly cite patristic writers in his homilies, rather he explained the lection with other scriptural texts, we can see that he operated within a tradition of choosing a particular biblical text in relation to a specific thematic context.

²² Bede, *Hom.* 2.18 (CChr.SL 122, 314-5).

²³ Bede, *Hom.* 2.18 (CChr.SL 122, 315): *electorum omnium caput est ... omnes electi eiusdem capitis membra sunt.*

invested with strong Christological meaning for patristic exegetes like Augustine and Gregory the Great in attesting to Christ's mediatory role in salvation.²⁴ Bede followed the tradition and the text is consistently cited to similar purpose in his gospel homilies. In this homily he illustrates that *John* 3:13 accommodates this interpretation with reference to Paul's images of Christ as head of the Church and the Church on earth as part of Christ's body in *Eph.* 1:22, *1Cor.* 12:27 and *Col.* 1:24.²⁵ These Pauline references underwrite Bede's central premise with *John* 3:13, that Christ's ascension in his human body in the presence of his apostles was the beginning of an ongoing process of the ascension for humanity into the presence of the Creator as members of Christ's body the Church on earth.²⁶ One of Bede's beloved Fathers, Gregory the Great, defined the continuous nature of this exaltation when describing the consequences of the Incarnation for humanity. Gregory advocated that because of their shared humanity with Christ, believers would also experience the resurrection and ascension at their deaths and he employed the Pauline imagery of the body: 'That so the members also may rejoice, that they are following to the same place, where they see that their Head has gone before'.²⁷ Gregory explained how this occurred and that it was not divergent to Christ's words at *John* 3:13, those who were part of the faith of the Christian Church were in the body of Christ and united to him. Christ, therefore, ascended to heaven singularly in each member of his body the Church who are drawn into heaven to his divinity.²⁸

In the octave homily Bede proceeds to designate Christ's body as the Church and its members who progress on the journey towards Christ its divine head amidst the dangerous impediments of the earthly life with citation of *Ps.* 27:6 (26:6); it is expounded as the Church's plea that, like Christ who was brought back to life and triumphed over death and his adversaries, it too will join Christ its head in the heavenly realm after this perilous life.²⁹

Maintaining the Christological thrust of his preaching here and again citing *John* 3:13, Bede observes that for all who wish to be part of the process of ascension to heaven begun by the incarnate Christ, it is necessary to unite

²⁴ Jennifer O'Reilly, 'The image of orthodoxy, the *mysterium Christi* and Insular gospel books', *Settimane di Studio della Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 57 (2010), 651-702, 680-2 and n. 89, also 673 for tradition of the text's use in combatting heresy.

²⁵ Bede, *Hom.* 2.18 (CChr.SL 122, 315).

²⁶ Bede, *Hom.* 2.18 (CChr.SL 122, 315): 'He first of all ascended in his own being, in the sight of the apostles, his most eminent members; after that, by ascending daily in his [other] members, he gathers himself [together] in heaven'.

²⁷ Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob* 27.15.29, ed. Marc Adriaen, CChr.SL 143B (Turnhout, 1985), 1352. The English translation is from J. Bliss, *Morals on the Book of Job by St. Gregory the Great*, vol. 3.1 (Oxford, 1847), 220-1.

²⁸ Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob* 27.15.30 (CChr.SL 143B, 1353).

²⁹ Bede, *Hom.* 2.18 (CChr.SL 122, 315). See discussion of this psalm verse with comparable themes by Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum I-LXX*, In *Ps.* 26.5-6 (CChr.SL 97, 238).

oneself in faith and love to him and he quotes *John* 14:6 in support.³⁰ It is a reasoning that is substantiated in previous commentary, especially in Augustine's explication of *John* 14:6. With emphatic reiteration, Augustine affirms the necessity of humanity's participation within Christ as the only way to ascend to the Father with whom he (Christ) is in union.³¹ A similar thought is offered in a homily on *John* 3:5 by John Chrysostom who saw those who were not baptized in the faith as being outside or excluded from the spiritual body of Christ's Church.³² These ideas are present in a similar context as Bede concludes his explanation of Christ's words to Nicodemus at *John* 3:13: 'Those things were said to Nicodemus, and they are said to all catechumens', by becoming members of the body of Christ i.e. the Church, they 'may be able to ascend into the kingdom of God'.³³

Bede now asserts that 'faith and the sacraments of the Lord's passion' are the necessary prerequisite for ascension and entry into heaven, hence the statement in *John* 3:14: 'And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up.' He offers that Christ guides us with 'heavenly teaching' in seeing the spiritual meaning of the law taught by Moses and the account of 'ancient history' therein as a figure of his own death on the cross and human salvation. He then enumerates the historical event in the Book of Numbers where the Israelites murmured against God in the desert and had serpents inflicted on them, but were saved from the fatal bites by looking at the brass serpent raised by Moses who interceded with God for them (*Num.* 21:5-8, 9).³⁴

Bede draws a moral parallel between the serpents and sin, and compares their inflicted wounds to the soul being harmed and being lead to 'spiritual death'. Moving into allegorical mode, the healing elevated bronze serpent represents

³⁰ Bede, *Hom.* 2.18 (CChr.SL 122, 315): '... let anyone who desires to ascend into heaven join himself, in a true unity of faith and love, to him who descended from heaven, clearly understanding that in no other way can he ascend into heaven except through him who descended from heaven. Hence he himself says elsewhere, "No one comes to the Father except through me".'

³¹ Augustine, *In Iohannis Euangelium Tractatus CXXIV, In Ioh.* 69.2, ed. D. Radbodius Willemis, CChr.SL 36 (Turnhout, 1954, rev. ed. 1990), 500: 'Therefore, he himself was going to himself by way of himself. And where do we go except to him? And by what way do we go except through him? He himself, therefore, to himself through himself; we to him through him, and indeed also to the Father, both he and we. For elsewhere too he says about himself, "I go to the Father"', and in this place for our sakes, "No one", he says, "comes to the Father but by me". And in this way he through himself both to himself and to the Father, and we through him both to him and to the Father'. The English translation is from FC 90, 68.

³² John Chrysostom, *Commentarius in sanctum Joannem Apostolum et Evangelistam, Hom.* 25.3 (PG 59, 151): 'And what profit is there from close kinship upon earth, if we are strangers in heaven? The catechumen is a stranger to the believer, for he does not have the same Head'. The English translation is from FC 33, 248.

³³ Bede, *Hom.* 2.18 (CChr.SL 122, 315): *Haec ideo Nichodimo cunctis dicuntur caticuminis ut discant eius membris renascendo incorporari per quem possint ascendere in regnum Dei.*

³⁴ Bede, *Hom.* 2.18 (CChr.SL 122, 315-6).

Christ's saving passion on the cross.³⁵ The curative Mosaic serpent without poison signifies Christ who 'came in the likeness of sinful flesh' (*Rom.* 8:3) and was able to redeem mankind in a sinless body with his death on the cross.³⁶ It is an observation informed by patristic theology that decreed it was precisely because Christ in his human nature was sinless that he successfully saved mankind from sin and spiritual death.³⁷ A tropological sense is drawn, the ancient Hebrews were healed and saved from temporal death by looking at the raised serpent, so too the mystery of the Lord's passion is gazed upon when those who believe, confess and sincerely imitate it are cured from sin and saved from spiritual death.³⁸ We see in Bede's preaching on the gospel that the pathway to eternal life is predicated on an appropriate understanding of Scripture which at the same time is necessarily linked to sustained spiritual progress in acting out the gospel precepts, a principle clearly discernible in his commentary on *John* 3:15: 'That everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life'.

With *John* 3:15, both a moral and anagogical note resonate in Bede's summation: '... we must zealously take care that worthy works complete what our understanding comprehends well, so that the confession of our right faith may deservedly bring us, by a pious and sober way of life, to the perfection of the life that has been promised us'.³⁹ This reflection is prefaced by his observation that *John* 3:15 teaches that faith in Christ leads to eternal life. Bede stresses: 'But there is this difference between the figure and the truth', meaning that the

³⁵ Bede, *Hom.* 2.18 (CChr.SL 122, 316).

³⁶ Bede, *Hom.* 2.18 (CChr.SL 122, 316): 'Just as the bronze serpent had the likeness of a fiery serpent, but had absolutely none of the strength of harmful poison in its members – rather by being lifted up it cured who had been stricken by the [live] serpents – so the Redeemer of the human race did not clothe himself in sinful flesh, but in the likeness of sinful flesh, in order that by suffering death on the cross in [this likeness] he might free those who believed in him from all sin and even from death itself'.

³⁷ So Leo, *Tractatus Septem et Nonaginta*, Tr. 64.2, ed. Antoine Chavasse, CChr.SL 138A (Turnhout, 1973), 391: 'From the stock of Adam there emerged one in whom the devil had nothing he could call his own'. The English translation is from FC 93, 279. In his letter to Flavian (read at Chalcedon) Leo defined Christ's conception and unique birth from the Virgin, including the principle that he did not share original sin with humanity, Norman P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols. (London, Washington, 1990), I 77-8; Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590-604)*, Pauline Allen and John Cawte (trans.), vol. 2 (Oxford, 1987), 154-5. Leo also expressed how redemption and freedom from the captivity of sin had to be accomplished from within human nature in order to be effective; an imperfect and sinful human nature could not do this, humanity had to be saved by the perfect humanity of Christ, Leo, *Tractatus Septem et Nonaginta*, Tr. 63.1 (CChr.SL 138A, 382). See Origen, *Commentaria in epistolam B. Pauli ad Romanos* 6.12 (PG 14, 1095A), who explained Christ's sinless body at *Rom.* 8:3 as the result of not being born of human intercourse but being conceived immaculately by the Virgin, therefore Christ 'did indeed possess the nature of our body, but he possessed in no respect whatsoever the contamination of sin'. The English translation is from FC 104, 49.

³⁸ Bede, *Hom.* 2.18 (CChr.SL 122, 316).

³⁹ Bede, *Hom.* 2.18 (CChr.SL 122, 316-7).

Old Testament bronze serpent only prolonged temporal life but the Lord's passion made it possible to obtain a life without end.⁴⁰ His attention to the different accomplishments of the 'figure and the truth' and the earlier observation on Christ's teaching on the spiritual meaning of the Mosaic law, highlight the inadequacy of a superficial or imperfect grasp of Scripture, signified by Old Testament literalism, a theme he expressed for instance in *In Ezram et Neemiam*.⁴¹ Elsewhere, in the *Historia abbatum*, Bede recorded that images of the serpent lifted up in the desert and that of the crucifixion were a typological pairing depicted in paintings that hung in St. Paul's church and monastery at Jarrow to show how the Old Testament foreshadowed the New.⁴² Bede's interpretative principles enshrined this fundamental hermeneutical tenet. As we proceed now to his homily on the miracle of Cana, we shall see unequivocally how his exegetical values were ultimately obtained in the salvific consequences of Christ's redemptive action.

Homily on *John 2:1-11*, the Miracle of Cana

In his homilies on the gospels, Bede at times took the opportunity to deliberate on a particular subject or theme. His homily on the Marriage of Cana for After Epiphany is one such sermon as it includes an extended illustration of how Scripture could be allegorically understood. This reflection on figurative interpretation is prompted by his preaching on verse *John 2:6*: 'There were six stone hydrias placed there in accordance with the Jews' [rites of] purification, each holding two or three measures'. Bede initially focuses on the literal text, specifying the Greek root of hydra, 'ydor', meaning water. This is characteristic

⁴⁰ Bede, *Hom.* 2.18 (CChr.SL 122, 316). See Augustine, *In Iohannis Euangelium Tractatus CXXXIV*, *In Ioh.* 12.11 (CChr.SL 36, 127).

⁴¹ Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam* 2, ed. David Hurst, CChr.SL 119A (Turnhout, 1969), 311-2: 'In the same way, the Lord "investigated" God's Law in that he rejected the traditions of the Pharisees and taught how Holy Scripture was to be understood mystically and what spiritual secrets it concealed beneath the veil of the letter and because he showed that the decrees of the Gospel that he himself brought to the world were more perfect and more pleasing to God the Father than the ones that he had sent earlier through Moses'. The English translation is from Scott DeGregorio, *Bede: On Ezra and Nehemiah*, Translated Texts for Historians 47 (Liverpool, 2006), 116-7.

⁴² Bede, *Historia abbatum* 9, ed. Charles Plummer, *Beda Opera Historica*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1896), I 373. Peter Hunter Blair, *The World of Bede* (Cambridge, 1990), 179. The pairing was also mentioned by Bede in his support for the use of images in *De templo*. The pictorial image of Jesus on the cross was deemed valuable along with others for eliciting 'great compunction' and providing to those who couldn't read 'a living narrative of the story of the Lord', Bede, *De templo* 2, CChr.SL 119A, ed. David Hurst (Turnhout, 1969), 212-3. The English translation is from S. Connolly, *Bede: On the Temple* (1995), 91; Paul Meyvaert, 'Bede and the church paintings at Wearmouth-Jarrow', *Anglo-Saxon England* 8 (1979), 63-77; A.G. Holder, 'Bede and the New Testament' (2010), 143.

of his exegetical method which included looking at circumstantial details and etymological analysis, and seems representative of Augustine's recommendations in *De doctrina christiana* regarding signs⁴³ and language.⁴⁴ Bede states that water represents 'knowledge of sacred scripture' and a moral interpretation follows, it 'cleanses its hearers from the stain of sins, and gives [them] drink from the font of divine cognition'.⁴⁵

The six hydrias that contained this 'divine cognition' are those who gave example of holy and faithful lives throughout the six ages of the world up to the time of Christ's preaching. The exegesis then moves into a strong Christological register, the stone of the vessels is identified as Christ with supporting scriptural references from *Dan.* 2:34-5, *Zech.* 3:9 and *1Pet.* 2:4-5. Interpreting *Zech.* 3:9, Bede plainly states: 'the entirety of spiritual knowledge dwells in Christ'. He refers to the hydrias (which symbolically represent those who lived good lives under the old dispensation 'up to the time of the Lord's preaching' and who had knowledge of sacred Scripture) as a component of the Jewish law on purification, and he pertinently cites *John* 1:17 to underscore that the Mosaic law was for Jews alone but Christ brought the grace and truth of the gospel to all.⁴⁶

This all serves as expository groundwork for the core of his thesis further on when he observes that the sense in which Scripture was understood before the Incarnation is as different as is water from wine, it is the difference between understanding Scripture under the old dispensation and the interpretation taught and bequeathed by Christ to his followers.⁴⁷ This is an image drawn from the Cana miracle that is ultimately derived from Origen.⁴⁸ Bede's principal source is Augustine, but coherently recast and adapted with different emphases.⁴⁹ He now proceeds to interpret the six hydrias filled with water as the events of

⁴³ Concerning interpretation of the biblical text, words were signs that imparted a specific significance for those who would interpret Scripture, Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 1.2.2, (CChr.SL 32, 7). *De doctrina christiana* in Bede's writings is discussed by R. Ray, 'Bede, rhetoric' (1997), 3-6.

⁴⁴ Hebrew and Greek in addition to Latin were recommended in order to properly understand what the written text of Scripture conveyed, Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 2.11.16 (CChr.SL 32, 42).

⁴⁵ Bede, *Hom.* 1.14 (CChr.SL 122, 98).

⁴⁶ Bede, *Hom.* 1.14 (CChr.SL 122, 98).

⁴⁷ Bede, *Hom.* 1.14 (CChr.SL 122, 98-9): *Sed quantum inter aquam et unum tantum distare inter sensum illum quo scripturae ante aduentum saluatoris intellegebantur et eum quem ueniens ipse reuelauit apostolis eorumque discipulis perpetuo sequendum reliquit.*

⁴⁸ Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, Lancelot C. Sheppard and Sister Elizabeth Englund (trans.) (Paris, 1947, San Francisco, 1988), 181-3 and n. 67.

⁴⁹ See Augustine, *In Iohannis Euangelium Tractatus CXXIV, In Ioh.* 9 (CChr.SL 36, 90-100). Bede's homily in turn later informed Ælfric's sermon on the Cana narrative, Ælfric, *The Sermones Catholici*, ed. Benjamin Thorpe, vol. 2 (London, 1846, repr. 1983), 54-73. For the influence of Bede's gospel homilies and commentaries on the homilies of Ælfric see Joyce Hill, 'Bede and the Benedictine reform', *Jarrow Lecture* (1998), 6-11; see also G.H. Brown, *Companion* (2010), 127 n. 63.

sacred history during the six ages of the world,⁵⁰ and he elucidates how the saving water of Scripture is turned into the wine of understanding for each world age – the verb *intellego* in various forms is used nine times here and fourteen overall in the homily. It is beyond the scope of this paper to consider in detail the interpretative interplay of different scriptural senses for all six world ages, thus I will confine my discussion to the first and sixth ages.

The first age

From the time of creation to Noah, Bede mentions the killing of Abel (*Gen.* 4:8). He notes the glory of Abel's martyrdom and his mention and praise in the New Testament (*Matt.* 23:35; *Luke* 11:51; *Heb.* 11:4; 12:24) as well as his brother's infamy and 'eternal curse', drawing on the historical meaning of the biblical event.⁵¹ Bede then sketches a tropological scenario: 'There are people who, when they hear about this, become apprehensive that they will be damned with the wicked, and, longing to be blessed with the holy, they cast off all that might enkindle hatred and envy and take care to please God through a sacrifice of justice, modesty, innocence, and patience'.⁵² Bede says that those who interpret the scriptures thus, 'have a vessel full of water from which they may rejoice that they have been beneficently cleansed and given drink'.⁵³

Bede then proceeds into another explanation of this same event, but this time it is an allegorical interpretation in relation to Christ and the Church. If Cain is understood as a figure of 'the Jews' lack of faith', Abel's killing as symbolic of the Lord's passion, and the earth which received Abel's blood (*Gen.* 4:11) as representative of the Church 'which received, in the mystery of its renewal, the blood of Christ poured out by the Jews', then this interpretation is water turned into wine. According to Bede it is 'a more sacred understanding of the sayings of the sacred law'.⁵⁴

Recounting key events from the history recorded in the Old Testament followed by a comprehension in the moral sense and then an allegorical interpretation

⁵⁰ For the six ages as an important recurrent theme in Bede's work see G.H. Brown, *Companion* (2010), 28-9; C.B. Kendall, *Bede: On Genesis* (2008), 100-1 n. 149; Faith Wallis, *Bede: The Reckoning of Time*, Translated Texts for Historians 29 (Liverpool, 1999), 353-66; Jane Stevenson, *The 'Laterculus Malalianus' and the School of Archbishop Theodore*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 14 (Cambridge, 1995, repr. 2007), 27 and n. 19; C. Plummer, *Baedae Opera* (1896), I, xli-xlii and n. 6.

⁵¹ Bede, *Hom.* 1.14 (CChr.SL 122, 99): 'In the first age of the world, the righteous Abel was killed by his brother out of envy, and on this account he was blessed by the everlasting glory of martyrdom and received praise for his righteousness, also in the writings of the evangelists and apostles, while the wicked slayer of his brother suffered the penalty of an eternal curse'.

⁵² Bede, *Hom.* 1.14 (CChr.SL 122, 99).

⁵³ Bede, *Hom.* 1.14 (CChr.SL 122, 99).

⁵⁴ Bede, *Hom.* 1.14 (CChr.SL 122, 99).

that incorporates Christological, sacramental and ecclesial themes among others, is the interpretative pattern for the subsequent world ages,⁵⁵ the latter understanding being the equivalent of water turned into wine.

The sixth age

Bede notes that the sixth age came into being with the Incarnation. He mentions Christ's circumcision on the eighth day after his birth and his later presentation in the temple, both in compliance with the demands of the law (*Luke* 2:21-4; *Lev.* 12:4).⁵⁶ The tropological significance of these historical occasions is evident in Bede's proposal that according to the 'literal sense' (*ad litteram*), we learn that we should have great diligence 'in placing ourselves under the mysteries of the gospel faith' since Christ himself, giver of the law, complied with its ritualistic requirements, 'though he consecrated everything through his divinity'. Christ both received and handed on 'the new sacraments of grace'.⁵⁷ The spiritual consequences of this understanding are recounted: 'Behold, [here is] the sixth hydria for cleansing the contagion of sin, for giving drink from the joys of life, and for bringing cleaner flowing waters to others'.⁵⁸

An interpretation which focuses on the sacraments of the Church now follows. Circumcision on the eighth day signifies baptism 'which has redeemed us from the death of our sins into the mystery of the Lord's resurrection' and the presentation of Jesus in the temple with the required sacrificial offerings anticipates the progression of the newly-baptized from the baptistery to the altar and Eucharistic sacrifice. The pre-eminence of this explanation which expresses the sacramental means of our redemption, is reflected in Bede's judgement: 'you have been granted wine made from the water, and it is a most undiluted wine'.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ The events from the second to the fifth age respectively discussed are: Noah and the flood, Abraham's command from God to sacrifice his son, David's anointing as king and his persecution by Saul, the Israelites' return from Babylon after seventy years including the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.

⁵⁶ Bede, *Hom.* 1.14 (CChr.SL 122, 101): 'As the sixth age of the world began, the Lord appeared in the flesh; on the eighth day after his nativity he was circumcised in accordance with the law; on the thirty-third day after this he was brought to the temple, and the offerings stipulated by the law were made for him'.

⁵⁷ Bede, *Hom.* 1.14 (CChr.SL 122, 101): *Haec intuentes ad litteram aperte discimus quanta nobis diligentia sunt euangelicae fidei subeunda mysteria quando ipse benedictionem gratiae adferens qui legem litterae dedit ueterum primo caerimoniarum tiru [sic] consecrari qui cuncta diuinitus consecrat et sic noua gratiae sacramenta suscipere simul et tradere curauit.*

⁵⁸ Bede, *Hom.* 1.14 (CChr.SL 122, 101).

⁵⁹ Bede, *Hom.* 1.14 (CChr.SL 122, 101-2): *Verum si in octauu diei circumcissione baptisma quod in mysterium dominicae resurrectionis a peccatorum nos morte redemit intellegis in inductione in templum et oblatione hostiae purificantis figuratum cognoscis fideles quosque de baptisterio ad altare sanctum ingredi ac dominici corporis et sanguinis uictima singulari debere consecrari, uino quidem de aqua facto et quidem meracissimo donatus es.*

Unlike his commentary on the previous five ages, an additional interpretation is now provided. Christ's circumcision symbolises the 'general resurrection of the human race, when ... all mortality will be changed into immortality' (*generalem humani generis resurrectionem quando ... mortalitas tota in immortalitatem mutabitur*). The presentation with sacrificial offerings in the temple signifies the period when the resurrection and final judgement are over and the saints 'will enter with their offerings of good works to contemplate forever the form of divine majesty' (*ad contemplantam perpetuo speciem diuinae maiestatis cum bonorum operum muneribus intrabunt*).⁶⁰ This anagogical interpretation corresponds to Henri de Lubac's observation on the inherent eschatology within anagogy, it was inexorably the final sense since it could not be exceeded.⁶¹ We see this reflected in the rhetorical arc of Bede's exegesis on the six hydras, this is the high-point as it aptly illustrates what awaits the elect of all six ages 'when the universal judgement is finished'. It resembles a microcosm of his extensive treatment of the six-ages that culminates in the eighth age of eternal bliss for the elect presented in *De temporum ratione*.⁶² Bede says this understanding is 'wondrous wine made from water', and to give expression to its revelatory impact he advocates saying to God: 'And your inebriating cup, how splendid it is!' (*Ps. 23:5 [22:5]*).⁶³

In an expository epilogue, the Lord's command to fill the six hydrias with water and turning them to wine is compared to his granting of 'six ages of wisdom in the world' and when the Lord himself came, he made this wisdom 'fruitful by virtue of a more sublime sense' (*sublimioris sensus uirtute fecundauit*). These are the events of sacred history contained in Scripture which Bede says Christ 'unlocked so that they could be perceived spiritually' (*spiritualiter sentienda reserauit*).⁶⁴ Bede completes this segment of his preaching by giving an example of the Lord making spiritual wine from knowledge of sacred Scripture and points to Christ's appearance and exposition of Scripture to the disciples going to Emmaus (*Lk. 24:27*). The disciples' inebriation by the wine of deeper understanding is their reaction to the Lord's opening up of the Scriptures (*Lk. 24:32*).⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Bede, *Hom. 1.14* (CChr.SL 122, 102).

⁶¹ Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale: Les Quatre Sens de L'Écriture*, 2 vols. in 4 (Paris, 1959-1964), 1.2, 643: 'C'est dans l'eschatologie traditionnelle que la doctrine des quatre sens s'achève et trouve son unité ... l'anagogie véritable est donc toujours eschatologique. Elle attise en nous le désir de l'éternité. C'est aussi pourquoi le quatrième sens est forcément le dernier ... elle n'est jamais dépassée'.

⁶² Bede, *De temporum ratione* 66-7, 71, ed. Charles W. Jones, CChr.SL 123B (Turnhout, 1977), 463-537, 542-4.

⁶³ Bede, *Hom. 1.14* (CChr.SL 122, 102). On this psalm and the patristic theme of inebriation with Scripture see Finbarr Clancy, 'The Eucharist in St. Ambrose's commentaries on the psalms', *SP* 69 (2013), 35-44, 39, 40-3.

⁶⁴ Bede, *Hom. 1.14* (CChr.SL 122, 102).

⁶⁵ Bede, *Hom. 1.14* (CChr.SL 122, 102).

Henri de Lubac: the 'Mystery of Christ' and the New Testament

The centrality of Christ to Bede's interpretative principles coalesces with a conception of the New Testament pondered by Henri de Lubac in his magisterial work, *Exégèse Médiévale: Les Quatre Sens de L'Écriture*.⁶⁶ According to de Lubac, the 'substance of the New Testament' was the 'Mystery of Christ'.⁶⁷ This Mystery was the 'redemptive' or 'Christ event', the Incarnation incorporating Christ's life, death, resurrection and ascension; it was also the 'Event of the Church', Christ's bride and body and indivisible from him.⁶⁸ As the allegory of the Old Testament – its 'truth' or 'spirit', the redemptive event of the New Testament was the Mystery of Christ in its entirety.⁶⁹ For de Lubac, tropology described the Mystery's fruitfulness, and anagogy educed its consummation, but he stated that these were still extensions of, or flowed from the Mystery, bringing us neither outside nor beyond Christ who was the source.⁷⁰ It is a characterization exemplified in his thought on the inherent unity of the fourfold schema, every sentence of Scripture had several meanings but together every sentence of Scripture had but one meaning.⁷¹ De Lubac pointed out that the Spirit of the New Testament 'wasn't constituted by the exterior of the gospel accounts ... but by the entire *mysterium*'. This was defined as 'all that Christ had to accomplish from the Incarnation, to his Church, in its sacraments, in faithful souls and finally in the heavenly Jerusalem'.⁷² Writing elsewhere on the Old and New Testament and drawing on the Fathers, de Lubac outlined the Old Testament prophecies being revealed through the action of the Cross.⁷³ He proposed that it was as if through the mystery of the Incarnation and redemption that Christ generated the Old Testament's spiritual meaning, imbuing Scripture with himself.⁷⁴ This assessment and the aforementioned views on the New Testament are useful when considering the Christological rationale that structures Bede's allegorical perspective.

⁶⁶ See above n. 61. For discussions of de Lubac's work on scriptural exegesis see David Grumett, *De Lubac: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London, 2007), 75-94 and for bibliography concerning works on de Lubac, 178-81; Susan K. Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church in the Theology of Henri de Lubac* (Grand Rapids, Edinburgh, 1998), 25-51.

⁶⁷ H. de Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale* 2.2 (1964), 111.

⁶⁸ H. de Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale* 2.2 (1964), 111.

⁶⁹ H. de Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale* 2.2 (1964), 111, 113-4.

⁷⁰ H. de Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale* 2.2 (1964), 111-2, 113-4.

⁷¹ H. de Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale* 1.2 (1959), 651: 'Chaque phrase de l'Écriture a plusieurs sens; mais plus réellement encore, toutes les phrases de l'Écriture n'ont jamais qu'un seul sens'.

⁷² H. de Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale* 2.2 (1964), 114.

⁷³ H. de Lubac, *Catholicism* (1988), 179-80.

⁷⁴ H. de Lubac, *Catholicism* (1988), 180-1 and for pertinent citation of Origen's thought, 182.

Conclusion

For Bede, in its sense of pertaining to Christ and the Church, allegory was charged with a significance that moved it beyond its constituency of being one of four senses for interpreting Scripture. While it functioned as a component of the fourfold method defined by him in *De schematibus et tropis*, allegory was also the system's sum and source as it constituted the Mystery that undergirded everything. As Bede's homiletic exegesis illustrates, Christ and the mysteries of the Incarnation including his death, resurrection and ascension, comprised the central criterion which shaped and guided his theological and interpretative principles. His preaching on the gospel readings interweaves different senses of scriptural understanding in relation to the past of our salvation history that foretold Christ, our present life in Christ on earth which is inaugurated and sustained by his sacraments and the Church, and our future eternal life in the heavenly kingdom where we join Christ our head. It is an exegetical outlook that bears just comparison with the description de Lubac gives of the always present and all-encompassing Mystery of Christ within the economy of salvation: *Jesus Christus heri, hodie, ipse et in saecula*. Including this Christocentric *mentalité* more fully into future discussions of Bede, exegesis and allegory, might further illuminate questions regarding his exegetical practice and choices.

NACHLEBEN

Reception of Late-Antique Popes in the Medieval Byzantine Tradition

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ABSTRACT

Leo the Great (440-461) and Gregory the Great (590-604) earned their epithets in very different ways, Leo by his intervention at the Council of Chalcedon via one momentous letter known as the *Tome to Flavian*, followed by a decade of campaigning tirelessly against one-nature doctrine and against anti-Chalcedonian bishops. Gregory I earned his reputation in Byzantium by his widely disseminated work of spiritual direction, the *Regula Pastoralis*, and his prolific publication of works in various genres, especially the *Dialogues*, which were taken up by the Byzantine church in the Greek translation of Pope Zacharias. This study looks at the reception of these and other late-antique popes in the Byzantine tradition in the Middle Ages, and how they were used to promote particular agenda by eastern and western writers.

Introduction

What kind of contribution to eastern-western Church relations was required for a pope to be remembered beyond the century in which he lived, and especially beyond Italy, in the Byzantine church? This impact can be measured by the continued popularity of a pope's written works, especially their decretal letters, whether in Latin or in translations into Greek. The proliferation of Greek *Lives* of select Roman bishops also testifies to their popularity in Byzantium during the medieval period. I try to reconstruct the principles of selection behind popes whose names were revered in the Greek East from the seventh century onwards, always on the proviso that we cannot know what works have not survived. From the literary evidence that is extant, it will be argued that successful mediation between the Roman and Byzantine churches, especially through letters adduced at councils, was a prerequisite for a lasting impact on later ages.

Recent work on the bishop of Rome has sought to deconstruct the medieval and later rhetoric of papal primacy, and to retrieve the institutional role of the bishop as a civic and spiritual within his own church.¹ Letters have emerged as

¹ E.g. K. Sessa, *The Formation of Papal Authority in Late Antique Italy: Roman Bishops and the Domestic Sphere* (Cambridge, 2012); G.E. Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter: The Development*

a previously under-utilized source for papal relationships with other key bishops, emperors and other aristocratic correspondents.² It is no secret that several non-Romans rose to the highest see in Italy in the Byzantine period, from 604 onwards. These included Theodore I (642-649), a Greek dyothelite³ born in Palestine; John VI (701-705), a Greek born in Ephesus; and John VII (705-707), born in the Byzantine territory of Calabria, in southern Italy.⁴ Zacharias (741-752), the last Greek to hold the Roman episcopacy, was only known in the East as the translator of Gregory I's *Dialogues* into Greek.⁵

By contrast, there was only one Greek pope in our period, the anti-pope Dioscorus, an Alexandrian Greek who stood unsuccessfully for the patriarchate of Alexandria, with the support of the then bishop of Rome, Hormisdas.⁶ After the death of Felix IV in 530, Dioscorus came to Rome to contest the election of September of that year, and was elected with the support of at least sixty clergy, alongside a rival Roman-born candidate, Boniface II, son of the Goth Sigibuld.⁷ Boniface was the candidate supported by the Gothic king Athalaric and some Roman senators as most likely to accept Theopaschism. Dioscorus, on the other hand, with his pro-Chalcedonian background, was guaranteed to object to the Theopaschite formula of Peter of Alexandria, the statement that 'one of the Trinity suffered', meaning that God suffered as Jesus in the flesh. After 28 days of strife between the Roman clergy and the senate over the papal contest, Dioscorus was killed. After Dioscorus was ultimately silenced, there were no further objections to the Theopaschite formula by future bishops after Boniface.

and Reception of the Petrine Discourse at the Close of Christian Antiquity (Philadelphia, 2013); and the essays in G.D. Dunn (ed.), *The Bishop of Rome in Late Antiquity* (Farnham, 2015).

² On papal letters and their transmission, see D. Moreau, 'Non impar conciliorum extat auctoritas. L'origine de l'introduction des lettres pontificales dans le droit canonique', in J. Desmulliez, C. Hoët-van Cauwenberghe and J.-C. Jolivet (eds), *L'étude des correspondances dans le monde romain de l'Antiquité classique à l'Antiquité tardive: permanences et mutations* (Lille, 2010), 487-506; B. Neil, 'Papal Letters', in C. Sogno, B. Storin, E. Watts (eds), *A Critical Introduction and Reference Guide to Letter Collections in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, 2016), 449-66.

³ That is, an advocate of two wills in Christ, against the monothelite party led by Patriarch Sergius (*sedit* 618-638), on whom see below, and A.J. Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes: Eastern Influences on Rome and the Papacy from Gregory the Great to Zacharias, 590-752 A.D.* (Lanham MD, 2007), 83-90.

⁴ On Popes John VI and John VII, see A.J. Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome* (2007), 245-48, 266-67, and 270; J.D. Breckenridge, 'Evidence for the Nature of Relations between Pope John VII and the Byzantine Emperor Justinian II', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 65 (1972), 364-74.

⁵ A.J. Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome* (2007), 298-302.

⁶ See E. Bertolini, 'Dioscoro, antipapa', in *Enciclopedia dei Papi* 1 (Rome, 2000), 495-9.

⁷ This is the persuasive theory of D. Moreau, 'Ipsius diebus Bonifatius, zelo et dolo ductus: The Root Causes of the Double Papal Election of 22 September 530', in G.D. Dunn (ed.), *The Bishop of Rome in Late Antiquity* (2015), 177-95.

A legacy of letters

The most obvious example of a pope whose legacy to the unity of eastern and western churches consisted in several, well-circulated letters is Leo the Great (440-461).⁸ Although his famous contribution to the Council of Chalcedon (451), the *Tome to Flavian*,⁹ was taken up with alacrity by the imperial faction as the solution to an impasse reached at that council, in *Ep.* 124 Leo claimed that his words were mistranslated in the Greek version of the *Tome*.¹⁰ The *Tome* was the object of strong criticism by anti-Chalcedonians in the East, especially the monks of Palestine, in Leo's lifetime and beyond.¹¹ Thus its authenticity as the 'word of the apostle Peter' had to be defended, even in the seventh century. This challenge was taken up by John Moschus (d. c. 619). The monk John picked up some colourful (not to say lurid) stories in his account of the ascetics he met on his travels through Egypt with Sophronius the Sophist, usually identified with Sophronius, future patriarch of Jerusalem (d. 638), who was later to start the defence against Emperor Heraclius' and Patriarch Sergius' doctrine of one will in Christ, known as monothelitism.¹²

In his *Spiritual Meadow*, John Moschus relates two stories linking Pope Leo with the apostle Peter and apostolic authority with the *Tome to Flavian*. The first also links Leo with Gregory the Great, 'a man of distinguished virtue', since Gregory told the story to Eulogius, patriarch of Alexandria (who told it to Abba Menas, who in turn told it to John Moschus) when he was archdeacon and apocrisiarius for Pelagius II in Constantinople.¹³ The first story about Leo in the *Spiritual Meadow* tells how he left his *Tome to Flavian* on the tomb of St Peter (in 449) to be corrected by the apostle. Forty days later the apostle

⁸ Leo's contribution to Chalcedon and the strife that followed is discussed in a case-study by B. Neil, 'Religious Conflict in Fifth-Century Rome: Methods of Avoidance and Escalation', *Scrinium* (forthcoming).

⁹ Leo I, *Ep.* 28, ed. E. Schwartz, *Concilium universale Chalcedonense*, vol. 2: *Versiones particulares*, pars 1: *Collectio Novariensis de re Eutyches*, Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum 2 (Berlin, 1932), 24-33; B. Neil (trans.), *Leo the Great*, The Early Church Fathers (Abingdon, New York, 2009), 94-103.

¹⁰ *Ep.* 124.1, trans. Neil, *Leo the Great* (2009), 106: '... certain translators, whether out of ignorance as seems likely, or out of malice, gave you to understand something other than what I preached. They were not able to render the Latin into Greek speech with fitting accuracy since each disputant can hardly manage to explain in his own tongue such subtle and difficult matters'. E. Schwartz (ed.), *Concilium universale Chalcedonense*, vol. 4: *Leonis papae I epistularum collections*, Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum 2 (Berlin, 1932), 159 (= *Ep.* 113.1).

¹¹ See M.C. Pennacchio, 'Ilaro, papa', in *Enciclopedia dei Papi*, vol. 1 (Rome, 2000), 442-7.

¹² So J. Wortley, *The Spiritual Meadow of John Moschus*, Cistercian Studies Series 139 (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1992), xvii.

¹³ See also P. Booth, 'Gregory and the Greek East', in B. Neil and M. Dal Santo (eds), *A Companion to Gregory the Great* (Leiden, 2013), 109-31, 123-6, on Gregory's involvement in eastern circles of his contemporary John Moschus, whom he never met. Booth, *ibid.* 124, deals with the two passages of *Pratum spirituale* cited below.

appeared to him as he was praying, saying, 'I have read it and I have corrected it'. So Leo returned to the tomb and found it corrected in the apostle's hand.¹⁴

In the second story, recounted by Theodore, bishop of Dara in Libya, secretary (*synkellos*) of Eulogius of Constantinople, a tall and impressive-looking Pope Leo appeared to Theodore in his sleep saying: 'Announce me to Eulogius'. Eulogius came running out to meet the visitor (in the dream).¹⁵

Then the truly godly and divinely-inspired Leo said to Pope Eulogios: 'Do you know why I have come to you?' The other said he did not. 'I have come to thank you', he said, 'because you have defended so well, and so intelligently, the letter [sc. the *Tome*] which I wrote to our brother, Flavian, Patriarch of Constantinople. You have declared my meaning and sealed up the mouths of the heretics. And know, brother, that it is not only me whom you have gratified by this labour of yours, but also Peter, the chief of the apostles; and, above all, the very Truth which is proclaimed by us, which is Christ our God'.

After he had seen the same vision three times, he told Eulogius, who was very gratified and gave thanks to God with tears that he had heard the prayers of '[God's] servants Peter and Leo'.

In his ninth-century review of books he had read, Patriarch Photius described Leo as the 'opponent of the impious doctrines' of the Coelestians and Nestorians (the two heresies being equated on the authority of Cyril of Alexandria),¹⁶ but gave the credit to Prosper of Aquitaine for crushing them in Rome with his writings, perhaps a subtle dig at Leo, whose authorship of the famous *Tome* was held in doubt by some contemporaries:¹⁷

Not long afterwards, when the shameless heresy again sprang up from an evil root, certain persons at Rome openly expressed themselves in favour of it. But Prosper, truly a man of God, in his pamphlets against them, soon crushed them, while Leo still occupied the papal throne.¹⁸ The heresy was also condemned at the holy synod of Ephesus. John, patriarch of Alexandria, in his *Apologia* to Gelasius, bishop of Rome, anathematized not only the Pelagian heresy, but Pelagius and Coelestius themselves, together with Julian, who was known to have succeeded them in the leadership of this sect.

A fragment of a genuine letter of Leo's successor Hilary (461-468) to the Byzantine Emperor Nicephorus is preserved in the *acta* of the Synod of Pavia

¹⁴ *Pratum spirituale* 147, PG 87C, 3012A-B; trans. Wortley, *Spiritual Meadow* (1992), 120.

¹⁵ *Pratum spirituale* 148, PG 87C, 3012C-3013A; trans. Wortley, *Spiritual Meadow* (1992), 121.

¹⁶ Photius, *Bibliotheca Cod.* 54, ed. R. Henry, *Photius: Bibliothèque*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1959; repr. Paris, 2003), 42.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*; trans. J.H. Freesse, *Bibliotheca Cod. 1-165* (London, 1920), online at <http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/photius_03bibliotheca.htm> (accessed 11.06.15) no page.

¹⁸ These pamphlets probably included the work that Photius called *A Copy of the Proceedings taken against the Doctrines of Nestorius by the Bishops of the West*, in *Bibliotheca Cod.* 54, ed. Henry, *Photius* (2003), 42. No other record of this work survives.

(866 AD).¹⁹ Hilary's decretal to the East confirmed the decisions of three ecumenical synods of Nicaea, Ephesus and Chalcedon, and endorsed Leo's *Tome*. In spite of this endorsement, he is not remembered in the Byzantine tradition. The same ignominy followed the pontificates of Simplicius (468-483) and Felix III (483-492), who presided over the Roman synod in 485 which excommunicated Acacius, probably due to their prominent role in the schism.²⁰ A fragment of Felix III's *Letter* 8 to Emperor Zeno – concerning the papal legates Vitalis and Misenus who crossed over to the imperial side when sent to Constantinople by Felix III after he had condemned both Acacius and Peter, patriarch of Alexandria – appears in *Letter* 90 of the ninth-century Pope Nicholas I to Emperor Michael III:²¹ 'Apostolic censure of Vitalis and Misenus, when they consented to these things, even though under duress, deprived them of their office and communion at the same time'. Nicholas' letter of 13 November 866 was written in the context of dispute between Rome and Constantinople over hegemony of the Bulgarian church. Nicholas had condemned his legates Radoald and Zacharias' for yielding to Michael's threats when they were sent to the capital to deliver the news of Nicholas' excommunication of the patriarch Photius. According to *LP*, *Letter* 90 and eight other letters of the same date to Constantinople recommending the papal legates who bore them were never delivered, Nicholas' embassy being blocked at the Bulgarian border by a Constantinopolitan guard.²²

Several letters from Popes Damasus to Gelasius I (492-496) were preserved for posterity in their original Latin and in Greek translation in the Scythian monk Dionysius Exiguus' *Book of Decrees (Liber Decretorum)*, the first recension of what became known as the *Dionysian Collection*. Dionysius' selection of papal pronouncements on subjects pertaining to ecclesiastical law and clerical discipline are usually studied in isolation, as one of the earliest witnesses to

¹⁹ PLS 3, 443. Inc. *De Deo gratias*, in P. Jaffé, S. Löwenfeld, F. Kaltenbrunner and P. Ewald (eds), *Regesta pontificum romanorum ab condita ecclesia ad annum post Christum natum MCXCVIII*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, ²1885-1888), [= JK] 565. See E. Dekkers (ed.), *Clavis Patrum Latinorum* (Turnhout, ³1995), no. 1663.

²⁰ Felix III, *Ep.* 11, in A. Thiel (ed.), *Epistolae Romanorum pontificum genuinae et quae ad eos scriptae sunt a s. Hilario usque ad Pelagium II*, vol. 1 (Braunsberg, ²1867; repr. Hildesheim, 2004), 221-84. Thiel, *ibid.*, edited seventeen letters, along with the *acta* of the Roman synods of 487 and 488 (*Ep.* 13) which were promulgated in Felix III's name.

²¹ Felix III, *Ep.* 8 (*Clavis Patrum Latinorum* 1666), cited by Pope Nicholas I, *Ep.* 90 (JK 2813): *Vitalem atque Misenum cur vel impulsus ad ista consenserint, honore simul et communione apostolica censura privavit*. E. Perels (ed.), *Nicholai I. epistolae*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica Epistolae 6, *Epistolae Karolini aevi* 4 (Berlin, 1978), 491, lines 34-5.

²² L. Duchesne and C. Vogel (eds), *Le Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 2 (Paris, ²1955-1957). See R. Davis (trans.), *The Lives of the Ninth-century Popes (Liber Pontificalis): The Ancient Biographies of Ten Popes from AD 817-891*, Translated Texts for Historians 20 (Liverpool, 1995), 242-3 and n. 150.

Roman canon law,²³ but as a collection they offer an insight into issues of common concern to the Greek and Roman churches in the early fifth century, and should be read in the context of other canon and civil law productions of the sixth century, as I have argued elsewhere.²⁴ The *General Decretal* of Pope Gelasius I was cut up into 28 chapters by Dionysius, each one dealing with a separate matter of discipline and liturgical practice for male clergy and consecrated virgins.²⁵ This handy reference guide to a range of canonical problems – from what to do with nuns who married, to how to punish bishops who made off with their diocese’s wealth – gave Gelasius long-standing fame in the East, even though he had been a prominent defender of the ‘two swords’ theory. His rhetorically-loaded defence of papal authority against the imperial powers of Anastasius I was not included in Dionysius’ collection.²⁶ However, Dionysius did include decretals from seven letters of Pope Leo I, including *Ep.* 137 to Emperor Marcian I, which contained a preliminary version of the ‘two swords’ theory.²⁷

The Acacian schism continued to plague the church from 496 to 498, with Pope Anastasius II seeking a rapprochement with the East and the Roman clergy falling out of communion with him as a consequence.²⁸ He is not well known in the East, perhaps because of his strong statement of papal primacy in *Letter 2* to Emperor Anastasius I.²⁹ Interestingly, eight excerpts from this

²³ G. Fransen, *Les décrétales et les collections de décrétales* (Turnhout, 1972; supplement Turnhout, 1985); B.E. Ferme, *Introduction to the History of the Sources of Canon Law: The Ancient Law up to the Decretum of Gratian*, Gratianus Series, Eng. trans. by W. King; orig. Italian ed. 1998 (Montreal, 2007); L. Kéry, *Canonical Collections of the Early Middle Ages (ca. 400–1140)* (Washington, D.C., 1999); D. Jasper and H. Fuhrmann, *Papal Letters in the Early Middle Ages* (Washington, D.C., 2001); L. Fowler-Magerl, *Clavis Canonum. Selected Canon Law Collections before 1140: Access with Data Processing*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Hilfsmittel 21 (Hanover, 2005).

²⁴ B. Neil, ‘The Decretals of Gelasius I: Making Canon Law in Late Antiquity’, in *Lex et Religio. XL Incontro di Studiosi dell’Antichità Cristiana (Roma, 10-12 maggio 2012)*, Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum 135 (Rome, 2013), 657-67.

²⁵ Gelasius, *Ep.* 14, ed. Thiel, *Epistolae* (2004), 362-79. Trans. B. Neil and P. Allen, *The Letters of Gelasius I (492–496), Pastor and Micro-manager of the Church of Rome*, Adnotationes I (Turnhout, 2014), 143-57. Ital. trans. T. Sardella and C. dell’Osso (eds), *I canoni dei concili della chiesa antica*, vol. 2: *I concili Latini*, part 1: *Decretali, concili Romani e canoni di Serdica*, Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum 106 (Rome, 2006).

²⁶ H. Wurm, *Studien und Texte zur Dekretalensammlung des Dionysius Exiguus*, Kanonistische Studien und Texte 16 (Bonn, 1939; repr. Amsterdam, 1964).

²⁷ See B. Neil, *Leo the Great* (2009), 137-8, and B. Neil, ‘The Decretals of Gelasius I’ (2013), 662 and n. 25.

²⁸ See P. Bertolini, ‘Anastasio II’, in *Enciclopedia dei Papi*, vol. 1 (Rome, 2000), 462-4. On Pope Anastasius’ role in this schism see E. Schwartz, *Publizistische Sammlungen zum acacianischen Schisma*, Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Abt. Neue Folge 10/4 (Munich, 1934), 3-303, 227-30.

²⁹ Anastasius II wrote six surviving letters, including a *Libellus*, ed. Thiel, *Epistolae* (2004), 615-37.

letter were included in Dionysius Exiguus' second recension of the Latin canons with a Greek translation.³⁰

Pope Agapitus (535-536), son of a priest, had held the see of Rome for just under a year before being sent to Constantinople on an embassy for the Gothic king Theodahad. He upset Justinian with his condemnation of the anti-Chalcedonian Patriarch Anthimus of Constantinople, who would not confess two natures in Christ.³¹ Justinian was forced to retire his patriarch, under the anathema, replacing him with the Chalcedonian Menas. Agapitus did not live long enough to enjoy his triumph over the emperor and the heretic Anthimus. He was mysteriously struck ill and died 'several days later' in Constantinople, on 22 April 536.

Agapitus, champion of two-nature Christology, is celebrated in the *Spiritual Meadow*. Three times Agapitus received a vision in his sleep in which a voice said 'the bishop (of Romilla, thirty miles from Rome) whom you hold as a prisoner will celebrate Eucharist with you.' So he let the bishop out of prison and concelebrated the Eucharist with him. That bishop could not finish the prayer of consecration but kept repeating it until the pope (at his request) dismissed a deacon whose presence was preventing the Holy Spirit from descending upon the gifts at the altar.³² Immediately the pope saw the Holy Spirit descending on the altar. The veil over the altar moved of its own accord and for three hours it overshadowed him and all the clergy standing there with him. Finally he realised that the bishop of Romilla had been falsely accused by the deacon (we are not told the nature of the accusation), and he resolved never to act with impatience again.

Roman bishops' letters could be used in later debates over papal primacy in ways which their authors would no doubt have repudiated, had they been given the chance. Pope Nicholas I (858-867) cited almost a whole letter of Pope Pelagius I (556-561) in his chastening address to Emperor Michael III on the question of imperial power over Rome.³³ This was the letter in which Pelagius had reprimanded King Childebert for allowing Sapaudus, bishop of Arles, to be brought before a secular court at the request of another bishop for an unspecified crime. It also contained a thinly veiled threat that God's support for the Gothic king's rule depended upon his respect for ecclesiastical laws and

³⁰ See B. Neil, 'The Decretals of Gelasius I' (2013), 662-4.

³¹ Agapitus I, *Epistula ad Iustinianum* inc. *Licet de...*, in O. Günther (ed.), *Epistulae imperatorum pontificum aliorum inde ab a. CCCLXVII usque ad a. DLIII datae Avellana quae dicitur collectio*, CSEL 35 (Vienna, Prague, 1895), 333-8; *id.*, *Epistula ad Iustinianum* inc. *Gratularum...*, in O. Günther (ed.), *Collectio Avellana* (1895), 342-7.

³² *Pratum spirituale* 150, PG 87C; trans. Wortley, *Spiritual Meadow* (1992), 122-4.

³³ *Ep.* 8 (JK 948). See Jasper and Furhmann, *Papal Letters* (2001), 67 n. 287. Pope Nicholas, *Ep.* 88, ed. E. Perels, *Nicholai I. epistolae* (1978), 465 (28 September 865). On the codices that preserve this letter-within-a-letter see P.M. Gassó and C.M. Batlle (eds), *Pelagii I Papae epistulae quae supersunt (556-561)*, Scripta et Documenta 8 (Montserrat, 1956), xxxi.

protection of the integrity of clerical orders.³⁴ Its value to Nicholas I in his struggles with the patriarchs of Constantinople and their imperial masters in the second half of the ninth century is obvious.³⁵ In the same letter, Nicholas criticised the Byzantine ruler for calling himself ‘emperor of the Romans’ when he could not even speak the language of Rome.³⁶

Pelagius I, formerly archdeacon of Agapitus and Vigilus, was the preferred candidate of the Byzantine general Narses, but was seen by the Roman and northern Italian clergy as a traitor to the anti-Three Chapters party. Consequently, he was not accepted by the Roman clergy or the nobility, and had trouble finding a bishop to ordain him. He claimed that even while he was *apocrisiarius* for Vigilus in Constantinople, he had written a refutation of his predecessor Vigilus, which does not survive. Pelagius is not remembered in the East, even though many of his letters survive.³⁷ His case is a reminder that even Byzantine candidates to the papacy were not guaranteed an afterlife within the regime that sponsored their accession to power.

Of all the late-antique popes, the only one to have made a lasting impact on the Greek East, to the extent of being celebrated with a Greek *Life*, was Gregory I (590-604). As Andrew Louth remarks:

Gregory is exceptional in having any influence in the East at all. The Byzantine Greeks, probably from an inherited sense of cultural superiority, displayed very little interest in the Latins. It is only at the very end of the Byzantine era—from the close of the 13th century onwards—that there is any volume of translation from Latin into Greek.³⁸

Apart from three Latin *Lives* of Gregory, which appeared one to three centuries after his death,³⁹ Gregory was also the subject of a Greek *Bios* to which Photius refers in his *Bibliotheca*.⁴⁰

³⁴ P.M. Gassó and C.M. Battle (eds), *Pelagii I epistulae* (1956), 27, lines 20-5: *Et huiusmodi causis sollicitam uos in reliquo decet exhibere cautelam, ne quid contra ecclesiasticas regulas menti uestrae, non aliter Deo nostro recte potest regalis deuotio famulari, nisi prouidentia eius ecclesiasticorum ordinum seruetur integritas.*

³⁵ See discussion of Pope Nicholas I's *Ep.* 88 by B. Neil (ed., trans.), *Seventh-century Popes and Martyrs: The Political Hagiography of Anastasius Bibliothecarius*, *Studia Antiqua Australiensia* 2 (Turnhout, Sydney, 2006), 16-7.

³⁶ Pope Nicholas, *Ep.* 88, ed. E. Perels, *Nicholai I. epistolae* (1978), 459, lines 5-32.

³⁷ 96 letters are edited by P.M. Gassó and C.M. Battle, *Pelagii I epistulae* (1956).

³⁸ A. Louth, ‘Gregory the Great in the Byzantine Tradition’, in B. Neil and M. Dal Santo (eds), *A Companion to Gregory the Great* (2013), 343-58, 344.

³⁹ The English *vita* composed by an anonymous monk of Whitby c. 713; Paul the Deacon's *Life of Gregory*, ed. S. Tuzzo, *Vita sancti Gregorii Magni* (Pisa, 2002), composed between 770 and 780; and the official Roman *vita* composed by John the Deacon for Pope John VIII (*sedes* 872-882), PL 75, 63-242.

⁴⁰ Photius, *Bibliotheca Cod.* 252, ed. R. Henry, *Photius: Bibliothèque*, vol. 7 (Paris, 1974; repr. Paris, 2003), 208 and n. 1, notes that F. Halkin (‘La date de composition de la ‘Bibliothèque’ de Photius remise en question’, *Analecta Bollandiana* 31 [1963], 414-7) believed that this material was drawn from a Greek version of the Latin life by John the Deacon (also known as John

Gregory's monastic background and his leanings towards eastern monasticism may partially explain his popularity in the East. This is evident from John Moschus' anecdote in the *Spiritual Meadow* concerning the time when Abba John the Persian visited Rome. When in papal procession Gregory passed John on the street, the great bishop prostrated himself before the monk, who had already prostrated himself before the pope. He then gave John three gold pieces and a good cloak, and provided for all of his needs.⁴¹ This story from the *Spiritual Meadow* reappears in the Whitby *Life of Gregory* and in the *Vita* of John the Deacon, as Booth noted,⁴² and provides evidence (albeit slim) of the Byzantine tradition storing and passing back to Rome the stories of its own spiritual heroes in the Middle Ages.

Two of Gregory's major works found great popularity in their Greek versions. The translation of the *Pastoral Rule* by Gregory's friend from Constantinople, Anastasius, patriarch of Antioch, made as early as 602, unfortunately does not survive.⁴³ The *Dialogues* in the Greek version made by Pope Zacharias (741-752), a Greek by birth, brought the fantastic collection of the miracles of wonder-working monks in Italy, and its author Gregory, lasting fame in the East.⁴⁴ The translation is noted in the *Liber Pontificalis* as one of Zacharias' greatest achievements.⁴⁵ In the second half of the ninth century, Photius in his *Bibliotheca* comments that Zacharias translated 'other valuable works' by Gregory, but these, like the Greek version of the *Pastoral Rule*, do not survive.

The fourth book of Gregory's *Dialogues* was an important source for a florilegium of extracts from various fathers on the monastic life made by Paul, founder of the monastery of the 'Beneficent Mother of God' (*Theotokos evergetis*) near Constantinople. Paul Evergetinos completed this massive work there before his death in 1054. Gregory's success in the East is all the more remarkable

Immonides) but it is more likely, given recent thinking on the date of the *Bibliotheca*'s composition (c. 855), some twenty years before the composition of the Latin life, and given John's knowledge of Greek, that John drew from the *Greek Life* that is now missing. On John Immonides, see B. Neil, *Seventh-century Popes* (2006), 64-5, 86. John's *Life of Gregory* contains information that is lacking in the other two Latin *vitae*. See B. Hemmerdinger, 'Le 'codex' 252 de la *Bibliothèque* de Photius', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 58 (1965), 1-2 (*sic*), and P. Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin. Notes et remarques sur enseignement et culture à Byzance des origines au X^e siècle*, *Bibliothèque byzantine. Études* 6 (Paris, 1971), 190 and n. 48.

⁴¹ *Pratum spirituale* 151, PG 87C, 3016D-3017A; trans. Wortley, *Spiritual Meadow* (1992), 124.

⁴² See P. Booth, 'Gregory and the Greek East' (2013), 125-6.

⁴³ *Ep.* 12.6, ed. D. Norberg, *S. Gregorii Magni Registrum Epistularum libri I-XIV*, CChr.SL 140A (Turnhout, 1982), 976. See R. Lizzi, 'La traduzione greca delle opere di Gregorio Magno dalla *Regula Pastoralis* ai *Dialogi*', in *Gregorio Magno e il suo tempo. XIX Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiana in collaborazione con l'Ecole Française de Rome, Roma, 9-12 maggio 1990*, *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 34/2 (Rome, 1991), 41-57.

⁴⁴ PL 77, 147-432.

⁴⁵ L. Duchesne and C. Vogel, *Le Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 1 (1955-1957), 435; see R. Lizzi, 'La traduzione greca' (1991).

for the fact that he opposed the patriarch of Constantinople's abrogation of the title 'ecumenical' (or, as he translated it in Latin, 'universal') for himself, as George Demacopoulos has highlighted.⁴⁶

Principles of selection

Based on the admittedly scanty surviving literary evidence, certain characteristics seem to have been mandatory for the survival of a Roman bishop's memory in the East:

1. Successful mediation between the Roman and Byzantine churches through letters adduced at councils.

All three popes mentioned by the dyothelite John Moschus fought against heresy in the East: Pope Leo the Great, opponent of the so-called monophysites under Eutychius; Pope Agapitus, who convinced Justinian to excommunicate and exile his anti-Chalcedonian patriarch Anthimus; and Gregory I who, while he was *apocrisiarius* in Constantinople, opposed the patriarch Eustratius in a debate before the court in Constantinople over the materiality of the resurrection body.⁴⁷ It is notable that both Agapitus and Gregory visited Constantinople in person, although there were others that did the same and met with unpleasant ends, and who are not remembered, such as John IV and Vigilius. All the popes who were celebrated in the Byzantine Greek church came out on the 'right' side of doctrinal disputes between Rome and Constantinople, that is to say, the side that was eventually received as orthodox.

2. Authorship of decretals, or letters taken to have universal application

Decretals that circulated in Latin and Greek in the *Liber Decretorum* included Pope Leo I's *Letter 4* and *Letter 137*,⁴⁸ Pope Gelasius I's *General Decretal*, and Pope Anastasius II's strong statement of papal primacy, *Letter 2* to Emperor Anastasius I. Other papal letters served Nicholas I's attempt to assert papal primacy against the powerful eastern church of the ninth century, the era of the great patriarch Photius. To be worthy of citing in this context, a pope had to maintain opposition to secular power. Nicholas' champions included Pope Felix III, who in a letter to Emperor Zeno censured the turncoat papal legates

⁴⁶ G.E. Demacopoulos, 'Gregory the Great and the Sixth-Century Dispute over the Ecumenical Title', *Theological Studies* 70 (2009), 600-21.

⁴⁷ M. Dal Santo, 'Gregory the Great and Eustratius of Constantinople: the *Dialogues on the Miracles of the Italian Fathers* as an Apology for the Cult of the Saints', *Journal for Early Christian Studies* 17 (2009), 421-47.

⁴⁸ H. Wurm (ed.), 'Decretales selectae ex antiquissimis Romanorum Pontificum epistulis decretalibus', *Apollinaris* 12 (1939), 79-93.

Vitalis and Misenus; Pope Gelasius, author of the ‘two swords’ theory in his letter to Anastasius I; and Pope Pelagius I, who reprimanded the Gothic King Childebert for trying bishops under secular law.

3. Authorship of works with universal appeal, translated into Greek

Other works which found popularity in their Greek versions included the *Dialogues* and *Pastoral Rule* of Gregory, the former being excerpted in the eleventh century by Paul Evergetinos for a monastic readership. These two works alone explain the powerful echoes of Gregory in the Byzantine tradition, giving him an unrivalled status there among Roman bishops of Late Antiquity as ‘the Dialogist’.

Finally, assertion of papal primacy was not a barrier to being memorialised in the Byzantine church. Gregory I, if he did not claim the universal title for himself, opposed its use by the patriarch of Constantinople, and sought to impose the seniority of the see of Rome over the popes of Alexandria and Antioch.

Providence, Resurrection, and Restoration in Byzantine Thought, Eighth to Ninth Centuries

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ABSTRACT

In her comprehensive and significant publication on the Christian teaching of the final restoration (*apokatastasis*) published in 2013, Ilaria Ramelli ends her study of the Greek and Latin traditions with Maximos the Confessor in the seventh century and with Eriugena in the ninth century. It is my intention in this paper to look at what was said on this topic and the related ones of providence (*pronoia*) and resurrection (*anastasis*) in Byzantium during the eighth and ninth centuries, a period largely consumed with the iconoclast controversy, and usually overlooked in relation to discussion of these topics. Yet there are a number of works which deal with these themes but whose textual history and attribution are in some cases obscure. Nevertheless, it is clear that interest in these topics continued to occupy theologians throughout this period, and that the iconoclast controversy may have provided the impetus for this continuing interest. Questions surrounding the post-resurrection status of Christ, and the impossibility of depicting his deified form, were raised by the iconoclasts and answered by John of Damascus, Theodore the Stoudite and Patriarch Nikephoros. Discussion relating to divine providence and the final restoration are also evident in their writings as well as in those of Patriarch Germanos and Patriarch Photios. This presentation will survey all three themes in the works of these authors in order to assess the contribution they made to understanding human destiny and divine judgement in the history of Byzantine Christianity.

Introduction

The topics highlighted in this article are not generally discussed in relation to Byzantine thought of the eighth and ninth centuries, the period that saw iconoclasm cast its long shadow over the intellectual history of Byzantium. Nevertheless, a close study of several texts from the period reveals an on-going engagement with these topics, perhaps as a result of the controversy stirred up by the iconoclasts and their reconfiguration of Chalcedonian 'orthodoxy'. Whatever the case, these texts are worth looking at for what their authors have to say in the wider context of understanding the Byzantine view of human destiny and the afterlife.

Terms of Life

In a work entitled *On [Predestined] Terms of Life* (CPG 8021), attributed to the eight-century patriarch of Constantinople, Germanos I, the focal point of the dialogue is the vindication of divine providence, especially as it applies to our lifespan.¹ The work claims to have been prompted by the recent death of a friend, untimely death being a not unusual reason for reflection upon the role of providence and fate. It explores the question of whether the limits of our lives are predetermined, why bad things happen to good people and good things to bad people, matters naturally of concern to individuals which require a satisfactory theological explanation. An earlier work on the same theme is attributed to the seventh-century historian, Theophylactos Simokattes,² as well as being discussed in the *Questions and Answers* of Anastasios of Sinai in the same century.³ The phrase 'terms of life' is taken from Basil the Great's homily *God is not the Author of Evil*, where he writes:

Death comes to those whose term of life (περὶ ὄρων ζωῆς) is completed; from the beginning, the just judgment of God has appointed this for each person, as he foresees from long before what is advantageous to each of us.⁴

Basil says this in the context of acquitting God of blame for personal health issues, social injustices, and natural disasters, while at the same time promoting the idea that divine providence does not predetermine what happens to us, any more than evil is a substance of its own.

In a consolatory letter of 871 to his brother Tarasios on the death of his daughter, the patriarch Photios takes issue with the sentiment that she died before her time.⁵ He does so because there is no inappropriate time in relation to what God has determined for us. He writes:

... while she was born by the consent of God and on time, yet in regards to her departure to the creator (δημιουργός) we appoint ourselves as timekeepers. And, while the

¹ C. Garton and L.G. Westerink, *Germanos On Predestined Terms of Life, Greek Text and English Translation*, Arethusa Monographs VII (Buffalo, New York, 1979).

² C. Garton and L.G. Westerink, *Theophylactos Simokates, On Predestined Terms of Life*, Arethusa Monographs VI (Buffalo, New York, 1978).

³ Questions 16 & 17, J.A. Munitiz, *Anastasios of Sinai, Questions and Answers*, Corpus Christianorum in Translation 7 (Turnhout, 2011); and his 'The Predetermination of Death: The Contribution of Anastasios of Sinai and Nikephoros Blemmydes to a Perennial Byzantine Problem', *DOP* 55 (2001), 9-20. Niketas Stethatos also wrote *On Terms of Life* in the eleventh century, see J. Darrouzès, *Nicétas Stethatos, Opuscules et Lettres*, Sources Chrétiennes 81 (Paris, 1961), 366-411.

⁴ N.V. Harrison, *St Basil the Great: On the Human Condition* (New York, 2005), 68.

⁵ *Epistle 234, ad Tarasium, consolatoria de morte filiae*, B. Laourdas and L.G. Westerink (eds), *Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani, Episulae et Amphilochia II* (Leipzig, 1984). See D. White, 'Photios' Letter to his Brother Tarasios on the Death of his Daughter', *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 18 (1973), 47-58.

creator brings us forth on time, when he takes us back to himself, then does he not know the right time? ... When, however, he transforms her to immortal life, only then it is not the right time?⁶

Photios implicitly evokes the ‘terms of life’ argument as it relates to those whose lives are cut short and who seem from a human perspective to have died needlessly and unjustifiably. If we accept that children are born at the appropriate time then we must accept that they can be taken from us at a time not of our choosing. If this sounds somewhat harsh it should be said that Photios strikes a more sympathetic note in other parts of his letter. He expresses similar sentiments a few years later in his letter to the nun Eusebia on the death of her sister.⁷

In another work attributed to Germanos I but now lost, the *Treatise on Requital* (CPG 8022), which was known to Photios (*Bibliothèque* cod. 233), the patriarch discusses the doctrine of *apokatastasis* and the salvation of demons which the followers of Origen claimed was supported by Gregory of Nyssa.⁸ Germanos in turn suggests that Gregory’s writings have been interpolated and are not open to the Origenist interpretation. He maintains that not all will be saved but each will receive his or her just requital at the appointed time.⁹ This is in accordance with his work *On [Predestined] Terms of Life*, which demonstrates that there are terms of life which God foreknows but which we cannot know.

Final restoration

When Maximos the Confessor was asked to explain the teaching of the final restoration he gave three explanations, the third of which deals with what Gregory of Nyssa said.¹⁰ It is noticeable that in explaining *apokatastasis* in his *Quaestiones et dubia*, Maximos restricts his comments to what the *ekklesia*

⁶ Epistle 234, 102-8. Translation (modified) by D.S. White, *Patriarch Photios of Constantinople: His Life, Scholarly Contributions, and Correspondence together with a Translation of Fifty-Two of his Letters* (Brookline, 1981), 118-9.

⁷ Epistle 245, *Eusebiae abbatissae*. This letter to the abbess Eusebia appears to be the only surviving one Photios addressed to a woman, see D. White, ‘Patriarch Photios’ Letter to Mother Superior Eusebia’, *Classical Folia* 29 (1975), 31-43.

⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Oration*, 27. We may note Anastasios of Sinai in Question 19: ‘Resurrection (*anastasis*) is defined by the holy fathers as a restoration (*apokatastasis*) to the primitive state of the first man’. In her comprehensive study of *apokatastasis* Ilaria Ramelli ends her survey of the Greek tradition with Maximos the Confessor, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena* (Leiden, 2013).

⁹ W. Luckner, ‘Ein Hagiographisches Zeugnis für den Antapodotikos des Patriarchen Germanos I. von Konstantinopel’, *Byzantion* 28 (1968), 42-104.

¹⁰ *Quaestiones et Dubia* 19, J.D. Declerck (ed.), *Maximi Confessoris Quaestiones et Dubia*, Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca 10 (Turnhout, 1982).

understands, and does not enter into the wider debate surrounding the issue.¹¹ In the ninth-century Theodore the Stoudite discusses the topic in one of his letters from exile.¹² He does so in answer to his correspondent's query regarding the teaching on the final restoration, and refers explicitly to Maximos' discussion of the three types of restoration. In fact Theodore quotes Maximos verbatim which probably means that he had his text in front of him when replying to his correspondent. Clearly the topic did not go away simply because of the condemnation of the doctrine of a final restoration and the release of the damned associated with Origen's name in the sixth century.¹³

The prospect of a universal restoration and an end to everlasting punishment is explicitly denied in the anathemas attached to the Definition (*Horos*) of the Iconoclast Council convoked by Constantine V in 754. It states:

Εἴ τις οὐχ ὁμολογεῖ ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν, καὶ κρίσιν καὶ ἀνταπόδοσιν τὴν πρὸς ἀξίαν ἐκάστῳ τοῖς δικαίοις τοῦ Θεοῦ σταθμοῖς, καὶ μὴ εἶναι τέλος κολάσεως, μήτε μὴν τῆς οὐρανοῦ βασιλείας, ἥτις ἐστὶν ἡ τοῦ Θεοῦ κατατρυφήσις ... ἀνάθεμα.

If anyone does not confess the resurrection of the dead, the judgment, and the recompense of each one's worth according to the just measures of God, and [does not confess] that there is no end either to the punishment or to the kingdom of heaven, which is the delight in God ... [let him be] anathema.¹⁴

The iconoclasts are here reiterating the 'orthodox' position on this matter, and although this was acknowledged by the bishops at Nicaea II in 787, it was unacceptable to them because it came from a synod that claimed to be the seventh ecumenical council.¹⁵ But why did the iconoclasts feel it was necessary to include this anathema? One answer might be that they wanted to distance themselves from accusations that their theology was tainted by Origenism. In fact there are other indications that the iconoclasts wished to repudiate such a suggestion.¹⁶ The Definition of 754 also restates the condemnation

¹¹ The passage is mentioned by B.E. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (Cambridge, 1991), 202. See also A. Alexakis, 'Was There Life beyond the Life beyond? Byzantine Ideas on Reincarnation and Final Restoration', *DOP* 55 (2001), 155-77, esp. 175-6.

¹² *Epistle 471*, G. Fatouros (ed.), *Theodori Studitae Epistulae*, 2 vols (Berlin, 1991).

¹³ R. Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553, with related texts on the Three Chapters Controversy*, 2 vols, TTH 51 (Liverpool, 2009), II 270-86.

¹⁴ J.D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio* XIII (Florence, 1767, repr. Graz, 1960), 349C; T. Krannich, C. Schubert and C. Sode, *Die ikonklastische Synode von Hiereia 754*, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 15 (Tubingen, 2002), 66; S. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Constantine V, with particular attention to the oriental sources*, CSCO 384, Subsidia 52 (Louvain, 1977), 91-2.

¹⁵ Mansi XIII, 349D-352B; D.J. Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eighth-Century Iconoclasm*, Toronto Medieval Texts and Translations 4 (Toronto, 1986), 164-5.

¹⁶ However, this has not stopped modern scholars from detecting Origenist influence on the iconoclast controversy, see S. Gero's critique of Georges Florovsky's 1950 article, *Constantine V* (1977), 103-5. The detection has been revisited by V. Baranov, 'Origen and the Iconoclastic

of Origen made by the Fifth Ecumenical Council of 553 convoked by Justinian.¹⁷

In expressing his disapproval of a final restoration Justinian remarks in his letter of 543 to Menas, patriarch of Constantinople:

If punishment and reward come to an end, then what is the purpose of the incarnation? Why the crucifixion, the death, the burial and the resurrection of the Lord? What will be the reward of those who will have fought the good fight and witnessed for Christ, if the demons and the impious receive through restoration the same dignity as the saints?¹⁸

Such statements suggest that the doctrine of everlasting bliss and punishment was not to be compromised by ideas of universal salvation that embraced sinners and saints alike. This takes us to the heart of the matter: some seem more worthy of salvation than others, and although we may want the same good for everyone, the desire for justice dictates that we separate saints from sinners.

There is one text from our period that suggests salvation for the unbaptised in Hades. This is the *Homily on those who have reposed in the faith* (CPG 8112), traditionally ascribed to John of Damascus, but not known before the early ninth century.¹⁹ It also speaks of the remission of sins post-mortem as a result of prayers for the dead. This passage may owe something to the Greek translation of the *Dialogues* of Pope Gregory the Great made by Pope Zacharias in the mid-eighth century.²⁰ The topic was discussed earlier by Eustratios of Constantinople in the late sixth century, in his treatise *On the State of Souls after Death* (CPG 7522).²¹ The work is concerned to refute those who claim that the souls of the departed are asleep and oblivious to prayers of intercession. The discussion is centred on whether the dead await the final judgement before receiving their punishment or reward, or whether they have been already judged

Controversy', in L. Perrone (ed.), *Origeniana Octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition. Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress Pisa, 27-31 August 2001*, vol. II (Leuven, 2003), 1043-52. See also V. Baranov and B. Lourié, 'The Role of Christ's Soul-Mediator in the Iconoclastic Christology', in G. Heidl and R. Somos (eds), *Origeniana Nona: Origen and the Religious Practice of his Time* (Leuven, 2009), 403-11.

¹⁷ Mansi XIII, 236D; D.J. Sahas, *Icon and Logos* (1986), 72; S. Gero, *Constantine V* (1977), 73.

¹⁸ *Letter to Menas* quoted by J. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (New York, 1975), 58. The 9th anathema of the Canons of the Synod of 543 condemns the restoration of demons and the impious, see R. Price, *Acts of the Council of 553* (2009), II 281.

¹⁹ PG 95, 248-77. On this text see V. Kontouma, 'John of Damascus (c. 655-c. 745)', in her *John of Damascus: New Studies on his Life and Works*, Variorum Collected Studies Series (Farnham, 2015), I 9-11. The homily's attribution and authenticity is not discussed by H. Alfeyev, *Christ the Conqueror of Hell: The Descent into Hades from an Orthodox Perspective* (New York, 2009), 214-5.

²⁰ V. Kontouma, 'John of Damascus' (2015), I 9-11. See also V. Marinis, "'He Who Is at the Point of Death": The Fate of the Soul in Byzantine Art and Liturgy', *Gesta* 54 (2015), 59-84. Pope Zacharias' translation was known to Photios as well as a Greek *Life* of Gregory (*Bibl. cod* 252).

²¹ N. Constatas, 'An Apology for the Cult of the Saints in Late Antiquity: Eustratios Presbyter of Constantinople, *On the State of Souls After Death* (CPG 7522)', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10 (2002), 267-85. The work was read by Photios (*Bibl. cod.* 171).

and are now being punished and rewarded. Eustratios also wrote the *Vita* of the sixth-century patriarch Eutychius (CPG 7520), who had taught that the resurrected body would be incorporeal and who had engaged in debate with Gregory the Great while the latter was papal *apocrisiarius* in Constantinople.²² Also from the sixth century, the *Florilegium* of Stephen Gobar, known only from Photios (*Bibl. cod* 232), contains an extended section on aspects of resurrectional theology with point by point discussion of various teachings.²³

Resurrection of Christ

Julian of Halicarnassus' teaching on the incorruptibility of Christ's body, known as Aphthartodoceticism, is said to have been promoted by Justinian in his final days.²⁴ This proposed that the body of Christ was incorruptible from the moment of his incarnation. Subsequently the question of Christ's resurrected body became an issue for the iconoclasts. Theodore the Stoudite deals with it in response to the argument that Christ was circumscribed up to his passion and death but not after his resurrection. In arguing against this, he maintains that Christ did not lose the properties of his human body after his resurrection. The iconoclasts stated in the Definition of 754 that at the last judgement Christ will be seated with the Father with a God-like (θεοειδής) body, so that he may be seen by those who pierced him while remaining without corporeality (παχύτης).²⁵ In support of their position they cite *2Cor.* 5:16 where Paul says: 'Even though we once knew Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him so no longer'. Clearly the iconoclasts understood this to mean that we will no longer know him in his physical form. The same biblical passage is quoted in the Definition of 754 to emphasize the priority of hearing over sight.²⁶ Theodore counters with a proof-text of his own from *Luke* 24:39 where Christ says to his disciples: 'See my hands and feet, that it is I myself'. He argues that the person they saw after the resurrection was the same who was circumscribed before his passion and death.²⁷

²² M. Dal Santo, 'Gregory the Great and Eustratius of Constantinople: The Dialogues of the Miracles of the Italian Fathers as an Apology for the Cult of the Saints', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 17, (2009), 421-57.

²³ Discussed by M. Dal Santo, *Debating the Saints' Cults in the Age of Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2012), 134-48.

²⁴ Eustratius, *Vita* of Eutychius IV 33; Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* IV 39. On the Julianists see R. Dragnet, *Julien d'Halicarnasse et sa Controverse avec Sévère d'Antioche sur l'Incorruptibilité du Corps du Christ* (Louvain, 1924).

²⁵ Mansi XIII, 336CD. This was in fact based on Gregory of Nazianzus' *Oration* 40.45, N.V. Harrison, *Festal Orations, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus* (New York, 2008), 141.

²⁶ Mansi XIII, 258C.

²⁷ *Antirrheticus* 2.44, PG 99, 384B. For different theories of Christ's resurrection in relation to iconoclasm, see V. Baranov, 'Byzantine Doctrines on the Resurrected Body of Christ and their

Also in the ninth century, the patriarch Nikephoros I meets the same objection of the iconoclasts by arguing that after the resurrection it was with the same body, albeit incorruptible, that Christ entered through closed doors and showed himself to Thomas (*John* 20:26-7).²⁸ For the iconoclasts, however, it is precisely because he appeared among them when the doors were shut that he must have been uncircumscribed. This is what Nikephoros describes as Agraphotocetism, that is, the idea that Christ's resurrected body being uncircumscribable was therefore beyond depiction.²⁹ The patriarch argues that he would not have asked Thomas to touch him unless he could recognise him, and if this were the case, then Christ's resurrected body was not absorbed into the Godhead. The fact that he is no longer known according to the flesh does not mean he has abandoned his body, but that he has been released from physical constraints, such as thirst and hunger.³⁰ If the iconoclasts thought that Christ's resurrection placed him beyond representation, then they were at odds with what the fathers had said. Theodore the Stoudite refers to Gregory of Nazianzus, who says that Christ even now is petitioning as *anthropos* for our salvation because he still has the body he assumed, though he is no longer known according to the flesh.³¹

Nikephoros discusses the difference between circumscription (*περιγραφή*) and representation (*γραφή*). He remarks that the art of the icon painter is to represent, not to circumscribe. Circumscription is a property of existence, that is, of being present in time and space, without which the painter cannot depict anything that exists. He can depict imaginary beings and things, but these remain figments of the imagination, merely phantasms of such creatures as centaurs or tritons.³² It is at this point that the distinction between an icon and an idol comes into play; the icon is of an existing prototype while the idol has no counterpart in reality. Angels can be depicted because they reveal themselves in human form and are described as such in scripture.³³ For iconographers, there has to be an already existing prototype in order for there to be an icon, and not just any prototype, only the *dramatis personae* of Christ, his mother, confessors, and saints. As the patriarch Germanos I points out, you cannot make an icon of your mother or father and offer it veneration, only

Parallels in Late Antiquity', in V. Baranov and B. Lourié (eds), *Patrologia Pacifica. Selected papers presented to the Western Pacific Rim Patristics Society 3rd Annual Conference (Nagoya, Japan, September 29-October 1, 2006) and other patristic studies*, *Scrinium* 4 (2008), 5-22.

²⁸ *Antirrheticus* 3.38, PG 100, 437B.

²⁹ *Antirrheticus* 1.25, PG 100, 268A; K. Parry, *Depicting the Word: Byzantine Iconophile Thought of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries*, *Medieval Mediterranean* 12 (Leiden, 1996), 144.

³⁰ *Antirrheticus*, 3.39, PG 100, 444CD.

³¹ *Antirrheticus* 2.47, PG 99, 385C; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 30.14, N.V. Harrison, *Festal Orations* (2008), 105.

³² *Antirrheticus* 1.29, PG 100, 277B.

³³ K. Parry, *Depicting the Word* (1996), ch. 9.

those deemed by the church to be worthy of sainthood are worthy of being depicted and therefore venerated.³⁴

In his work *On Heresies* John of Damascus mentions a group he calls the Χριστολύται or ‘those who dissolve Christ’, who taught that after his resurrection Christ departed his dead body and ascended into heaven with only his divinity.³⁵ Nothing else is known of this sect, if such it was; it is not included in the list of heresies by Sophronius of Jerusalem in his *Synodical Letter* of the seventh century,³⁶ nor is it mentioned by other writers, at least not as far as I know. It is not certain that John derived this heresy from what he knew of iconoclast teaching, because it is not referred to in Heresy 102 on the iconoclasts found in some manuscripts of his *On Heresies*.³⁷ However, it is of some interest to find that Nikephoros cites Heresy 102, albeit in its expanded form.³⁸ Yet the idea of Christ abandoning his body and being subsumed into the Godhead has some affinity with the position taken by the iconoclasts. Their focus on the impossibility of depicting divinity in general, and Christ’s incorruptible body in particular, would suggest their Christology lacked a complete understanding of the Chalcedonian concept of hypostasis, and it was on this particular point that Theodore the Stoudite criticised them.³⁹ In writing his trilogy against the iconoclasts John of Damascus emphasizes that Christ never relinquished his human body once he acquired it.⁴⁰

The iconoclasts were not the only ones to question the nature of Christ’s resurrection in our period. In the *Refutations of the Saracens*, found among the Greek works attributed to Theodore Abū Qurrah in the early ninth century, we find a dialogue dealing with our topic. The text shows that understanding Christ’s resurrection was problematic for Muslims and that our author needed to explain how Christians understood it. What we are told is that the hypostatic union was not destroyed by the passion and death of Christ, even though his body was in the grave while his soul was in Hades, and that both parts were deified even though they were separated.⁴¹ Clearly questions relating to Christ’s

³⁴ *Letter to Thomas of Claudiopolis*, PG 98, 181B.

³⁵ *Liber de haeresibus* 93, P.B. Kotter (ed.), *Die Schiften des Johannes von Damaskos IV* (Berlin, 1981).

³⁶ See P. Allen, *Sophronius of Jerusalem and Seventh-Century Heresy: The Synodical Letter and Other Documents* (Oxford, 2009). Another work read by Photios (*Bibl. cod.* 231).

³⁷ See P.B. Kotter, *Liber de haeresibus* (1981), 5.

³⁸ *Antirrheticus* III.83-4, PG 100, 525D-533A. For discussion, see S. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III, with particular attention to the oriental sources*, CSCO 346, Subsidia 41 (Louvain, 1973), 67-9.

³⁹ *Antirrheticus* 3.A18, PG 99, 397D.

⁴⁰ *Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres* 1.4, P.B. Kotter (ed.), *Die Schiften des Johannes von Damaskos III* (Berlin, 1975).

⁴¹ English text in J.C. Lamoreaux, *Theodore Abū Qurrah*. Library of the Christian East 1 (Provo, 2005), 223-4. On the relation of Theodore’s Greek works to those attributed to John of

resurrection engaged Melkites debating with Muslims as well as Byzantines iconophiles dealing with iconoclasts.

Individual resurrection

For John of Damascus if there is no resurrection there is no providence. The resurrection provides recompense for the just who suffer in this life and for sinners who prosper, and without it there is no proper judgment or true governance. The soul and body will receive their recompense together because there can be no virtue or vice without the body. If death is the separation of the soul from the body then the resurrection reconstitutes them. John stresses that the resurrected will be known by their hypostatic properties; that is, their individual characteristics (καρρακτηριστικῶν), and will rise on judgement day with incorruptible bodies.⁴² He opposes the idea that the resurrected person will be of an entirely different nature, and therefore unrecognisable in his or her incorruptible state.⁴³ In discussing this question John illustrates it with reference to biblical proof texts utilised by previous authors such as Anastasios of Sinai.⁴⁴

It is unclear who John may be refuting here, but he could well be thinking of earlier authors such as John Philoponus in the sixth century.⁴⁵ In his lost treatise *On the Resurrection* (CPG 7272), a work known to Photios (*Bibl. cod.* 21), Philoponus proposed that there will be a new body of a different nature at the resurrection.⁴⁶ Maximos the Confessor mentions a new doctrine that emphasized the ‘blood and bones’ aspect of the resurrected body, suggesting that it will be no different from what we already have, except that it will not be subject to death.⁴⁷ This could well have developed in reaction to such a teaching regarding a resurrected body of an entirely different nature. Elsewhere Maximos argues

Damascus in the manuscript tradition, see J.C. Lamoreaux, ‘Theodore Abu Qurrah and John the Deacon’, *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 42 (2001), 361-86.

⁴² *Expositio fidei* IV 27, P.B. Kotter (ed.), *Die Schiften des Johannes von Damaskos* II (Berlin, 1973).

⁴³ On this particular topic, see D. Krausmüller, ‘“At the Resurrection we will not Recognise One Another”’: Radical Evaluation of Social Relations in the Lost Model of Anastasius’ and Pseudo-Anastasius’ *Questions and Answers*’, *Byzantion* 83 (2013), 207-27.

⁴⁴ See further Y. Papadogiannakis, ‘Individuality and the Resurrection in Some Late Antique Texts’, in A. Torrance and J. Zachhuber (eds), *Individuality in Late Antiquity* (Farnham, 2014), 129-42.

⁴⁵ On John Philoponus see the entry by S. Lilla in A. Di Berardino (ed.), *Patrology: The Eastern Fathers from the Council of Chalcedon (451) to John of Damascus (750)* (Cambridge, 2008), 356-84. The Damascene may have known Philoponus’ treatise as he preserves passages from another lost Greek work by him, *The Arbiter*, see *Liber de haeresibus* 83.

⁴⁶ See H. Chadwick, ‘Philoponus the Christian Theologian’, in R. Sorabji (ed.), *Philoponus and the Rejection of Aristotelian Science* (London, 1987), 41-56.

⁴⁷ Maximos the Confessor, *Epistula* 7, PG 91, 433C.

for the continuity of the individual identity by explaining that after the death of the body, the soul remains the soul of a certain [τινος] human being, just as the body, after separating from the soul, is the body of a particular human being.⁴⁸

At one point Theodore the Stoudite makes a reference to an iconographic representation of the last judgement. He does so in the context of refuting the iconoclasts on the impossibility of representing Christ after his resurrection. He says there is a long-standing tradition of depicting the last judgement which shows, depending on which side they are standing, some figures represented with gloomy faces and others with joyous ones. The fact that he draws attention to this aspect of the last judgement shows that he was familiar with such a scene, with the damned and the saved depicted either side of the mercy seat.⁴⁹ It also suggests that the saved will be on the right side from the damned on the left, the scriptural passage for this being the separation of the sheep from the goats at the last judgement (*Matt.* 25:31-41). However, there are no surviving images depicting this particular scene from Theodore's time.⁵⁰ Images of the resurrection are included in the programme of pictorial representations mentioned by John of Damascus.⁵¹ From the seventh century, the *Anastasis* icon showing Christ trampling on the gates of Hades and releasing Adam and Eve became a common image of the resurrection in the Byzantine tradition.⁵²

Conclusion

Although the topics we have looked at were perennial issues, concerns about providential justice, post-resurrectional identity, and a final restoration, appear to have a particular focus in the period under discussion. Given the political and religious upheavals of the times it would not be surprising if such concerns surfaced in the extant literature. The iconoclasts' loss of confidence in iconography to depict the resurrected Christ saw them promote a doctrine of uncircumscribability that was at odds with Chalcedonian Christology. However, one cannot help thinking that such a doctrine was symptomatic of a wider anxiety over the afterlife and human destiny at a time of disruption and uncertainty. Certainly the texts we have reviewed suggest that matters of an eschatological nature were pressing for iconoclasts and iconophiles alike.

⁴⁸ *Ambigua* 7, PG 91, 1101B; N. Constatas, *Maximos the Confessor: On Difficulties of the Church Fathers* I (Cambridge, MA, 2014), 139-41.

⁴⁹ *Antirrheticus* 1.10, PG 99, 341A.

⁵⁰ See L. Brubaker, 'Byzantine Visions of the End', in P. Clark and T. Claydon (eds), *The Church, The Afterlife and the Fate of the Soul*, Ecclesiastical History Society Papers (Woodbridge, 2009), 97-119.

⁵¹ *Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres* I 8; III 8.

⁵² See A.D. Kartsonis, *Anastasis: The Making of an Image* (Princeton, 1986).

Spätbyzantinische Übernahme der Vorstellung von der Lichtvision des Euagrius Pontikos, erörtert am Beispiel des Gregorios Sinaites

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ABSTRACT

Gregorios Sinaites (c. 1255-1346) is a major representative of Hesychasmus, a monastic-spiritual movement of the late Byzantine period, developed on the basis of the aspiration of a mystical experience of a vision of the divine light. This light-vision was attempted by repetition of the prayer of Jesus with a certain psycho-physical method. Gregorios Sinaites was the first monastic leader who created a detailed and precise doctrine for this prayer technique. In this article, I would like to focus on the light-vision as an effect of prayer, as its nature is not precisely explained. This mystical vision of the divine light itself had, however, since Euagrius Pontikos (c. 345-399), been elevated as the highest ideal of the monastic life in the East. His thinking of the light-vision was taken over by the later Byzantine spirituality. There is, however, a certain difference between the Euagrian and Gregorian doctrine: I see it in the radicalization of an apophatic characteristic of the light-movement in the context of the discussion about the distinction of the genuine light-vision from so-to-speak 'pseudo-visions'. Euagrius emphasizes the formlessness as a characteristic of the true light-vision, while Gregorios does not attribute this to the kind of seeing the light. It is precisely for this reason that he identifies the vision as something that can also be 'smelled' or 'heard'. Hence, the boundary between the senses themselves are disappearing. Nevertheless, the light that is connected with 'seeing' remains illusion. Gregorios even somehow accentuates the light as a particular characteristic of true prayer. But different from the Euagrian formlessness, he offers an assessment of the authenticity of a light-vision which entails not only its formlessness, but an entire 'abolition of the visual'.

Der in der orthodoxen Kirche als Heiliger verehrte byzantinische Mönch, Gregorios Sinaites (c. 1255-1346),¹ ist ein bedeutender Vertreter des Hesychasmus, eine die ostkirchliche Frömmigkeitsgeschichte charakterisierende monastisch-geistliche Bewegung, die auf der Basis des Strebens nach einer mystischen

¹ Als Hauptquelle für sein Leben gibt es die von seinem Schüler dem Patriarchen von Konstantinopel Kallistos dem 1. (1350-1353; 1355-1363) verfaßte Vita. Fundort: I. Pomjalovskij (Hg.), *Zapiski Istoriko-Filologičeskago, Fakul'teta Imperatorskago S. -Petersburgskago Universita 35* (St. Petersburg, 1896), 1-46. Vgl. David Balfour, 'Saint Gregory of Sinai's Life Story and Spiritual Profile', *Theol (A)* 53 (1982), 30-62.

Erfahrung göttlicher Lichtvision entfaltet wurde. Diese Lichtvision versuchte man durch Wiederholung des Jesusgebets mit einer bestimmten psycho-physischen Methode, zu erreichen.² Gregorios Sinaïtes war der erste Mönchsführer, der für diese Gebetstechnik eine ausführliche und präzise Lehre aufgestellt hat.³

Seine Lehre der genannten Gebetsmethode selbst ist bereits ziemlich erschöpfend untersucht worden. In diesem Referat möchte ich eben jene Lichtvision als Effekt des Gebetes verdeutlichen, die einen wichtigen Aspekt seiner Gebetslehre ausmacht, ohne dass er deren Eigenschaft präzise gefasst hätte.

Die mystische Vision des göttlichen Lichts selbst war allerdings schon von alters her, besonders seit Euagrios Pontikos (um 345-399), zum höchsten Ideal des Mönchslebens im Osten erhoben worden.⁴ In der Lehre des Euagrios kann die Lichtvision bei den spirituell Fortgeschrittenen im Zustand der 'Kontemplation', oder besser in der 'Theoria der Dreifaltigkeit'⁵ erfahren werden. Diese bedeutet aber keinesfalls die Schau der Trinität von Angesicht, d.h. eine direkte Erkenntnis Gottes in seinem Wesen, sondern sie ist vielmehr Gottesschau, die dem Nous (Intellekt oder die geistige Personmitte) durch die Schau seines eigenen Zustands, genauer in seinem eigenen Licht, zuteil wird. Euagrios sagt öfters, bei der Theoria schaue sich der Nous selbst bzw. seinen Zustand (*katastasis*).⁶ Wie ist dieser Zustand konkret? Diesen Zustand kennzeichnet Euagrios als 'einen dem Nous eigenen Lichtschein'.⁷ Dieser ist jedoch keine Produktion des Nous selbst, sondern eine Widerspiegelung des Lichtes der Dreifaltigkeit; denn Gott ist 'Licht' (1Joh. 1:5). Der Nous 'empfängt' es wie eine 'Lampe'. Ihm wird 'zur Zeit des Gebetes das Licht der Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit zuteil'.⁸ Der Nous ist sich selbst ein Spiegel, 'in dem er Gott gleichsam indirect zu schauen vermag'.⁹

² Vgl. Irénée Hausherr, *Hésychasme et prière*, OCA 176 (Rom, 1966); ders., *Nom du Christ et voies d'oraison*, OCA 157 (Rom, 1960); Un moine de l'Église d'Orient, *La prière de Jésus. Sa genèse, son développement et sa pratique dans la tradition religieuse byzantino-slave* (Chevetogne, 1963); Pierre Adnès, 'Jésus (Prière à)', *DSp* 8 (1974), 1126-50.

³ Vgl. Kallistos Ware, 'The Jesus Prayer in St. Gregory of Sinai', *ECR* 4 (1972), 3-22; D. Balfour, 'The Works of Gregory the Sinaïte. C) The Doctrine. ii) Praktical Doctrine', *Theol* (A) 54 (1983), 153-83.

⁴ Vgl. Hans-Veit Beyer, 'Die Lichtlehre der Mönche des vierzehnten und des vierten Jahrhunderts, erörtert am Beispiel des Gregorios Sinaïtes, des Evagrius Pontikos und des Ps.-Makarios/Symeon', *JÖB* 31 (1981), 473-512; ders., 'Ergänzung und Verbesserung zum Hauptreferat 'Die Liechtlehre...'', *JÖB* 32 (1982), 290-2.

⁵ Kephalaia gnostica 5,82 = Antoine Guillaumont (Hg.), *Les six Centuries des 'Kephalaia Gnostica' d'Évagre le Pontique*, PO 28 (Turnhout, 1977), 210.

⁶ Vgl. A. Guillaumont, 'La vision de l'intellect par lui-même dans la mystique évagrienne', *MUSJ* 50 (1984), 255-62.

⁷ Gnosticus 147 = Hg. Wilhelm Frankenberg, *Evagrius Ponticus*, AFWG NF 8/2 (Berlin, 1912), 553.

⁸ *Capita cognoscitiva* 3 = Hg. Joseph Muyldermans, 'Evagriana', *Le Muséon* 44 (1931), 51.

⁹ Vgl. Gabriel Bunge, *Das Geistgebet. Studien zum Traktat De oratione des Evagrius Ponticus* (Köln, 1987), 69.

Wie G. Bunge betont, ist dieses Licht aber keineswegs 'eine sinnlich wahrnehmbare Erscheinung, die Euagrius durchweg als dämonische Nachäffung ablehnt'.¹⁰ Eine 'sinnlich wahrnehmbare Erscheinung' wäre eine Vision mit 'Farbe und Gestalt' und deshalb ist das Merkmal für die Echtheit der göttlichen Lichtvision gerade ihre 'Gestalt- und Farblosigkeit'. Nach H.-V. Beyer wäre diese apophatische 'Lichterfahrung ohne Gestalt und Farbe' mit 'tabula rasa' zu vergleichen.¹¹

Die obige zusammengefaßte Vorstellung der Lichtvision wurde von der späteren hesychastischen Spiritualität übernommen, deren Hauptfigur Gregorios Sinaites war. Gregorios sieht das 'Merkmal' des 'geistigen, reinen, engelhaften Gebets', also des von ihm gelehrtens Jesusgebetes, darin, 'daß der Nous beim Beten ganz und gar bildlos gesehen wird und weder sich selbst noch einen anderen stoffhaft sieht'.¹² Den eigenen Nous schauen bedeutet zugleich 'Lichtvision', denn der Nous selbst 'wird dann immateriell und lichthaft' (*phōtoeidēs*),¹³ wobei diese Schau 'bildlos' (*anedieōs*) und nicht 'stoffhaft' (*en pachutēti*) sein muß. All das ist vollkommen euagrianisch.¹⁴

Was ist dann die Eigenschaft seiner Lichtlehre? Ich sehe sie in der Radikalisierung einer apophatischen Charakteristik der Lichterfahrung im Zusammenhang der Erörterung über die Unterscheidung der echten, authentischen Lichtvision von sozusagen 'Pseudo-Visionen' als parapsychologische Phänomene.

Allgemein halten die Hesychasten die Erscheinungen oder Visionen für etwas durchaus Alarmierendes. Daß es solch ungewöhnliche Erfahrungen in einem gewissen psychologischen Zustand tatsächlich gibt, nehmen die Hesychasten zwar an, aber sie sehen darin Phänomene, vor denen nachdrücklich gewarnt werden muß. Der Hesychast, der diese Dinge ausführlich behandelt und mit unerbitterlicher Härte vor ihnen warnt, ist Gregorios Sinaites. Zitieren wir einige betreffenden Erwähnungen:

Gib genau acht, Liebhaber Gottes, indem du dir bewußt bist: Wenn du das Werk ausführst und ein Licht siehst, ein Feuer von außerhalb, eine vorgebliche Gestalt Christi, eines Engels oder irgendeines anderen, akzeptiere es nicht, um keinen Schaden zu erleiden! Auch sollst du nicht von dir aus auf Bilder bedacht sein und nicht zulassen, daß der Nous solche gestaltet! Denn all das, was draußen zur Unzeit seine Gestalt wechselt, schleicht sich ein, um die Seele irrezuleiten.¹⁵

¹⁰ Ders., *Evagrius Pontikos. Praktikos oder der Mönch. Hundert Kapitel über das geistliche Leben*, Koinonia-Oriens 32 (Köln, 1987), 202.

¹¹ Vgl. H.-V. Beyer, 'Die Lichtlehre der Mönche des vierzehnten und des vierten Jahrhunderts' (1981), 483.

¹² Gregorios Sinaites, *Kephalala di'akrostichidos* 116 = *Philokalia tōn hierōn nēptikēn IV* (Athenai, ³1961) [=Phi IV], 52,31-3.

¹³ Ebenda = 52,34.

¹⁴ Vgl. H.-V. Beyer, 'Die Lichtlehre der Mönche des vierzehnten und des vierten Jahrhunderts' (1981), 474-85.

¹⁵ Gregorios Sinaites, *Peri hesychias kai peri dyo tropōn proseychēs* 10 = *Phi IV* 76,14-9.

Wenn wir nun frei von Irrtum den Weg finden und erkennen wollen, sollen wir versuchen, nur die Wirkkraft des Herzens zu haben, gänzlich frei von Bild und Form [bleiben], Gestalt oder Umriß eines, der sich als Heiliger ausgibt, nicht vorstellungsmäßig widerspiegeln und weder Farbe noch Lichter schauen. Es pflegt nämlich die Irreführung besonders am Anfang durch derlei falsche Eingebungen den Nous der Unerfahrenen zu täuschen.¹⁶

Die durch 'Irreführung' (*planē*) verursachten Pseudo-Visionen geschehen vor allem bei Unerfahrenen. Die Warnung gilt aber für alle Hesychasten:

Du, wenn du ein guter Hesychast bist und erwartest, mit Gott zusammenzusein, akzeptiere niemals, was immer du auch Sinnhaftes oder Geistiges siehst, innerhalb oder außerhalb (der Seele?), auch wenn es ein Bild Christi oder vorgeblich eines Engels oder eines Heiligen Gestalt ist. Noch sollst du dir mit dem Nous ein Licht vorstellen oder einprägen.¹⁷

Alle 'frommen' Erscheinungen lehnt Gregorios also kategorisch ab. Als Grund für derartige Erscheinungen gibt er eine rein psychoanalytische Erklärung:

Denn der Nous selbst hat seiner Natur nach von sich aus das Vorstellungsvermögen, das bei denen, die nicht genau auf ihn achten, leicht ein Gebilde dessen schaffen kann, wonach er strebt, und so sich selbst Schaden verursacht. Sogar die Erinnerung an das Gute und Schlechte pflegt durch ihren plötzlichen Zugriff den Nous zu prägen, indem sie ihn zur Phantasie zurückführt, wobei der betreffende zum Phantasten und nicht zum Hesychasten wird.¹⁸

Die 'Erinnerung an das Gute und Schlechte' ist, nach Diadochos von Photike (5. Jh.), eine Folge der Seelenspaltung durch den Sündenfall.¹⁹ Gregorios hat diesen Gedanken von der diadochischen Theorie übernommen. Sein Geist ist aber so nüchtern und kritisch, daß er sogar in der Erinnerung an das 'Gute' einen dem Menschen Schaden zufügenden Faktor erblickt, der ihn zum 'Phantasten' und nicht zum 'Hesychasten' macht. Eine derart kühle Beobachtung ist bei Diadochos nicht zu finden.

Alle oben geschilderten Erscheinungen lehnt Gregorios als Irrtum streng ab. Wer Lichterscheinungen hat, soll sie für irgendwelche Eindrücke der Sinnerkraft, also für Phantasien, Emotionen, Halluzinationen und dergleichen halten. Eine Erscheinung, die körperlich vor den Augen aufblitzt, ist also ein künstlich herbeigeführtes Phänomen, wovor Gregorios seine Mönche warnt.

Er erklärt solche Erscheinungen aber nicht nur rein psychoanalytisch, sondern verknüpft sie auch mit der Dämonologie. Dabei schreibt er die Ursache der Erscheinungen den Dämonen zu. So sagt er, der 'Feind' (*echthros*) gebe

¹⁶ Ders., *Eidēsis akribēs peri hesychias kai proseychēs* 3 = *Phi IV* 67,34-68,4.

¹⁷ Ders., *Peri toy pōs dei katezesthai ton hesychazonta* 7 = *Phi IV* 85,29-32.

¹⁸ Ebenda = 85,32-7.

¹⁹ Vgl. Diadochos von Photike, *Capita centum de perfectione spirituali* 24-5 = Hg. Édouard des Places, *Diadoque de Photicē. Œuvres spirituelles*, SC 5^{bis} (Paris, 1955), 96-7.

dem Nous 'von oben ein Gebilde scheinbarer Wahrheit' (*anōthen morphōsin dēthen alētheias*)²⁰ ein. Deshalb unterstreicht er die Notwendigkeit der 'Unterscheidung' (*diakrisis*), um auf die Frage zu antworten: 'Was sollen wir tun, da "der Dämon sich als ein Engel des Lichtes verstellt" (vgl. *2Kor.* 11:14) und den Menschen in die Irre führt?'²¹ Angriffe der sich als Engel tarnenden Dämonen sind seit alters eine geläufige Vorstellung. Athanasios läßt Antonios ganz lebhaft und bilderreich beschreiben, wie die Dämonen in Gestalt von Engel listig den Mönchen schmeicheln und sie preisen.²² Bemerkenswert ist, daß eine explizit parallele Frage bei Pseudo-Makarios (5. Jh.), dem Autor der 50 Homilien, zu finden ist: 'Was soll der tun, der vom Satan in die Irre geführt wird, als ob er durch irgendwelche scheinbar wahrhaftigen Dinge oder durch Lichtartiges eine Offenbarung der Gnade empfinde?'²³ Das vorgenannte Pauluszitat des Sinaiten findet sich bei Pseudo-Makarios in seiner Antwort. H.-V. Beyer bekräftigt die Abhängigkeit des Sinaiten von Pseudo-Makarios durch ein handschriftliches Argument.²⁴

Dasselbe Bibelzitat (*2Kor.* 11:14) ist im Zusammenhang mit der von den Dämonen verursachten visuellen Täuschungen ebenfalls bei Diadochos bezeugt. Er bestätigt zwar die euagrianische Theorie über die Schau des eigenen Lichtes des Nous, doch 'was immer sich ihm in irgendeiner Gestalt zeigt, sei es als Licht, sei es als Feuer, kommt aus den üblen Künsten des Feindes. Der göttliche Paulus belehrt uns darüber klar; indem er sagt, daß der Satan sich selbst in einen Engel des Lichtes verwandele'.²⁵

Die Zusammenstellung von 'Feuer' und 'Licht' haben wir ebenfalls schon bei Gregorios gesehen.²⁶ All diese radikalen Warnungen sind jedenfalls eine Vertiefung der euagrianischen Lehre.

Trotz dieser äußerst strengen Haltung der Hesychasten gegenüber den Erscheinungen gibt es eine Erscheinung, die sie einhellig für ein Zeichen des idealen Gebetes halten. Es handelt sich um eine ganz spezifische Lichterscheinung. Pseudo-Symeon hat ausdrücklich seine Gebetsmethode als 'lichterzeugendes Tun' (*phōtotokon ergasian*)²⁷ bezeichnet. Er konkretisiert dann diese Lichterfahrung, in dem Sinn, daß der Nous, der sich im Herzen befindet, 'sich selbst

²⁰ Gregorios Sinaites, *Peri toy pōs dei kathezesthai ton hesychazonta* 4 = *Phi IV* 85,3.

²¹ Ebenda 8 = 88,1-2.

²² Vgl. Athanasios, *Vita Antonii* 35 = PG 26, 893B-896B.

²³ Pseudo-Makarios, *Sermo* 2,10,1 = Hg. Heinz Berthold, *Makarios / Symeon, Reden und Briefe. Die Sammlung I des Vaticans Graecus 694 (B). I: Einleitung und Tabellen. Die Logoi B 2-29, II: Die Logoi B 30-64*, GCS (Berlin, 1979), I 19,23-4.

²⁴ Vgl. H.-V. Beyer, 'Die Lichtlehre der Mönche des vierzehnten und des vierten Jahrhunderts' (1981), 507-8.

²⁵ Diadochos von Photike, *Capita centum de perfectione spirituali* 40 = Hg. É. des Places, 108, 9-12.

²⁶ Gregorios Sinaites, *Peri hesychias kai peri dyo tropōn proseychēs* 10 = *Phi IV* 76,15.

²⁷ I. Hausherr, *La méthode d'oraison hésychaste*, OrChr (R)9 (Rom, 1927), 158,8-9.

gänzlich in Licht gehüllt sieht' (*blepei ... heauton phōteinon holon*).²⁸ Hier geht es um das Licht des Nous selbst. Diese mystische Schau des eigenen Lichtes durch den Nous war für Euagrius der vollkommene Zustand des 'reinen Gebets'. Nikephoros der Hesyachast, der Verfasser eines um die Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts entstandenen hesychastischen Traktates 'Über die Nüchternheit und Wachsamkeit des Herzens', spricht von der 'Lichterscheinung' (*phōtophaneia*) Christi, und zwar in der Anrede am Anfang des genannten Traktates: 'Ihr alle, die ihr ein brennendes Verlangen habt, die überwältigende und göttliche Lichterscheinung unseres Erlösers Jesus Christus zu erreichen'.²⁹

Wie spricht Gregorios darüber? Er charakterisiert das Zeichen für die 'ständig bewegte geistige Wirkkraft des Heiligen Geistes' am Anfang des Gebetes als 'das vom Herzen aufsteigende Feuer der Freude, am Ende als "duftendes Licht" (*phōs euōdiazon*).³⁰ An einer anderen Stelle wiederholt er: 'Gebet ist bei den Anfängern wie Feuer der Freude, das aus dem Herzen steigt, bei den Vollendeten wie duftendes Licht, das gewirkt wird'.³¹ Ferner anerkennt er als Zeichen 'besonders bei denen, die Fortschritte machten im Gebet ein friedliches "lindes Säuseln" (vgl. 1Kön. 19:11) vom Licht' (*auran leptēn phōtos eirēnaian*).³²

Gregorios läßt die Frage offen, ob dieses Licht dem Nous selbst oder Christus gehört. Sie ist aber das Kriterium für die Unterscheidung zwischen der apophatischen und der kataphatischen Lichterscheinung; denn er spricht auch vom täuschenden Licht und warnt vor ihm. Auffallend sind auf jeden Fall die seltsamen Ausdrücke für das Licht als Zeichen des echten Gebetes: 'ein duftendes Licht' und 'ein friedliches lindes Säuseln vom Licht'. Aus diesen eigentlich absurden Ausdrücken ist schon zu ersehen, daß Gregorios Dinge benennen will, die nicht ohne weiteres in der menschlichen Erfahrung vorkommen und deshalb das normale Sprachvermögen transzendieren. Hier ist besonders zu beachten, daß der Autor diese Art von Licht nicht dem 'Sehen' zuschreibt. Gerade deshalb kennzeichnet er es als etwas, das man 'riechen' (duftendes Licht), 'hören' oder mit der Haut 'spüren' (friedliches lindes Säuseln von Licht) könne. Mystische Erfahrung ist so unbeschreiblich, daß die Grenzen zwischen den Sinnen selbst verschwinden. Hingegen ist das Licht, das mit dem 'Sehen' zusammenhängt, ausnahmslos Illusion. Gregorios will also mit seinen ungewöhnlichen Formulierungen irgendwie das Anders-Sein der Lichterscheinung als Merkmal für das wahre Gebet akzentuieren. Damit bietet er neben der euagrianischen Gestaltlosigkeit eine andere Variante für die Beurteilung der Echtheit einer Lichtvision, nämlich die Aufhebung des Visuellen.

²⁸ Ebenda 165,3-5.

²⁹ Nikephoros, *Peri nepseōs kai phylakē kardias* = *Phi IV*, 18,6-7.

³⁰ Gregorios Sinaites, *Eidēsis akribēs peri hesychias kai proseychēs* 3 = *Phi IV* 68,8-11.

³¹ Ders., *Kephalaia di'akrostichidos* 113 = *Phi IV* 51,19-21.

³² Ders., *Peri toy pōs dei kathezesthai ton hesychazonta* 7 = *Phi IV* 87,33-4.

Eriugena's Trinity: A Framework for Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue

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ABSTRACT

The Carolingian philosopher and theologian Johannes Scottus Eriugena is an important point of confluence of many streams of Trinitarian thought, as well as a significant and creative theologian in his own right. Because of his remarkable ability to work back through Patristic sources to the original Neoplatonic doctrine by means of sheer ratiocination, Eriugena also acts a valuable critic of the many streams of trinitarianism that come through to him, both Eastern and Western. This issue has been well explored from the perspective of the Neoplatonic elements that went up to make it. However, a good deal of new work on the Liberal Arts tradition has appeared recently (including my own). The integration of this work with existing scholarship on the Neoplatonic elements in his Trinitarian theology is an important project, which also has implications for contemporary debates in theology, especially as regards inculturation. In this communication, the issue of Eriugena's methodology will be addressed, and the extent to which that reflects Patristic methodology as a whole, when confronted with an attractive and sophisticated system of thought.

Because of his combination of Greek Byzantine and Latin Christian elements, as well as his adroit handling of purely philosophical Neoplatonic categories in addition to specifically Christian concerns, John Scottus Eriugena is an important point of confluence of many streams of Trinitarian thought, as well as a significant and creative theologian in his own right.² Depending on how one

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² There is extensive bibliography on this topic – nearly all scholarship on Eriugena deals with it in one way or another. See, e.g., the essays in Werner Beierwaltes (ed.), *Eriugena. Studien zu seinen Quellen* (Heidelberg, 1980); also Bernard McGinn and Willemien Otten (eds), *Eriugena East and West. Papers of the Eighth International Colloquium of the Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies, Chicago and Notre Dame, 18-20 October 1991* (Notre Dame IN/London, 1994), especially Werner Beierwaltes, 'Unity and Trinity in East and West', 209-31; also Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the*

wishes to handle the divisions within Christianity, this makes him on the basis of that fact alone, a master of interreligious dialogue. Interreligious dialogue is a rather subtle process: on the one hand, it is important to find common elements, so that at least the different groups can talk to each other; on the other, it is also important to respect the differences between each religion. Broadly speaking, at least for Christians, the question is this: whether interreligious dialogue is merely a matter of finding a lowest common denominator on which we can all agree, and emphasizing that, to the exclusion of more difficult questions, or whether it is a matter of the study and employment of conceptual elements which may well originate in a non-Christian ambience, indeed in circles often quite hostile to Christianity, because those elements help to clarify difficult questions. From a Christian perspective, the uniqueness of Christ's message is always to be maintained: in the early centuries of its existence, Christianity fought a hard battle against syncretism of various kinds in defense of the singularity of its own teachings. Interestingly, however, this was also compatible with the study and deployment of non-Christian elements in the crucially important theological debates of its emergence, and this was to be a feature of Christian thought, both east and west, throughout its history.

The extent to which Eriugena's handling of the Trinity can work as a framework for inter-religious dialogue depends, of course, on the extent to which his trinitarianism is a peculiarly Christian structure: triadic metaphysics can be found in a variety of places, including, of course, the metaphysics of the Greek Neoplatonism which provided the Church Fathers with the conceptual tools to work out the fine distinctions crucial to maintaining a distinctively Christian perspective on the questions of Christ's divinity and humanity and on the relation of these to each other and to divinity as a whole – that is to say, Trinitarian theology. One of the on-going and significant debates surrounding Eriugena, a debate which became critical in the twelfth century culminating in the condemnation of 1210, and which has swung back and forth ever since, is the extent to which he really is a Christian thinker.³ Clearly, this concerns above all his thinking on the Trinity: is his a uniquely Christian conception, or is it something

Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition (Leiden, 1978); also E. Jeuneau, 'Jean l'Érigène et les "Ambigua ad Iohannem" de Maxime le Confesseur', in Felix Heinzer and Christoph von Schönborn (eds), *Maximus Confessor Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur* (Fribourg, 1982), 343-64; also *id.*, 'Pseudo-Dionysius, Gregory of Nyssa, and Maximus the Confessor in the Works of John Scottus Eriugena', in Uta-Renate Blumenthal (ed.), *Carolingian Essays: Andrew W. Mellon Lectures in Early Christian Studies* (Washington, D.C., 1983), 138-49; also Reka Forrai 'The Notes of Anastasius on Eriugena's Translation of the *Corpus Dionysiacum*', *The Journal of Medieval Latin* (2008), 74-100; also L. Michael Harrington's comments in *A Thirteenth-century Textbook of Mystical Theology at the University of Paris: The Mystical Theology of Dionysius the Areopagite in Eriugena's Latin Translation, with the Scholia Translated by Anastasius the Librarian, and Excerpts from Eriugena's Periphyseon* (Leuven, 2004), i-viii.

³ For a perspective which is dubious about Eriugena's Christian commitment, see, e.g., Marcia Colish, 'John the Scot's Christology and Soteriology in Relation to His Greek Sources', *Downside*

which could just as easily be accommodated to any kind of metaphysics which makes use of triadic structures? One has to remember also that for Eriugena, thinking is fundamentally hermeneutical – even when he is dealing with astronomical or arithmetical problems, he still thinks of himself as ultimately ‘reading’ something which means more than it appears to on the surface. For the remainder of this article, I shall first give a brief summary of Eriugena’s hermeneutics, before going on to examine the Patristic sources and Scriptural basis for Eriugena’s doctrine on the Trinity, as interpreted by him in the light of Patristic tradition (which here includes pseudo-Dionysius) – that is to say, on his Trinitarian thinking, as we find it in the exegesis of a number of key scriptural texts. Having considered this in some depth, I shall then return to the question of the purely Christian nature of this, or otherwise, and conclude.

Hermeneutics

Eriugena describes the hermeneutical process as ‘dialectical’, and it is important to understand what he means by this.⁴ The word seems to indicate rationality, or the processes of the faculty of reason – and so it does. However, at this point we have to be careful: since Descartes, the nature and scope of rationality has been narrowed a great deal, until by now, mostly, we think of it as analytic and deductive. However, for Eriugena, as for the Patristic tradition generally, dialectic means the Platonic dialectic: that process of feeling out the bones and joints of reality, which is intuitive and synthetic as well as analytic

Review 100 (1984), 138-51; she argues that Eriugena does not in fact reproduce faithfully the orthodox Christology of Maximus and pseudo-Dionysius.

⁴ For Eriugena’s hermeneutics and dialectic in more depth, see the articles in James McEvoy, Carlos Steel and Gerd Van Riel (eds), *Iohannes Scottus Eriugena, The Bible and Hermeneutics Proceedings of the Ninth International colloquium of the Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies Held at Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve June 7-10, 1995* (Leuven, 1996), especially Stephen Gersh ‘Eriugena’s ‘Ars Rhetorica’ - Theory and Practice’, 261-78; also the articles in G.-H. Allard (ed.), *Jean Scot écrivain* (Montreal and Paris, 1987), especially Werner Beierwaltes, ‘Language and object: Reflections on Eriugena’s valuation of the function and capacities of language’, 209-28 and Giulio D’Onofrio, “‘Disputandi disciplina’’: Procédés dialectiques et “Logica vetus” dans le langage philosophique de Jean Scot’, 229-63; also Christoph Erismann, ‘The Logic of Being: Eriugena’s Dialectical Ontology’, *Vivarium* 45 (2007), 203-18; also Giulio d’Onofrio, ‘La “Concordia” di Agostino e Dionigi. Per un’ermeneutica del dissenso fra le fonti patristiche nel *Periphyseon* di Giovanni Scoto Eriugena’, *Medioevo* 19 (1993), 1-25; also Catherine Kavanagh, ‘Eriugenian Developments of Ciceronian Topical Theory’, in Stephen Gersh and Bert Roest (eds), *Medieval and Renaissance Humanism: Rhetoric, Representation, and Reform* (Leiden, 2003), 1-31; *ead.*, ‘The Discussion of the Aristotelian Categories According to Maximus the Confessor and Johannes Scottus Eriugena’, *The American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 79 (2005), 567-601, edition dedicated to Eriugena; *ead.*, ‘John Scottus Eriugena and the Uses of Dialectic’, in Michael Dunne and James McEvoy (eds), *The Irish Contribution to Scholastic Thought* (Dublin, 2009), 2-30.

and deductive. The operations of the mind, tracing out the contours of reality by means of dialectic can be trusted as corresponding in that reality, since mind itself participates in it; in fact, it is the only aspect of man which can really be said to participate in reality for Plato.

Dialectic, therefore, is not merely formal or logical; it is realistic in the most cogent sense of the term. The mind's operation in dialectical work corresponds exactly to the unfolding of the forms which it perceives: in fact, the two are ultimately the same operation. For Plato, the operations of mind are not purely linguistic, of course: the operations of mathematical reasoning are in fact the highest form of mental activity, and, especially in the study and contemplation of harmony and specific modes of music as he describes them in the *Republic* and the *Symposium*, lead directly to the contemplation of beauty itself. Dialectic is the application of mathematical and musical reasoning in the linguistic field, and therefore, it is closely related also to aesthetic experience; in fact, there is nothing which cannot be considered dialectically. We find this strongly realistic presentation of dialectic again and again throughout the Platonic tradition; in the later, Christianized Neoplatonism of Byzantium, it is assimilated to the Maximian theory of man as the microcosm, with very similar results. Since man reassumes all things within himself, his dialectical operations do, in fact, correspond exactly to the creative activity of God within the cosmos as a whole.⁵ Eriugena inherits this Christianised Platonic dialectic through the Patristic tradition, and he finds further justification for his adoption of it in the *Vetus Latina Genesis I*, based on the Septuagint: 'God created all things in weight and measure, genus and species'.⁶ This is augmented by the Augustinian teaching in *De doctrina Christiana*, Book II,

⁵ See L. Thurneysen, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Copenhagen, 1965); also F. Heinzer and C. Schönborn (eds), *Maximus Confessor. Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur. Fribourg, 2-5 septembre, 1980* (Fribourg, 1982); also I.-H. Dalmais, 'Maxime le Confesseur', *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, Fascicules LXVI-LXVII* (Paris, 1978), 836-47; also F. Heinzer, *Gottes Sohn als Mensch: Die Struktur des Menschseins Christi bei Maximus Confessor* (Freiburg, Schweiz, 1980); also Guido Bausenhardt, 'In allem uns gleich ausser der Sünde': *Studien zum Beitrag Maximus' des Bekenner zur altkirchlichen Christologie: Mit einer kommentierten Übersetzung der 'Disputatio cum Pyrrho'* (Mainz, 1992); Bernardo De Angelis, *Natura, persona, libertà: l'antropologia di Massimo il Confessore* (Roma, 2002); Philipp Gabriel Renczes, *Agir de Dieu et liberté de l'homme: recherches sur l'anthropologie théologique de saint Maxime le confesseur* (Paris, 2003); Demetrios Bathrellos, *The Byzantine Christ. Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford, 2004); Torstein Tollefsen, *The Christocentric cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford, New York, 2008). For more general approaches, see Aidan Nichols, *Byzantine Gospel: Maximus the Confessor in Modern Scholarship* (Edinburgh, 1993); Maria Luisa Gatti Perer, *Massimo il confessore: saggio di bibliografia generale ragionata e contributi per una ricostruzione scientifica del suo pensiero metafisico e religioso* (Milano, 1987); Melchisedec Törönen, *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford, New York, 2007).

⁶ *Gen. 1:1, Vetus Latina*, B. Fischer (ed.), *Vetus latina; die Reste der altlateinischen Bibel* (Freiburg, 1949), 3.

where Augustine asserts that the spoils of the Egyptians (which Eriugena takes to be natural science) can profitably be used in the interpretation of Scripture; all is grist to his mill. Following Maximus, also, he interprets the 'two garments' of Christ as meaning that truth is to be obtained by 'reading' both the Book of Scripture and that of Nature. The hermeneutic Eriugena applies to Scripture is dialectical, and he seeks to root his thinking on the Trinity in Scripture interpreted correctly, *i.e.*, via tradition.

The hermeneutical development of trinitarian theology

The use which Eriugena makes of his most significant Trinitarian sources is fundamental: Augustine to begin with, as the foundation of Latin thinking on this topic, the Christology of Maximus the Confessor, and pseudo-Dionysius as the thinker who stimulates his most original insights. Whatever he adds to his sources himself must, in his view, harmonise with what has gone before. We could perhaps describe it as symphonic: not necessarily mere repetition, but capable of being woven into the already existing tradition of thought on the subject. Looking at the relationship between Christian and Pagan elements, and the relationship between different strands of the Christian tradition in these principal sources of Eriugena's Trinitarian theology, it is clear that Augustine is foundational: the *De Trinitate* remained the authoritative work on the subject in the Latin tradition for centuries.⁷ Augustine works on a principle of cause and effect for much of this: the *De Trinitate* presents us with various interlocking triadic structures present throughout the structure of reality, including (and for Augustine most importantly), the psychic structure of the human being. The most telling image of God is the human being, and therefore the psychological structure of the human being, the very nature of the human soul, is what tells us most, as an effect that mirrors its cause, about God. Therefore, the tripartite nature of the human soul is of the utmost importance when talking about God. However, this tripartite image is not merely a human perspective on a God who remains simply one beyond human perception: Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not just human names applied to God, but in some mysterious way are God: wherever one is present, so too are the others. We find this metaphysical imagery in Eriugena also, as too the anthropological description of the Trinity: Eriugena certainly does understand man – and this is something which is stronger again in Maximus the Confessor – as the microcosm, and therefore the one in whom the Trinitarian working out of God is most clearly visible.⁸ Where

⁷ See Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge, 2010), for a magisterial account of Augustine on the Trinity.

⁸ On Eriugena's anthropology, see Willemien Otten, *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena* (Leiden, 1991).

he diverges from Augustine is in his deeper and more radical negative theology, which he inherits from pseudo-Dionysius.

The influence of Maximus the Confessor is most important at the level of Christology. Maximus, of course, is concerned with the preservation of Chalcedonian orthodoxy, and with the battles against monophysitism and monotheism: crucially, from a philosophical perspective, the Maximian formulation – two natures in one Person of Christ, two wills in the one Person of Christ, three persons of the Trinity in one, simple God – introduce a very complex interplay of multiplicity and unity, in which the presence of difference does not destroy the simplicity and unity of God. Christ is one person, notwithstanding the two natures, not some kind of duality; God is one – but to be One is to be Trinitarian. That the One is inherently Trinitarian is a very important point in the consideration of Eriugena's final position on the Trinity, given his very radical negative theology. The *Periphyseon* in particular is littered with statements to the effect that we should understand that when we talk of the Trinity, we need to realise that our language is always ultimately surpassed, and that, whatever it may be in itself, we will not reach that in our human language.⁹ This does beg the question as to whether, for Eriugena, the Trinitarian names are in the end merely human constructions of God, mere modes of naming, which have nothing to do with what God ultimately may be in himself.

The answer to this question depends on the Trinitarian theology of pseudo-Dionysius. Now, this is a very controversial topic, with scholars fiercely divided as to whether Dionysius is, firstly, even a Christian to begin with, although on the whole the reasons for saying that he is seem to be much the stronger; secondly, as to whether he is an orthodox Christian: the argument here is more varied, but again, on balance, it looks as though he is. A full account of the scholarly debate is clearly beyond the scope of this article: Alexander Golitzin gives an excellent summary in his recent *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita*. Golitzin concludes on the basis of an extensive analysis of Dionysius' sources and, importantly, a detailed and sensitive analysis of Dionysius' theological language, that he is indeed a Christian, and an orthodox one.¹⁰ As regards his Trinitarian theology, Golitzin points out that for Dionysius, 'One' – the One of Plotinus, the undivided, unknowable One – means 'Trinity': 'Trinity' is not a mode of thinking or speaking to be abandoned, even in the final 'agnostic' leap into unknowing recounted in the *Mystical Theology*: that leap into the divine darkness is, in fact, a leap into the Trinity. Golitzin's reading of Dionysius' Trinitarian theology is extremely helpful in understanding how Eriugena is using his other sources also, in fact: although the negative theology differs from Augustine's, it does harmonise with such a reading of

⁹ See Deirdre Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena* (Oxford, 2000), 33, 51-3.

¹⁰ See Alexander Golitzin, *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita* (Collegeville MN, 2014).

Dionysius, and, of course, it also fits very well with Maximus the Confessor, who studied Dionysius so extensively, and is actually the author whom Eriugena credits with helping him to understand Dionysius in the first place. This is of the utmost importance in coming to a conclusion as regards Eriugena, since he does adopt Dionysius' philosophy of God, and if that is Trinitarian for Dionysius, then it is so for Eriugena also. There is an ongoing argument within Eriugenian scholarship as to whether Augustine or Dionysius is the more influential thinker for him; certainly he begins with Augustine, who always remains a constant bedrock, the point from which he starts, but he indicates in several ways, both explicitly and implicitly, that in Dionysius he had found a development of theology which he considered surpassed Augustine and the Western tradition.¹¹

The scriptural basis for Eriugena's trinitarian theology

There are five principal texts from Scripture that Eriugena uses as a springboard for his interpretation of the Trinitarian creative process: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without Him not one thing came into being; What has come into being in Him was life' (*John* 1:1-4); '[For] in Him all things were created in Heaven and on Earth, visible and invisible' (*Col.* 1:16); 'Oh Lord, how manifest are your works! In wisdom you have made them all! (*Ps.* 103:24); 'In the beginning when God created the Heavens and the Earth (*Gen.* 1:1); 'In the beginning, in the day of your power, in sacred splendours, before the daystar in the womb, I begot you' (*Ps.* 109:3). These texts crop up mainly in Book II of the *Periphyseon*, beginning at 556A, where we get one of the most extensive treatments of Trinitarian doctrine, as developed from Scriptural exegesis: interestingly, many of the texts are psalm texts, which have traditionally been given strong Christological interpretation. Eriugena intends at this point to develop a commentary on the Hexaemeron, but he thinks it necessary to say something about the cause of all of this which is the Trinity. He starts with the first line of *Genesis*, asking what is to be understood by the divine word 'in the Beginning

¹¹ See, e.g., the introduction by Eriugena to his translations of the pseudo-Dionysian corpus, dedicated to Charles the Bald, in H.J. Floss (ed.), *Patrologia Latina* 122 (1853, reprint 1865), 1031A-36A; it is also noteworthy that throughout the *Periphyseon*, the *Alumnus* normally articulates what is taken to be the standard Augustinian position, definitive for Western Christianity, whereas the *Nutritor* articulates, in response to this, the Dionysian position, pushing the discussion beyond a standard reading of Augustine. Of course, one can argue that this is a sophisticated reading of Augustine rather than rejection of him – and certainly Eriugena does desire to reconcile his sources.

God made', from *Genesis*, and he dovetails that into the line from *Ps.* 109:3 for the remainder of his interpretation:

For the prophet also says ... in the person of the Father 'my heart brought forth the good Word, I speak my works unto the King (*Ps.* 44:2)' as though He were to say openly: When my Word/Logos/Christ is born out of the recesses of my Essence, I make in Him my works, which I give to Him as King ... with Thee and in Thee is eternally the beginning of all things, that is, thy Word (*Ps.* 109:3). (*PP* II 557 A-B)¹²

So God brings forth his Word eternally, and eternally makes all things in Him – since there is no accident or temporal motion or temporal process in God, therefore there is none in the Word/Logos, since the Logos is to be identified with God.¹³ He confirms this with another interpretation of a citation from a different psalm: we see this type of multi-layered exegesis, the purpose of which is ultimately to root all interpretation of Scripture in Christological concerns, throughout Eriugena's writings. It is a technique which he develops on the basis of his encounter with Maximus the Confessor which confirmed him in, and contributed to, his development of the Augustinian thesis that a true interpretation of Scripture ultimately ends in charity – that is, the Word, Christ. We find a continual and repeated Christological emphasis in all Eriugenian exegesis, and because of his doctrine that wherever the Word is, there also we may expect to find the Father and the Holy Spirit, a doctrine both Augustinian and Dionysian in origin, this Christological interpretation is ultimately also Trinitarian.

He continues here:

'In the day of thy Power' (*Ps.* 109:3) ... for the day of the power of the Father is here not inappropriately understood as the knowledge of the ineffable birth of the God the Word from God the Father ... for the Power of the Father is the Wisdom of the Father, in which he made all things ... But that knowledge ... is in me ... by faith ... For 'who shall relate his generation?' (*Is.* 53:8) For no man, nor any of the celestial powers, can know of the generation of the Word from the Father how it is, or of what kind it is... (*PP* II 557 C)¹⁴

¹² *Et alibi idem propheta ex persona patris ait: 'Eructavit cor meum uerbum bonum, dico ego opera mea regi' (Ps. 44:2). Ac si aperte diceret: Ex secreto essentiae meae uerbo meo nascente, opera mea in eo facio, quae ego ipsi regnanti do... Tecum semper est et in te principium omnium, hoc est uerbum tuum (cf. Ps. 109:3) Si ergo semper principium est in patre et cum patre, nunquam erat et principium non erat, sed semper principium erat, E. Jeauneau (ed.), Iohannes Scotus seu Eriugena – Periphyseon, CChr.CM 162 (Turnhout, 2001), 42.*

¹³ See A. Golitzin, *Mystagogy* (2014) for an account of ps-Dionysius' Christology, including some suggestions as to why Dionysius is so reluctant to use the word Logos to refer to Christ: Golitzin suggests it may be due to his desire to avoid making Christ seem inferior to, or on a lower level than, the Father, as the Nous/Logos would have been on a lower level than the One in pagan Neoplatonism.

¹⁴ *'In die uirtutis tuae' (Ps. 103:9), hoc est in notitia intellectualis et rationalis creaturae generationis a te. 'Virtutis tuae', hoc est sapientiae tuae. Dies enim uirtutis patris in hoc loco non*

Here we see Eriugena laying down a couple of basic parameters: first, he draws his teaching from Scriptural sources. That is not to say that the substantial legacy of Neoplatonic thought which he inherited from the Fathers does not affect how he reads, but the starting point, to which he can bring these other resources, is Scriptural. Second, this knowledge of the generation of the Trinity is 'known by faith' – the extent to which he can, in present circumstances, see into the Godhead by reason is necessarily limited, and faith carries him beyond that reason: it is not a substitute for reason. Finally, although God allows a glimpse of His Trinitarian life through an adequate reading and understanding of Scripture, ultimately only God can understand what it means to beget the Word, and only the Word understands what it means to be begotten: the Trinity is not merely a human mode of speaking, or even a celestial mode of theophany, or revelation, concealing ultimately something quite different, but to be God is to be Trinity. Dionysius had made a distinction between 'creating' on the one hand and 'begetting' on the other: 'creation' is God's going forth into the effects, which may be divinized ultimately but are not to be found in God's very self, whereas 'begetting' characterizes the very selfhood of God: it is found within the One. It is notable that it is this Dionysian language of creating-begetting which allows Eriugena to establish the Trinitarian nature of God beyond all being and knowing.

Eriugena continues:

'In the splendours of the saints out of the womb, before the daystar I have begotten Thee' (*Ps.* 109:3) ... Understand 'womb' here to be the secret recesses of the Father's substance out of which the only begotten Son, who is the Word of the Father, was born, and from which he is always being born, and in which, while he is always being born, He always remains; of which it is said in the Gospel: 'No man hath seen God at any time, but the only begotten Son who is in the recesses of the Father shall himself tell of Him'. (*Jn.* 1:18) For He who is eternally and immutably in the Father is not separated from the Father, as He Himself says: 'I am in the Father, and the Father in me' (*Jn.* 14:10). (*PP* II 558 B)¹⁵

In this rather dense passage, we see Eriugena's preference for the Eastern, Greek formulation of the Trinity – three substances, one essence, emerging.

incongrue intelligitur cognitio ineffabilis natiuitatis dei uerbi ex deo patre ... 'Generationem enim eius quis enarrabit?' (Is. 53:8) Nullus enim hominum, nulla caelestium uirtutum generationem uerbi a patre potest cognoscere quomodo uel qualis est, sicut nemo nouit hominum uel angelorum quid est qui genuit et quid est quod genitum est, sed nouit quid genuit qui genuit et quia genitum est quod genitum est, Periphyseon, CChr.CM 162, 42-3.

¹⁵ *'In splendoribus sanctorum ex utero ante luciferum genui te' (Ps. 109:3) ... Vterum hic intellige secretos paternae essentiae sinus, ex quibus unigenitus filius qui est uerbum patris natus est, et de quibus semper nascitur, et in quibus dum semper nascitur semper manet. De quibus in euangelio dictum est: 'Deum nemo uidit unquam. Unigenitus autem filius qui est in sinibus patris ipse narrabit' (Ioh. 1:18). Non enim separatur a patre qui aeternaliter et incommutabiliter est in patre, sicut ipse ait: 'Ego in patre et pater in me' (Ioh. 14:10), Periphyseon, CChr.CM 162, 43.*

The substance (rather confusingly, Eriugena uses the Latin *essentia* here – but this means *ousia*) of the Father is the origin of the Son – who is, however, a separate substance in the same essence. The Son never separates from the Father, however, even as he is distinct from Him: He is always being born, and going forth, but he always remains, and Eriugena confirms this with a further Scriptural citation. Of course, the paradoxical process of procession and remaining which he describes here is also the Neoplatonic procession, remaining and return of One and Logos – but it has been completely assimilated to a Christian framework: the Neoplatonic structure has been used as a hermeneutical device to explicate some particularly difficult lines of Scripture, which in turn confirms the Platonic insight, arrived at by the exercise of reason alone.

Following this, there is a long passage of discussion concerning the ‘splendours of the saints’ which is taken to mean the Primordial Causes, eternally existing in the Word before descending into the realm of time and space – that is, coming to be. Eriugena then returns to the discussion of the Trinity as he finds it in Scripture, and introduces the Holy Spirit:

It seems to me, then, that the divine word attributes to God the Father the property of creating natures in their causes. For it says: ‘In the Beginning God made heaven and earth’ (*Gen. 1:1, Vetus Latina*), again, in another place: ‘Thou hast made all things in Thy Wisdom’ (*Ps. 103, 24*) and again: ‘Thou who madest the world out of unformed matter’ (*Wis. 11:18, Vulgate; 11:17, LXX*) ... and there are a thousand other instances. But it also asserts that it is in the Word that the substantive reasons of things are created, as these same passages which have been quoted witness: ‘In the Beginning God made heaven and earth’, and, ‘Thou madest all things in Thy Wisdom’. For Beginning is not one thing, and Wisdom another and the Word another, but by all these names the only begotten Son of God in whom and through Whom all things are made by the Father is properly signified ... ‘In Whom we live and move and have our being’ (*Acts 17:28*). Finally, the distribution of all the causes which the Father created in His Word generically and essentially, we find allotted by the same divine word to the Holy Spirit. For if to Him, as the Apostle witnesses, is given the ... distribution of divine gifts, why should he not also be given the distribution of the Primordial Causes substantially created in the Word of God? ... for what is to be understood by the Spirit of God fermenting, fertilising and nourishing the waters of the primordial causes (see *Gen. 1:2*) except the distribution and ordering of those things which in the Word are made simply as of one form and one substance, into the difference of all the genera and species and wholes and parts and individuals? (*PP II 563A-564A*)¹⁶

¹⁶ *Uidetur itaque mihi conditionis naturarum causaliter proprietatem Deo Patri theologiam tribuere: In principio, inquit, fecit deus caelum et terram (Gen. 1:1, Vetus Latina); item alibi: Omnia in sapientia fecisti (Ps. 103, 24); item: Qui fecisti mundum de materia informi (Sap. 11:18, Vulgata; 11:17, Septuaginta); et cetera mille. In Verbo autem rationes omnium rerum substantias conditas esse perhibet, praedictis eisdem attestantibus testimoniis: In principio fecit Deus caelum et terram; et: Omnia in sapientia fecisti. Non enim aliud est principium, aliud sapientia, aliud Uerbum, sed his omnibus nominationibus unigenitus Filius Dei, in quo et per quem omnia a Patre facta sunt, proprie significatur. Apostolus item: In quo uiuimus, inquit, et mouemur et*

In this passage, he reassumes the properties of the Father and the Son before describing the Holy Spirit. The Father creates the eternal reasons of all things in the Son, that is, the Primordial Causes, which, in another place, Eriugena will describe as the foreknowledge of God, which is eternal. He wants to avoid saying that God creates the world of matter eternally, since, as a Christian, he believes the world had a beginning, but he has to get himself from God who is eternal, creating something which is not: how would anything created by an eternal God not have the characteristic of eternity? The answer is that things as they truly are, are eternal, but as encountered in the realm of space and time, they are distributed, *i.e.*, instantiated in a world of quantity, both temporal and spatial. This instantiation is the work of the Holy Spirit who distributes these creative energies throughout the world of the Categories, thus giving it form and order and beauty – and this is a work of love for this lower level. This is an instance of another definition of the Trinity which Eriugena gets from his Byzantine sources, that is, Essence, Power and Operation which permits us to see how the creative process works. It is the Holy Spirit (*energeia*) which makes the Power (*dunamis*) of the Word actual, coming from the Father, from Essence (*ousia*), and of course, this is justified by so many references to the Spirit in Scripture – the Spirit of God moving over the waters in *Genesis*, Christ's promise to the disciples to send the Spirit, the Spirit speaking for us (and for creation) in *Romans*, because we know not how to pray as we ought and so on.

Later, when he comes to deal with the anthropological manifestation of the Trinity, the Father will be identified with *Nous*, with the highest level of intelligence found in the human soul, that which intuitively grasps the true nature of things and their origin in God, and is thus closest to Him, the Son with *Logos*, which is really the faculty of collecting all that we know, and coming to understand it, and the Holy Spirit will be seen to operate at the level of sense, which is the most external aspect of human intelligence – but the appreciation of beauty at the level of sense is what begins the turning of the material world back towards the source of all beauty. It is important to realize that, in this system of thinking, the Holy Spirit is not a lower-level Person because He operates at this level – in fact, wherever we see one member of the Trinity, we are to understand all, as the final citation makes clear: 'But the Holy Spirit Himself,

sumus (Act. 17:28) ... Omnium uero causarum, quas Pater in Uerbo suo universaliter et essentialiter creauit, distributionem Spiritui sancto eandem theologiam reperimus applicare. Si enim ipsi diuinarum donationum partitio distributioque, teste Apostolo, datur, cur non etiam primordialium causarum substantialiter in Uerbo Dei conditarum diuisio daretur ... Hoc etiam ex Scriptura Geneseos possumus argumentari, ubi scriptum est: Et Spiritus Dei fouebat aquas (Gen. 1:2). Ad quid enim aliud aestimandus est Spiritus Dei primordialium causarum aquas fouissee, fecundasse, nutrisse, nisi ut ea, quae uniformiter unitimque ac simpliciter in Uerbo facta sunt, per differentias generum, formarum, totorumque ac partium, numerorumque omnium distribueret atque ordinaret? Periphyseon, CChr.CM 162, 50-1.

as he essentially subsists in the nature of God the Father, so also essentially is in the nature of the Son, since as substance He proceeds from the Father through the Son ineffably born, and so the gifts which he distributes are not only his but the Father's from Whom He proceeds and the Son's from whom and through Whom he proceeds'. (*PP* II 565 A). Thus all creative activity at the material level is in some way participatory in the work of the Holy Spirit – and so Eriugena can include his own work here (as well as all creative or imaginative work) in the great process of systole, or return to God.

Conclusion

Clearly, Eriugena's Trinity needs to be located within the overall structure of his thought as a whole. The fundamental characteristic of his thinking is that it is theophanic, and this is something that he gets ultimately from Dionysius. This leads to a particular understanding of negativity, not as privative, but hyperphatic (*PP* 443A-*PP* 445D): non-being is not necessarily pure absence. God's very self is dialectical – Trinitarian – and that cannot be collapsed. Therefore, a really comprehensive account of reality can never be attained, because of the relationship of reality, which is theophany, the *energeia* of the Spirit, to *ousia*, or the ineffable essence through *dunamis*. This brings us to the Augustinian dimension of Eriugena's thought: it is precisely in the structure of reality – which is living, and always capable of surprise – that we see the true nature of its cause (even if we do not comprehend it) which is Trinitarian. (*PP* 678 C): there can never be a reconciliation of transcendent and immanent because this is how reality is structured.

To what extent, then, is this a foundation for interreligious dialogue? On the analysis of his methodology in relation to the Trinity, Eriugena emerges as a distinctively Christian thinker, one capable of employing – that is to say, dialoguing, with a wide variety of both Christian and non-Christian sources.

The *Apophthegmata Patrum* in the Context of the Occidental Reformation of Monastic Life during the 11th and 12th Centuries. The Case of Peter Abelard

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ABSTRACT

The *Apophthegmata Patrum* had an enormous impact on Christian asceticism and spirituality, and they had a wide circulation even in the medieval Occident. They served as a model especially in the context of the western reformation of monastic life during the 11th and 12th centuries. In that context, the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, that is, their Latin translation, the *Verba Seniorum*, played a major role which has been repeatedly emphasized in research, but has nevertheless not really been analyzed up to now.

The region of (today's) France was a major focus of the monastic reform movements. In order to shed light on the reception of the *Verba Seniorum* in France, in an exemplary manner, Peter Abelard's use of them will be analyzed. He makes abundant use of them in his *Letter 8* to Heloisa containing a monastic rule for religious women, and he also refers to them in his *Theologia* and his *Sic et non*. Therefore, the question can start from his case: In what way does Peter Abelard use and interpret the fathers' sayings and in what way is his own thinking shaped by them?

Under the name *Apophthegmata Patrum*, the sayings and deeds of late-antique desert fathers from Egypt were collected and transmitted. These fundamental testimonies of eastern eremitism and monasticism had an enormous impact on Christian asceticism and spirituality, and they had wide circulation even in the medieval Occident.¹ They served as a model especially in the context of the western reformation of monastic life during the 11th and 12th centuries.² In that context, the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, that is, their Latin translation, the *Verba Seniorum*, played a major role which has been repeatedly emphasized in research,³ but nevertheless has not really been analysed up to now.⁴

¹ See Columba M. Battle, *Die 'Adhortationes sanctorum patrum' ('Verba seniorum') im lateinischen Mittelalter: Überlieferung, Fortleben und Wirkung* (Münster, 1972).

² On this movement, see Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1996); Werner Goetz, *Kirchenreform und Investiturstreit 910-1122* (Stuttgart, 2000).

³ See, e.g., G. Constable, *Reformation* (1996), 160-1; Gregorio Penco, 'Il ricordo dell'ascetismo orientale nella tradizione monastica del medio evo europeo', *Studi medievali* 3 (1963), 571-87.

⁴ Up to now research in this field was limited to the few studies that could, at least, trace the fundamental lines of the *Apophthegmata Patrum*'s transmission in the West and demonstrate their

The region of (today's) France was a major centre of the monastic reform movements, with, *e.g.*, the origins of the Cistercian and the Carthusian orders at that very time.⁵ In order to shed light on the impact which the *Apophthegmata Patrum* had in that context, I wish to focus on Peter Abelard. He is famous as a major exponent of early scholasticism, but he was also a monastic reformer and liked to refer to the Fathers' sayings for that purpose. Of course, by focusing on one author, we cannot cover the broad range of contemporary references to the *Verba Seniorum*; nevertheless, by analysing the use Abelard made of them, we will gain an exemplary impression of how an outstanding 12th-century French writer treated them. At the same time, looking at the great scholastic Peter Abelard acting as an exemplary writer in the monastic context, we will see how deeply rooted he is in that very context – and how his reception of the Fathers' sayings crosses the boundaries between monastic and scholastic contexts. After a short look at the *Apophthegmata Patrum*'s transmission in the Medieval West (I), I will turn to Abelard (II) and emphasise two major aspects of the use he makes of them: Stressing the authority standing behind his views (IIa) and interiorisation (IIb). Finally, there will be a short conclusion (III).

I. Transmission

The *Apophthegmata Patrum*, which were first of all written down, most probably, in the Greek language at the end of the 5th century, were soon translated into the languages of the Christian Orient, but also Latin:⁶ The so-called systematic collection of the *Apophthegmata Patrum* – which, besides the so-called alphabetic collection, was to dominate the tradition of the Fathers' sayings – had already been translated into Latin by the middle of the 6th century.⁷ During the following centuries, this translation was incorporated into a corpus of texts collecting the traditions of Eastern monasticism, into the so-called *Vitae Patrum*.⁸ Under that title, in 1615 Heribert Rosweyde edited, besides the lives of outstanding monastic figures like the *Life of Anthony* and accounts of the

vast attestation. See C.M. Battle, *Adhortationes* (1972); Eva Schulz-Flügel, 'Zur Entstehung der Corpora Vitae Patrum', *SP* 20 (1989), 289-300. Those meritorious studies did not raise the crucial question how the Fathers' sayings were used and interpreted.

⁵ See, *e.g.*, Jacques Verger, *La renaissance du XII^e siècle* (Paris, 1999), 64-71; W. Goetz, *Kirchenreform* (2000), 56-65.

⁶ On the origins of the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, see Jean-Claude Guy, 'Note sur l'évolution du genre apophthegmatique', *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique* 32 (1956), 63-8; *id.*, *Recherches sur la tradition grecque des Apophthegmata Patrum* (Bruxelles, 1962); *id.*, *Les apophthegmes des pères: collection systématique. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes*, 3 volumes, Sources Chrétiennes 387 (Paris, 1993); 474 (Paris, 2003); 498 (Paris, 2005).

⁷ See Anscari Mundó, 'L'authenticité de la regula Sancti Benedicti', *Studia Anselmiana* 42 (1957), 131-3; C.M. Battle, *Adhortationes* (1972), 12.

⁸ See E. Schulz-Flügel, *Vitae Patrum* (1989), 289-300.

origins of monasticism like the *Historia monachorum*, the *Apophthegmata Patrum* translated into Latin.⁹ He called the latter *Verba Seniorum*, and this term is still used in research to refer to the Latin *Apophthegmata Patrum*.

The *Verba Seniorum* spread all over the Occident, particularly in monasteries and their libraries, for which they became a kind of 'house book'.¹⁰ There are more than 100 manuscripts preserved from the 11th and 12th centuries containing them, and we know many authors from that time referring to them in their works, especially in the region of (today's) France.¹¹ Peter Abelard (1079-1142) is one of them.¹²

II. Peter Abelard and the *Apophthegmata Patrum*

Abelard is well known as a scholastic thinker from Paris, author of astute writings like his *Theologia* and, of course, as Heloisa's lover. But he was also a monk; he even became the abbot of a monastery in Brittany, and he was a monastic reformer: He was the founder of an eremitic community, the so-called 'Paraclete', and for Heloisa, after she had become the prioress of a convent, he wrote, amongst other writings, a treatise on the origins of the life of nuns (*Letter 7*) and a rule for her nuns' community. In his *Letter 8* which contains this rule,¹³ he carried out Heloisa's request and adapted the Rule of St. Benedict which was, of course, a rule for men, to the nuns' convent led by Heloisa. It was especially in that rule that, besides the *Rule of Benedict*, he made abundant use of the *Verba Seniorum*. From the fact that Abelard referred to the Fathers' sayings in combination with the *Rule of Benedict*, that is, with the fundamental authority of Western monasticism, we can already see one major feature of Abelard's use of the former:

Ia. Authority

He drew on the *Verba Seniorum* in order to underpin, by their authority, his own ideals concerning monastic life and its reformation – ideals which were, of course, shaped by his own time, but which he understood as ideals stemming from the origins of monasticism. By referring to the *Verba Seniorum* regarded as witnesses of those origins, he could easily show that his convictions matched

⁹ Rosweyde's third edition (1628) became part of the PL 73-4.

¹⁰ E. Schulz-Flügel, *Vitae Patrum* (1989), 289; see also C.M. Battle, *Adhortationes* (1972).

¹¹ See C.M. Battle, *Adhortationes* (1972).

¹² On Peter Abelard's life and works, see Michael T. Clanchy, *Abelard: A Medieval Life* (Oxford, 1997); John Marenbon, *The Philosophy of Peter Abelard* (Cambridge, 1997).

¹³ On the authenticity of Abelard's *Letters* 1-8 – which has been thoroughly discussed – see Tobias Georges, *Quam nos divinitatem nominare consuevimus. Die theologische Ethik des Peter Abaelard*, Arbeiten zur Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte 16 (Leipzig, 2005), 127-33.

original monastic ideals. This use of the Fathers' sayings is pervasive in Abelard's monastic rule. While he drew on the *Verba Seniorum* in other writings as well, the majority of his references are to be found in that rule. In all of its sections, he referred to passages from the *Verba Seniorum*, often by quoting entire Apophthegms or even chains of Apophthegms: when outlining fundamental ideals of monastic life – like chastity, renunciation of property, obedience, and withdrawal from the world – or when regulating daily life in the convent or even when finally urging the nuns to study the holy scriptures. Abelard emphasised those references especially in the context of the fundamental ideals of monastic life and particularly when calling to withdraw from the world. To illustrate this, the following passage is quite paradigmatic:

Solitude is indeed all the more necessary for your woman's frailty, inasmuch as for our part we are less attacked by the conflicts of carnal temptations and less likely to stray towards bodily things through the senses. Hence St. Antony says: 'Whoever sits in solitude and is at peace is rescued from three wars, that is, wars of hearing, speech, and sight; he shall have only one thing to fight against, the heart'.¹⁴

Of course, in the context of monastic reform, St. Antony was regularly cited. His words contained in the quotation from Abelard's rule were taken from the *Verba Seniorum* (5,2,2). Abelard was quite loyal to the *Verba Seniorum*'s original text.¹⁵ In this way, Abelard often quoted from the *Apophthegmata Patrum* in order to corroborate and illustrate his own convictions.

Beyond this general strive for underpinning his own ideals by pointing to the Fathers' sayings, there is another, specific feature characteristic of many of Abelard's references to them, which is also illustrated by the passage quoted from the rule.

IIb. Interiorisation

There is a special tendency of looking at ascetic life or even human life in general that made the Fathers' sayings attractive to authors like Abelard: the tendency towards interiorisation which was widespread in his time in general, and particularly in the monastic context.¹⁶ Generally speaking, in Abelard's times, there was a growing interest in the inner being of man and his heart

¹⁴ Petrus Abaelardus, *Institutio* 20, ed. David E. Luscombe (Oxford, 2013), 380 (translation: 381): *Vestrae vero infirmitati tanto magis est solitudo necessaria, quanto carnalium tentationum bellis minus hic infestamur et minus ad corporalia per sensus evagamur. Unde et beatus Antonius: 'Qui sedet', inquit, 'in solitudine et quiescit, a tribus bellis eripitur, id est auditus, locutionis et visus, et contra unum habebit tantummodo pugnam, id est cordis'.*

¹⁵ See PL 73, 858.

¹⁶ See T. Georges, *Theologische Ethik* (2005), 50-1, 267-71; G. Constable, *Reformation* (1996), 269-70; Georg Wieland, 'Rationalisierung und Verinnerlichung. Aspekte der geistigen Physiognomie des 12. Jahrhunderts', in Jan Peter Beckmann (ed.), *Philosophie im Mittelalter* (Hamburg, 1987), 61-79.

(*anima, animus, cor*), his intention (*intentio*) and his powers of discernment (*discretio*) when the perception, thinking, feeling and acting of man was reflected. This inclination met a fundamental aspect of the anthropology that was predominant in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*: Many of those sayings also tended to focus on the inner life of man, and very often they pointed to the heart as a person's centre – because it is the heart they understood as the pivotal point of contact between God and man and, at the same time, as the place for the demons' attacks, as the place where it is decided who rules the person.¹⁷

This reason for referring to the *Verba Seniorum* is obvious in Peter Abelard who, in his rule, did not tire of using them in order to exhort Heloisa and her sisters to flee from the outward, bodily world characterised by temptations and to concentrate on the heart, to become self-aware and free for God's presence. The passage containing St. Antony's words quoted before exactly highlights this motive: The retreat into solitude served to concentrate on one's own heart. As the place for such a retreat into oneself, in Abelard's eyes, solitude was the place where, as he said, one should '... speak with God...'¹⁸

III. Conclusion: Abelard in context

With this use Abelard made of the *Verba Seniorum*, he sheds light on a common phenomenon that was very prominent among monks and hermits of his times. Of course, a broader analysis¹⁹ would also show individual characteristics and differences between authors, but first of all, the common ground is striking. The two features emphasised in this article – stressing the authority and interiorisation – can be found in many of Abelard's contemporaries using the *Verba Seniorum*, like, e.g., the Cistercian abbot Bernard of Clairvaux²⁰ and the Cluniacian abbot Peter the Venerable – two contemporaries that Abelard knew very well.²¹ As evidence, I just quote two passages from Peter the Venerable's *Letter*

¹⁷ On this perspective in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, see Barbara Müller, *Der Weg des Weinens. Die Tradition des 'Penthos' in den Apophthegmata Patrum*, Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte 77 (Göttingen, 2000), 60-4.

¹⁸ ... *cum deo loqui*... Petrus Abaelardus, *Institutio* 111, ed. D.E. Luscombe (Oxford, 2013), 488 (translation: 489); see Petrus Abaelardus, *Institutio* 7, ed. D.E. Luscombe (Oxford, 2013), 366: ... *Deo loquimur*...

¹⁹ This article is part of my research project on 'The Apophthegmata Patrum in the context of the occidental reformation of monastic life during the 11th and 12th centuries: Their transmission, interpretation and importance in France'.

²⁰ See, e.g., Bernard of Clairvaux, *In Resurrectione sermo* 2,4, ed. Gerhard B. Winkler (Innsbruck, 1997), 264.

²¹ On Bernard of Clairvaux, see Peter Dinzelbacher, *Bernhard von Clairvaux: Leben und Werk des berühmten Zisterziensers* (Darmstadt, 1998), on Peter the Venerable, see Jean-Pierre Torrell and Denise Bouthillier, *Pierre le Vénérable et sa vision du monde. Sa vie – son œuvre – l'homme et le démon*, *Spicilegium sacrum Lovaniense: études et documents* 42 (Leuven, 1986).

20 addressed to a hermit called Gislebertus. In order to encourage Gislebertus and his ascetic way of life, Peter told him:

I recommend this cell to you so that according to an old father's saying, 'the cell shall itself teach you by its silence, more eloquently than all the teachers'.²²

And a bit later, Peter said:

One of the fathers says: 'Flee from the people and keep the silence, and you will be saved'.²³

In both cases, the Clunisian abbot quoted from the *Verba Seniorum*. So we see in what way Abelard was rooted in the contemporary monastic context. At the same time, in Abelard's case, it turns out that the common way of using the Fathers' sayings goes beyond the monastic context. Because Abelard's reception of the *Verba Seniorum* is not restricted to his rule. He uses them, e.g., also in his *Theologia scholarium* (1,140)²⁴ and in his *Sic et non* (*Quaestio* 117),²⁵ that is, in two writings stemming from a background usually called 'scholastic'.²⁶ In both passages, we find the focus on the inner being of man again which, of course, excellently matches Abelard's own profile as a theologian: He is famous for his acute perspective on human intention and consciousness, and it is not by chance that his ethical masterpiece is entitled *Scito te ipsum*.²⁷ The roots of this title with its allusion to the Delphic motto were certainly wide-ranging,²⁸ especially in Abelard's times which were also characterised as 'renaissance of the 12th century'.²⁹ However, in view of Abelard's references to the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, the line of thought that stemmed from them and emphasised interiority should not be neglected. Thus, Abelard makes us perceive in what way the kinds of thinking usually labelled as 'monastic' on the one hand and as 'scholastic' on the other³⁰ converge.

²² Petrus Venerabilis, *Ep.* 20, ed. Giles Constable (Cambridge MA., 1967), 29: ... *hanc ... cellam tibi propono, ut secundum cuiusdam antiqui patris dictum 'ipsa sola eloquentius omnibus magistris tacendo te doceat'* [*Verba Seniorum* 3,109; PL 73, 781].

²³ Petrus Venerabilis, *Ep.* 20, ed. G. Constable (Cambridge MA., 1967), 29: '*Fuge' ait quidam patrum 'homines et tace, et salvus eris'* [*Verba Seniorum* 3,190; PL 73, 801].

²⁴ Ed. Eloi Marie Buytaert and Constant Mews, CChr.CM 13 (Turnhout, 1987), 376.

²⁵ Ed. Blanche B. Boyer and Richard McKeon (Chicago Ill., 1976), 392-3.

²⁶ On this background, see, e.g., Stefan Ernst, *Petrus Abaelardus*, Zugänge zum Denken des Mittelalters 2 (Münster, 2003), 15-8.

²⁷ On this, see T. Georges, *Theologische Ethik* (2005), especially 228-59.

²⁸ See Rainer M. Ilgner, 'Scito te ipsum – Ethica nostra. Zu Herkunft und Bedeutung des Titels von Abaelards Ethik', *Theologie und Philosophie* 76 (2001), 253-70; G. Constable, *Reformation* (1996), 275-6.

²⁹ See Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge MA., 1927); Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable (eds), *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge MA., 1982).

³⁰ On this distinction, see Ulrich Köpf, 'Monastische und scholastische Theologie', in Dieter R. Bauer and Gotthard Fuchs (eds), *Bernhard von Clairvaux und der Beginn der Moderne* (Innsbruck and Wien, 1996), 96-135.

Augustine and the Dissolution of Polarity. Some Thoughts on Augustine Reception in the Late 13th and Early 14th Centuries According to Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart

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ABSTRACT

Perhaps one of the most understudied and undervalued aspects of medieval thought is the body. By the ‘body’ I do not mean the elusive object of various contemporary strains of thought, but – at least initially at any rate – the metaphysics of embodiment: the implications of the relationship between matter and form, of what is a substance, what is a thing, in the composite that makes up the human person.¹ I select this avenue of inquiry for two reasons; firstly because it seems to be an excellent place to assess the use and impact of Augustine in the late medieval period; and secondly (but only inadvertently for our purposes here) because the implications of such metaphysical questions are also of a contemporary significance. The debate about the nature of matter and form is instructive on a number of levels, but perhaps most interestingly here it displays a connection between various strands of late medieval thought, especially with respect to two thinkers (Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart) who otherwise stand out, for reasons that will become apparent, from others on the question of the appropriation of Augustine in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. We will therefore consider the relationship between the emerging Dominican thought through Thomas, and his unique conception of matter-form relation; and both Eckhart’s personal connections (to Augustinianism and speculative grammatical theories) and his own understanding of matter-form relation, which draws on Thomas but also (thanks to Augustine) seems struck by the mysteriousness of matter. In both cases we can then see evidence for a late medieval conception of the human person which is sensitive to the eschatological orientation of matter to the resurrected state. In Thomas’ case we see this as a result of the ecstatic relation between matter and form – that is, a mutuality which seeks the good of the other² – which is something contrary to competing models of Augustinianism, and which sees Augustine as a reason to abandon thoughts of polarity.

¹ A notable exception to this is Caroline Walker Bynum’s *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York NY, 1995), in particular 227-344. In this contribution I hope to supplement some of the considerations raised by this excellent study.

² I am grateful to Graham McAleer and the insights of his book *Ecstatic Morality and Sexual Politics: A Catholic and Antitotalitarian Theory of the Body* (New York, 2005), which not only makes this point, but has also greatly influenced the conception of Thomas’ theory of matter-form relation, and surrounding debates, upon which the reflections in this present contribution rests.

In Eckhart we find a spiritual-metaphysical agenda which, unsure whether to admit of any kind of ‘somethingness’ to matter, stands outside of the polarity of ‘something’ versus ‘nothing’. The implication of Eckhart’s position is to question the role of language and its relation to reality, and therefore to the orientation of matter to its eschatological end. Thomas and Eckhart therefore mark something of a break with the so-called neo-Augustinianism of their day – for different reasons, but by extension, both in a conception of the body.

It has been quite convincingly argued that with respect to the reception of Augustine in the late medieval period in general, we must disband any attempt to impose a contemporary understanding of the Bishop of Hippo upon the understanding of him during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.³ This may seem an obvious point, but unless it is consciously and continually affirmed with a force proportional to our growing understanding of just how far removed the late medieval worldview is from the contemporary, it plunges into ever-greater confusion an appreciation for the different and often subtle ways Augustine was received among the theologians and philosophers of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Because Augustine has by this time been assumed so fully into the fabric of Christian existence, every Christian theologian and philosopher, to a greater or lesser extent, is ‘Augustinian’.

Studies dedicated to the theological reception of Augustine in the late medieval period rely understandably and perhaps inevitably upon the members of the Order of the Hermits of St. Augustine.⁴ Any good history of the Order knows to distinguish between the generations of ‘Augustinianism’: the Franciscan response to pervading Aristotelianism of the thirteenth century; Giles of Rome and his establishment as the first solid theological authority-figure of the Augustinian Hermits; and the later Augustinian Hermits such as Gregory of Rimini.⁵ This imprecise though intelligible distinction between Augustine’s reception both inside and outside of the Order suffers unfortunately

³ Eric Leyland Saak, *Creating Augustine: Interpreting Augustine and Augustinianism in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2012), 222.

⁴ Perhaps of greatest significance among recent publications is E.L. Saak, *Creating Augustine* (2012), but without doubt Zumkeller’s work is seminal, see Adolar Zumkeller, *Theology and History of the Augustinian School in the Middle Ages*, ed. by John E. Rotelle, The Augustinian Series 6 (Villanova PA, 1996). Additionally the excellent work of David Gutiérrez, *The Augustinians in the Middle Ages 1256-1356*, trans. Arthur J. Ennis, History of the Order of St. Augustine 1/1 (Villanova, 1984). The work of Damasus Trapp also cannot go without reference, in particular for his contribution to a broadening of knowledge of Augustinian Hermits of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, see *Augustinian Theology of the 14th Century: Notes on Editions, Marginalia, Opinions and Booklore* (Leuven, 1956).

⁵ On these distinctions see Jeremiah Hackett, ‘The Reception of Meister Eckhart: Mysticism, Philosophy and Theology in Henry of Friemar (the Elder) and Jordanus of Quedlinburg’, in Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener (eds), *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 32 (Berlin, 2005), 554-86, 557 n. 3.

from a relative lack of edited texts from Augustinian Hermits of the period. Nevertheless, some points of connection between interpreters of Augustine seem immediately clear. Given the fact that Giles of Rome was a student of Thomas Aquinas, and Henry of Friemar (the Elder) possibly a student of Godfrey of Fontaines, it has been rightly suggested that ‘the existence of a specific Thomistic Dominican influence on these early Augustinian teachers cannot be ignored’.⁶ Central to this claim is the development of ‘Erfordian schools’,⁷ which draws upon the personal connections between Meister Eckhart (a Dominican, living in the cloister at the Predigerkirche in Erfurt) and Henry of Friemar (an Augustinian, living in the Augustinerkloster in Erfurt), literally streets away from each other. For a variety of reasons, and not least from the various manuscript witnesses, Eckhart was considered someone of great importance for the Augustinian Hermits – and perhaps his relationship with Henry of Friemar played some role in this.⁸ Not without note also is Thomas of Erfurt, the Franciscan teacher at the Schottenkloster, famed for his contribution to the development of grammatical theories among the Modistae.⁹ The relations between this triad of persons, operating at the same time, are not to be overlooked, and can serve as a particularly constructive example for both delineating between the various Augustinianisms of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, and for increasing the sense we have for how the late medieval mind understood the world (the relation between language and reality), which naturally informed their interpretations of Augustine. Undoubtedly in the approach Eckhart takes with respect to Augustine and language these connections play a vital role.

It is in light of these observations that we here focus on the relationship between Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart. The first part seeks to draw the reader’s attention to recent research into ‘Ecstatic Thomism’, and how this illustrates a

⁶ *Ibid.* 557.

⁷ *Ibid.* 585. I am not sure whether the conclusion that ‘the *Via Augustini* is to be distinguished from the Albertinian tradition as represented by Dietrich of Freiberg’ is necessarily universally true. It seems that this relies perhaps too much on a unified concept of the *Via Augustini*, and we must at least distinguish between varieties of Augustine-appropriation from among the various topics of theological and philosophical discussion seen to coincide with or diverge from the views of Augustine.

⁸ The manuscript compiled by the Augustinian Prosper de Reggio Emilia OESA, Rome, *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*, Vaticanus Latinus 1086, is our best witness to Eckhart’s Parisian activities. The fragment pertaining to Eckhart in Troyes is in the margin of a question by another Augustinian: Jacobus de Viterbo OESA (see Walter Senner OP, ‘Meister Eckhart’s Life, Training, Career and Trial’, in Jeremiah Hackett [ed.], *A Companion to Meister Eckhart*, Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition 36 [Leiden, 2012], 7-84, 14 and 16 n. 55) and the Erfurt manuscript at the *Amploniana*, which contains Eckhart’s *Collatio in libros Sententiarum*, also contains a quodlibet by Jacobus de Viterbo (CA 2^o 321).

⁹ On a growing understanding of the relationship between Thomas and Eckhart, see Markus Vinzent and Christopher M. Wojtulewicz (eds), *Meister Eckhart and Thomas of Erfurt*, Eckhart: Texts and Studies (Leuven, forthcoming).

unified concept of the human person, but points in the direction of a Thomism which is indebted to Augustine, even if it stands in contrast to an Augustinianism which feels uneasy with the idea of man as a rational *animal* (at least in the unified way Aquinas understands it)¹⁰ whose whole being looks to the consummation of the immanence of God already acknowledged as present to reality by virtue of revelation. The second part seeks to enter into Eckhart's contribution to the matter-form debate in light of Augustine, and in fact demonstrates that Eckhart seems to depend on Augustine in a way which ultimately brings his concerns more in line with Aquinas than perhaps otherwise perceived, but for different reasons, by a different route, and with some key distinctions.¹¹

Where there seems to be a particular convergence between Aquinas and Eckhart in their appropriation of Augustine is in the dissolution of a sense of polarity. It therefore seems reasonable to challenge something of the 'Augustine versus Thomas' view, especially as it seems to simply get in the way of a more precise assessment of what was going on in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. More accurately, Thomas seems to disagree with a certain kind of Augustine-reception – one which he seemed to feel put a 'limitation on God's generosity and power, in the neo-Augustinian refusal to think of the creature as a unity'.¹² This inherent unity relies on an understanding of the body and of matter which have vast implications, and for our purposes here at least, it seems to demonstrate that the term 'neo-Augustinian', whilst identifying some figures of the period, does not account universally for Augustine's reception. The problem consists in that the so-called 'neo-Augustinianism' begins from the view that 'the body and the soul [matter and form] are not intimately related'.¹³ Aquinas asserts the contrary: not only does he think that matter and form are intimately related and desirous of one another, he also 'rejects theories of desire that make lack essential to desire'.¹⁴

Hylomorphic theories rely upon a view of divine immanence which can easily become the fulcrum that sets the balance for determining the influence of Augustine. Graham McAleer has argued that in Aquinas and Giles of Rome we have two turning points regarding an understanding of divine immanence. Augustine plays his role in both, but in Giles we find at least a new kind of 'exteriority', distinguishing him from Aquinas:

Thus, if, in Averroes, God and the world are ultimately divided, in Giles, God and the world are ultimately united, but this unification is not rendered without its moments of

¹⁰ Denys Turner, *Faith, Reason and the Existence of God* (Cambridge, 2004), 89-90.

¹¹ Eckhart is not to be mistaken for following Augustine uncritically. In fact, on the question of the will, Eckhart sets his position as diametrically opposed to that of Augustine, see John M. Connolly, *Living Without Why. Meister Eckhart's Critique of the Medieval Concept of Will* (Oxford, 2014).

¹² G.J. McAleer, *Ecstatic Morality* (2005), 5.

¹³ *Ibid.* 4-5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 5.

violence [...] it is a commonplace of the philosophical and theological tradition to conceive of self-mastery in terms of violent self-rule; to assume that material substantial compositions are held together through violence [...] Thomas objects to [...] these violent analyses but sees [...] them as] related to a central problem: the failure to see the natural world as a setting for the *deus revelatus*.¹⁵

The distinction is therefore not between the use of Augustine to emphasise a transcendence or exteriority between God and the world, but between two theories of transcendence whose implications for hylomorphism lead to a conception of the body – of the human person – in terms of ‘violent self-rule’. The observation of failure by Thomas can also be seen as a decisive split between the competing receptions of Augustine, and certainly, as a natural extension, of the sorts of divisions this entails. It is, as we will see, precisely on the basis of this fundamental understanding of the setting for the *deus revelatus* that Thomas takes Augustine forward.

McAleer’s assessment of the relationship between the question of divine immanence and the ensuing internal conflict in man is a highly perceptive analysis which deserves much greater attention. Thomas says (contrary to Averroes) that all matter is the same, but that the *ratio possibilitatis* – the possibilities of what matter can become – are many.¹⁶ Thus, it is the form which sets the matter in its *ratio* or desire. But Giles was not convinced by this explanation, thinking that because it necessitates such a completeness of dependence on its form, matter is metaphysically very weak. Instead, Giles wanted to push for a stronger ontology of matter, whereby matter is a *res* (thing) in itself, as with form, so that man can properly be spoken of as a composite.¹⁷ Matter’s ‘way of being possible is a *modus rei*’ or mode of thing,¹⁸ but Thomas’s problem with this ‘modal’ explanation of the relationship between matter and form is that according to it matter does not naturally look to form, and when it does, it is only in one of its modes, thus not uniting itself completely to the form.¹⁹ So begins, for Thomas, an unacceptable interior violence of dominance between matter and form: that matter has to be forced to con-form.

Giles of Rome, *doctor fundatissimus*, is the name that becomes synonymous with the Order of Hermits of St. Augustine, as the one who leads the way, through the foundational nature of his work, in the correct understanding and use of Augustine, both academically and spiritually within the Order. But in fact our knowledge of this Order, and the relevant persons from this period of history, is relatively, that is to say proportionally, unbalanced. So many important figures in fact, producing sentence commentaries and other theological

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 8-9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 10.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 24-5.

works at the time, remain little more than names. As our knowledge of the members of this Order grows, however, our sense of the importance and centrality of a particular reading of Augustine is continually affirmed. Giles is placed as the one on whom the Order could rely for a correct understanding of Augustine and a united school of thought.²⁰ What Giles stood for in the Augustinian Order, Thomas went on to be for the Dominican Order.

The top and bottom of this fundamental difference in approach to matter and form relations is a change in understanding of the violence of self-mastery, the violence instigated by the re-growth of a theory of metaphysical independence of matter from form, and the emphasis on modes of presence as an explanation for the potentiality of matter. This seems to be an important way forward for understanding the reception of Augustine. The unity and harmony of Aquinas' theory, followed by the rupture of the 1277 condemnations, formed the background to the development of theories which sought to use Augustine to fill the epistemic gap now forged by the rejection of Aquinas' view, but which unravels when applied to the interior details of man's spiritual existence. This sense of 'a return to Augustine'²¹ seems to presuppose that he had in some measure fallen out of favour; it seems rather that what we witness here are two ways in which Augustine was received, not a pull towards or from an Augustinian view of the human person, even if the close theological proximity of the Augustinian Hermits to one another represented the degree to which they felt themselves to be the true guardians of the proper interpretation of Augustine.²² Aquinas, on the other hand, seems to have approached Augustine with a view to explicating the dilation of the human experience, rather than its polarity to God.

Taking this receptive split further, although created in the image of God, Augustine was nevertheless keen to emphasise the 'radical *dissimilitude*' of man to the 'uncreated Trinity'.²³ As a result of this dissimilitude, man is no longer set in an economy of 'comparison' to God, as though they were simply opposites, capable of a correlative discourse. The preservation of a sense of the depth of what we cannot yet know about God is of course sustained throughout the late medieval period, and not just in mystical texts, but also within the very fabric of the theological and philosophical discourse of the university. Emphasis is made on the fact that this encourages a larger degree of humility in progressing with a cumulative but never exhaustive understanding of the mystery of the Trinity, and this certainly satisfies the sanctifying role the study of theology ought to occupy, so keenly stressed by the Augustinian Hermits as

²⁰ A. Zumkeller, *Theology and History* (1996), 12.

²¹ E.L. Saak, *Creating Augustine* (2012), 46.

²² A. Zumkeller, *Augustinian Theology* (1996), 11-6.

²³ Gilles Emery OP, 'Trinitarian Theology as Spiritual Exercise in Augustine and Aquinas', in Michael Dauphinais, Barry David and Matthew Levering (eds), *Aquinas the Augustinian* (Washington, D.C., 2007), 1-40, 12.

essential to the growth of the Order, as well as the *humility* of the Order.²⁴ But the implications of the inclusion of the works of the Trinity in stressing man's limitation in comprehending God – that is to say, man as created as a partaker in the life of the Trinity – do not take leave of us at this point: they inculcate a dissolution of a polarity by stressing how mysterious both *matter* and *human personhood* are. Here we find a most important way in which Aquinas appropriates Augustine. The *imago dei* in man can, as Emery puts it with respect to all of the works of Trinity, 'lead us to a certain knowledge of the mystery' whilst it 'remain[ing] incomprehensible for us'.²⁵ No longer are we operating in an intellectual realm where the world is simply a reflection of God's inner life in a way which catapults one's considerations away from the world and 'up' to the mystery of God – God and the world are not comparable by virtue of man's dissimilitude – but we are operating actually on the fact that the mystery is *present* to the created order.

The question of man as *imago dei* is not just a question of *how man reflects God*, but a question of *what it means to talk about the dimensions of man which are exclusive to him*. In other words, what is discoverable about the incomprehensibility of God by considering what there is in man which sets him apart from everything else, on the one hand, and what is there in man which is also common to all of the created world, on the other? Respectively, *human personhood* and *matter* fit these categories. We are left then to say that the late medieval mind, thanks to Augustine's stress even on the incomprehensibility of the world, is increased in its sensitivity to the fundamental mysteriousness of *matter* and *human personhood*. Matter is of course a constitutive element of the human person, for 'human person' presupposes a body, and the reality of the resurrection precludes the possibility of identifying the human person exclusively with the soul.

Aquinas understands, along with Augustine, that man's self-knowledge and self-love, properly conceived, are secondary ways to knowledge and love of God. Their secondary place has to do with the fact that such self-reflexivity requires the focusing upon an object that is not 'immutable'; nevertheless, as Emery shows, there is value in the fact that the object of the knowledge and

²⁴ We read from Giles in 1292: 'Maintain and foster the study of theology with all your effort because this, along with regular observance, is necessary for our Order to grow and even to exalt in humility'. *Analecta Augustiniana* IV (1911-1912), 203, as given in A. Zumkeller, *Theology and History* (1996), 11. Emery also highlights how Augustine makes use of 'interminable detours, repetitions and digressions' in *De Trinitate* because it is Augustine's intention that the reader be exercised in such a way that he advance in his capacity for the mysteries of God (see G. Emery, 'Trinitarian Theology' [2007], 13). This point about Augustine has to be considered in light of what we say here about Eckhart and language – is this to be seen as the function of a literary device, or more of the ontological effectiveness of language? Giles of Rome clearly sees remaining close to Augustine as essential for personal spiritual, and intellectual growth.

²⁵ G. Emery, 'Trinitarian Theology' (2007), 19-20.

love of the self *is indeed the same as oneself*, and that this thereby gives rise to an analogical experience of what it means for God to act ‘*consubstantially*’.²⁶ It is, Emery says, at least an ‘*identity of being*’.²⁷ The primary knowledge and love of God is not set as in opposition to this self-knowledge and self-love, provided this self-reflexivity is not ‘absolute’,²⁸ whereupon the soul would be stunted and trapped by the delimited claustrophobia of eternal self reference; rather, this is to allow man ‘to go on to turn to God’,²⁹ and it is then, in the vast openness of knowledge and love of God, that man is able to be transformed and drawn into the mystery of the Trinity:

Thomas repeats Augustine’s profound views verbatim: “We know the glorious God by the mirror of reason, in which there is an image of God. We behold Him when we rise from a consideration of ourselves to some knowledge of God, and we are transformed. For since all knowledge involves the knower’s being assimilated to the thing known, it is necessary that those who see be in some way transformed into God. If they see perfectly, they are perfectly transformed, as the blessed in heaven by the union of fruition: ‘When he appears we shall be like him’ (1 Jn 3:2); but if we see imperfectly, then we are transformed imperfectly, as here by faith: ‘Now we see in a mirror dimly’ (1 Cor 12:12).”³⁰

Two things are drawn together by Thomas’ observation here: the first to do with revelation and the second to do with the movement or trajectory of the individual. The first, as in Bonaventure, is that the theology of revelation, the theology which accounts for God’s relation to history, in being an active process of revealing and unveiling to creation,³¹ is also a drawing forth towards the perfection of transparent union with God that characterises the beatific vision. In this sense, the medieval aggregation of an Augustinian anthropology of man being drawn into God through knowledge and love of God and of himself, informs a spiritual-theological vision whereby man’s horizon serves not to inculcate the Christian mind with a jarring radical polarity between God and man; but to give the means by which the human soul dilates in its experience and capacity for God. To grasp this understanding of the late medieval period requires a certain stripping away of what we immediately think of with respect to revelation and Scripture, as was noted in the habilitation of Joseph Ratzinger

²⁶ *Ibid.* 37.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia, q. 93, a. 8, co.: *Sed hoc est, non quia fertur mens in seipsam absolute, sed prout per hoc ulterius potest ferri in Deum; ut patet per auctoritatem supra inductam.* The ‘authority’ Thomas is referring to is *De trinitate* XIV, 12 from his *sed contra* to this article. See G. Emery, ‘Trinitarian Theology’ (2007), 37.

²⁹ G. Emery, ‘Trinitarian Theology’ (2007), 37.

³⁰ *In II Ad Cor.* 3:18 (no. 114), *De Trinitate* XV 8, 14, as quoted and translated in G. Emery, ‘Trinitarian Theology’ (2007), 38.

³¹ It both ‘*arrives and is perceived*’ see Maximilian Heinrich Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church and Living Theology* (San Francisco, CA, 2007), 161.

on the nature of the theology of history according to Bonaventure. According to his analysis, the theologians of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries would have viewed 'revelation' as 'a concept denoting an act'. Therefore, 'the receiving subject is always also a part of the concept of "revelation"'.³² For this reason a theory which sees the world as the place of the *deus revelatus*, unlike the Averroist position,³³ is a theory which concedes the dissolution of polarity and affirms the mutual compenetration of God and man.

The second aspect from Aquinas' quote is that Emery's point about the experience of the *identity of being* as analogous to God's consubstantiality seems particularly pertinent to a medieval realisation that the nature of *matter* is itself mysterious. This follows what is now called 'Ecstatic Thomism'³⁴ – the realisation that even at the fundamental level of matter and form each reaches out in desire for the other in a way which seeks to advance the other. Whilst some form of rule is necessary, the conditions are right for this rule such that violence is not needed to ensure the correct trajectory: in other words, matter is not suppressed.

As the general thrust of Thomas's position and appropriation of Augustine becomes more apparent, we now turn to Meister Eckhart in light of these concerns and assess whether he comes to Thomas's conclusions.

Meister Eckhart: Matter-Form Relation and Language

A number of elements come together when we consider the relation between matter and form according to Meister Eckhart. Following Augustine closely, Eckhart seeks to maintain an understanding of matter's relation to form, sharpened in its nature by drawing upon Maimonides' interpretation of matter-form relation. Prime matter, as *desirous* of form, is taken to its extreme in Eckhart in fact, as he says that in virtue of the infinite potential relations to an infinite number of forms, prime matter continually desires a new form because it is never able to find the form which contains all forms.³⁵ Its appetite is

³² From *Milestones* (San Francisco, CA, 1998), 108-9, as quoted in M.H. Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger* (2007), 160-1.

³³ See n. 15 above.

³⁴ G.J. McAleer, *Ecstatic Morality* (2005), 14.

³⁵ Meister Eckhart, *Sermones et Lectiones super Ecclesiastici*, n. 42, LW II 271, 7-9: *materia prima infinita est ad omnes formas generabiles infinitas. Propter quod, licet nunquam sit sine forma et sic semper edat, semper tamen aliam et aliam formam appetit et esurit, quia nullam invenit in qua sint omnes*. References to the critical edition (Latin Works = LW; German Works = DW) are taken from the following volumes: *Meister Eckhart. Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, hg. im Auftrag der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft (Stuttgart), LW 1/2 (ed. Loris Sturlese [2015]), LW II (ed. Albert Zimmermann, Loris Sturlese, Konrad Weiß, Josef Koch, Heribert Fischer [1992]), DW 4/2 (ed. Georg Streer in collaboration with Wolfgang Klimanek and Freimut Löser [2003]).

proportioned to its capability, but is also chaotic and unrestrainedly seeks after the form which contains all forms because this is the only real distinction it knows: it does not distinguish between the 'noblest' or the 'smallest' of forms.³⁶ In fact, Eckhart's use of language is notably strong and negative with respect to matter, which he describes as 'passive, imperfect, nude, destitute, beggarly'.³⁷ Already this sets him apart from the non-violent ecstasis of Thomas' account.

Insofar as Eckhart understands the dynamic integrity of the *Logos* as *ratio idealis*, as the one in whom all *rationes* are found, however, the true desire of the human body is to be in-formed by Christ. This is, so to say, the eschatological orientation of matter. The desire of matter is thus always frustrated, and Eckhart even seeks to regulate this desirousness according to an ethical economy; thus, in an otherwise perplexing comment on the nature of parables, he says that *Proverbs* 5:2-3, which reads 'do not pay attention to a deceiving woman; the lips of a harlot are like a dripping honeycomb',³⁸ is a parable about prime matter! This actually follows Moses Maimonides *The Guide for the Perplexed* III, chapter 8 in his interpretation of the verse,³⁹ although Eckhart appears to have made the specific connection to *Proverbs* 5. Maimonides' point – by his own admission a sidetrack from his intended theme – actually becomes a meditation on correct sexual conduct in the context of the desires of the flesh, punctuated by a few metaphysical points. Moreover, Maimonides appears gripped by the same desire for form to suppress matter which stands in such contrast to the position of Aquinas. Eckhart's concern however is exclusively metaphysical: matter is like the adulteress, never settled under one form and always looking for another.⁴⁰ In his *Commentary on Genesis* Eckhart says:

It is said, however, in the first place that matter is "an abyss", sort of "baseless", according to Job 26: "he hung the earth upon nothing", for the sake of its unformed

³⁶ Meister Eckhart, *Expositio Libri Exodi*, n. 89, LW II 92, 11-3: *materia rerum genera<bi>lium non plus quiescit sub forma nobilissima, puta hominis, quominus appetat quamlibet etiam minimam, quam e converso sub ipsa minima forma, puta formicae, iam adepta.*

³⁷ Meister Eckhart, *Expositio Libri Genesis*, n. 33, LW I/2, 90, 21-2: *Terrena autem materialia sunt, passiva sunt, imperfecta, nuda, egena, mendica per essentiam.*

³⁸ Meister Eckhart, *Liber Parabolarum Genesis*, n. 5, LW I/2, 336, 15-7. Translation of the verse is from Bernard McGinn and Edmund Colledge, *Meister Eckhart: Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense* (Mahwah NJ, 1981), 95.

³⁹ Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, trans. M. Friedländer (New York, 1904), 261-4. See an interpretation of this and its implications for gender relations in Tova Rosen, *Unveiling Eve: Reading Gender in Medieval Hebrew Literature* (Philadelphia PA, 2003), 137-8. It is worth considering this reading in light of what McAleer presents as Thomas' theory when contemplating the implications of Eckhart's position.

⁴⁰ Note that elsewhere Eckhart does not refer to 'prime matter', rather just 'matter'. *Expositio Libri Exodi*, n. 89, LW II 93, 1-2. See also *Expositio Libri Genesis*, n. 33, LW I/2, 90, 22-92, 1.

state, its indetermination, confusion and instability, as under no form does [matter] settle, but is always desiring another just like the adulteress.⁴¹

The point it seems is that Eckhart, and arguably Thomas too,⁴² see the nothingness of prime matter – that it is not properly a *thing* (*res*) until it is satisfied by form – as a position which is at least not contrary to Augustine, if not actually attributable to him.⁴³ But is this the case? In the sections of his *Commentary on Genesis* dedicated to the darkness and the abyss before creation, Eckhart does draw upon Augustine several times in order to come to some understanding of the nature of matter.⁴⁴

Here Eckhart wants to use Augustine's point in the *Confessions* 12, 6 where Augustine questions what the very mutability of mutable things is – in other words, in the case of man, we are not to identify the mutability with any part of him: not the mind, not the body, nor the form of either of these two – it is therefore something else, it is, so to say, a kind of nonbeing which must have existed before in some sense in order for it to be able to receive form.⁴⁵ Eckhart inserts that what Augustine is here referring to is *matter*. He picks out three things that Augustine says about matter from the *Confessions*: 1) it is somewhere between 'form' and 'nothing', so 'almost nothing' (*prope nihil*);⁴⁶ 2) it is, again quoting Augustine verbatim, 'a nothing something' (*nihil aliquid*),⁴⁷ it both 'is and is not' and it must also have existed before in some sense, in order for it to be able to receive species;⁴⁸ 3) matter is made 'from nothing'

⁴¹ *Expositio Libri Genesis*, n. 45, LW I/2, 101, 5-8: *Dicta est autem in praemissis materia 'abyssus', quasi 'sine basi', secundum illud Iob 26: 'appendit terram super nihilum', aut propter sui informitatem, indeterminationem, confusionem et instabilitatem, qua sub nulla forma quiescit, sed semper aliam appetit ad modum adulterae.*

⁴² Thomas Aquinas, *In Sent.* II, d. 12, q. 1, a. 5 *expositio textus* (ed. Mandonnet, vol. II [Paris, 1929], 318): *Vel dicitur abyssus, quasi sine basi, de aliqua magna profunditate, et praecipuae aquarum, secundum Augustinum: et similiter materia prima abyssus dicitur, inquantum privatur forma, per quam esse substantificum recipit.*

⁴³ Note that in Thomas (see n. 42) he relies upon Augustine's *Contra Faustinam* 22, 11.

⁴⁴ See in particular *Expositio Libri Genesis* nn. 35-45, LW I/2, 93, 21-101, 8.

⁴⁵ See the translation and discussion of the relevant passage in the *Confessions* that this refers to, as well as other relevant passages, in Christian Tornau, 'Intelligible Matter and the Genesis of Intellect: The Metamorphosis of a Plotinian Theme in *Confessions* 12-13', in William E. Mann (ed.), *Augustine's Confessions: Philosophy in Autobiography* (Oxford, 2014), 181-218, 192-3.

⁴⁶ Meister Eckhart, *Expositio Libri Genesis*, n. 35, LW I/2, 95, 2-3: *Primo quod est 'quiddam inter formam et nihil, nec formatum nec nihil, informe, prope nihil'*. It seems to have been something important for John Scottus Eriugena that Augustine believed man to be somewhere between something and nothing – see Dermot Moran, *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena: A Study of Idealism in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2004), 213.

⁴⁷ On the interpretation of *prope nihil* and *nihil aliquid* see Paul M. Blowers, *Drama of the Divine Economy: Creator and Creation in Early Christian Theology and Piety* (Oxford, 2012), 177.

⁴⁸ Meister Eckhart, *Expositio Libri Genesis*, n. 35, LW I/2, 95, 4-5: *Secundo sic ait: 'si dici potest "nihil aliquid" et "est et non est", hoc eam dixerim, et tamen iam utcumque erat ut species*

(*de nihilo*), ‘from no-thing’ (*de nulla re*), is ‘properly nothing’ (*proprie nihil*) and is ‘almost no thing’ (*paene nulla res*).⁴⁹ It seems at face value rather difficult to separate out these three senses of matter that Eckhart identifies in Augustine, but our attention must be drawn, if to nothing else, by his appropriation of Augustine’s use of *res*. Matter *is*, despite being the lowest kind of ‘something’, and is not, of itself, nothing. Eckhart’s position is very close to that of Thomas, but still seems to want to attribute something to matter itself, however small, not unlike Bonaventure.⁵⁰ It is not identified with nothing or privation, but is only ‘near’ to it. Here Eckhart moves away from Aquinas’ strict conception of matter as pure potentiality, and actually – in a rare moment of agreement – towards the sorts of positions adopted by Duns Scotus and William of Ockham.⁵¹

Eckhart’s language of location is deliberate, because in commenting on *Genesis* 1:2 ‘the darkness was upon the face of the abyss’, he explicitly identifies ‘darkness’ with ‘privation’, and the ‘abyss’ with ‘prime matter’.⁵² As a result, matter is not to be identified with privation, even though it is near to it and has its effect upon it: namely, that matter is devoid of form, and that constitutes its condition of possibility (potency) to take on form. This, Eckhart adds, is realised if it is ‘soberly understood’.⁵³ For Aquinas, matter and privation are the same subject, even if they are not the same in nature.⁵⁴ Three principles of nature are necessary: ‘being (*ens*) in potency or matter; nonexistence (*non esse*) in actuality or privation; that by which something is made to be in

caperet’. There is something of a discussion about how to translate *species* here: whether as species, or as form (which is really what it seems to mean). This is noted in C. Tornau, ‘Intelligible Matter and the Genesis of Intellect’ (2014), 192 n. 46. Note at least that Eckhart does not make any effort to change ‘species’ to ‘form’.

⁴⁹ Meister Eckhart, *Expositio Libri Genesis*, n. 35, LW I/2, 95, 5-6: *Tertio dicit quod est facta ‘de nihilo’, ‘prop[ri]e nihil’, ‘de nulla re, paene nulla res*. This was intended by Augustine at least to frustrate the desires of the Manichaeans seeking to attribute evil to matter, but it seems there is good reason why the medievals assumed Augustine’s understanding of matter within the Aristotelian hylomorphic framework – see Frederick van Fleteren, ‘Matter’, in Allan D. Fitzgerald and John Cavadini (eds), *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids MI, 1999), 547-9.

⁵⁰ John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, D.C., 2000), 313.

⁵¹ See Robert Passnau, ‘Form and Matter’, in Robert Passnau and Christina van Dyke (eds), *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, vol. II (Cambridge, 2010), 635-46, 639.

⁵² Meister Eckhart, *Expositio Libri Genesis*, n. 35, LW I/2, 93, 21-95, 2: *Tenebrae erant super faciem abyssi. Notandum primo quod per tenebras intelligitur privatio – lucis enim privatio tenebrae sunt – per abyssum autem intelligitur materia prima, secundum Augustinum XII Confessionum [...]*.

⁵³ Meister Eckhart, *Expositio Libri Genesis*, n. 36, LW I/2, 95, 18: *[...] si sane intelligatur.*

⁵⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *De principiis naturae*, c. 2 (Editio Leonina 43 [Rome, 1976], 40a, 5-6): *[...] materia et privatio sunt idem subiecto, sed differunt ratione*. See J.F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (2000), 297-8.

actuality, or form'.⁵⁵ Prime matter, however, is pure potentiality and therefore is not anything in and of itself. This was a view that was fiercely contested in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, with many (including Henry of Ghent, in addition to Scotus and Ockham as already mentioned) being opposed to it.⁵⁶ Among its supporters were Albert the Great, Siger of Brabant, Giles of Rome and Godfrey of Fontaines.⁵⁷ Eckhart, however, does not seem to make the distinction between matter and prime matter, and in fact seems to use the terms interchangeably, although his position, by drawing on Augustine, does appear to be the same as Godfrey of Fontaines'.⁵⁸

Eckhart seems to follow Aquinas' understanding of the distinction between kinds of nonexistence. Because prime matter is pure potency, for Thomas it is the 'kind of nonbeing (*non ens*) which is being in potency'.⁵⁹ Following this reasoning, Eckhart states that the production of being in act from being in potency therefore means that it is not a production simply out of nothing.⁶⁰ Nevertheless Eckhart says that it is substantial form alone that keeps prime matter from being nothing.⁶¹ This gives us a clearer picture of the way Eckhart is reading Augustine's suggestion that matter is a kind of *nihil aliquid*. At any rate it begins to formulate for us a picture in which we see Eckhart appropriating Augustine in order to consider the dissolution of polarity, much as Aquinas does.

The most interesting aspect of Eckhart's position comes from the fact that he wants to retain the sense of the privation at the heart of the composite thing: it is true that even in the most perfect of forms, such as that of man, there is a privation at heart, in matter, even if it is accidental (this forms the third and fourth of the five points Eckhart wants to make about *Genesis* 1:2).⁶² Its formulation is really quite extraordinary, because precisely by using Augustine, but presumably because of a pull towards Thomas' position, Eckhart is placing matter on the very edge of nothing: it only just about is, whilst also resisting

⁵⁵ J.F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (2000), 297.

⁵⁶ For a full explanation of Aquinas's position and the surrounding debate see *ibid.* 312-20.

⁵⁷ John F. Wippel, 'Essence and Existence', in Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny and Jan Pinborg (eds), *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1982), 385-410, 410. Nevertheless, as aforementioned, Giles of Rome at least is to be distinguished for the sake of attempting to transpose onto an Averroist framework the theory of Thomas (G.J. McAleer, *Ecstatic Morality* [2005], 10-1).

⁵⁸ For Godfrey's position see John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Godfrey of Fontaines. A Study in Late Thirteenth Century Philosophy* (Washington, D.C., 1999), 266-7.

⁵⁹ *Id.*, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (2000), 297.

⁶⁰ Meister Eckhart, *Liber Parabolarum Genesis*, n. 72, LW I/2, 371, 26-8: *Sic ergo patet quod ens in actu productum ex ente in potentia non producitur simpliciter ex nihilo.*

⁶¹ Meister Eckhart, *Sermones et Lectiones super Ecclesiastici*, n. 55, LW II, 284, 5-7: *Propter quod forma substantialis est perfectior omni alio formali, et materia prima ipsam solam per sui ipsius materiae essentiam appetit et esurit, eo quod ipsa forma sola facit distare a nihilo.*

⁶² Meister Eckhart, *Expositio Libri Genesis*, n. 37, LW I/2, 95, 21-7.

this language of proximity, for we know that he wants to suggest that matter has privation at its heart – it is the locus of the mutability of the thing; it is the privation of the forms that it is not or is not-yet.⁶³ This is not therefore simply a debate about being and nonbeing; nevertheless, the *nihil aliquid* from Augustine seems to just tick the right box for Eckhart to describe matter in terms which in fact frustrate the polarity of ‘something’ and ‘nothing’. What is matter, then, according to Eckhart? Is it a *res*, as he seems to think from quoting Augustine’s *Confessions*? If this is the case, it would bring Eckhart much more in line with the views of Giles of Rome and therefore the ‘neo-Augustinian’ tradition, for the potency of matter would be a potency to a mode of the *res* that constitutes matter. Or is matter for Eckhart connected with privation with a view to being the principle or a possibility to exist according to form, as is Aquinas’ view? Matter is not ‘nothing’, and yet is to be identified with privation which becomes part of it, so it would seem, *per accidens*.⁶⁴ Here Eckhart makes the same point as Aquinas, but is differentiated in that Eckhart understands this to make sense of Augustine’s assertion that matter is still a *nihil aliquid*. It is, so to say, an explanation of matter sitting proverbially on the edge of nothing. Nevertheless the ‘sitting’ is only proverbial – there is no ‘edge’ to fall off into the nothing that belongs to a formless being in potency because, given that lack of location therefore means ubiquity, the nothing is present to matter at all points and at all levels.⁶⁵ It is in this last point in particular that we can come to appreciate one of the ways in which Eckhart sought to interlace his spiritual and metaphysical concerns.

Looking back briefly to Giles and the question of ‘mode’, although Eckhart does not make use of this language with respect to matter and form, it is nonetheless on the horizon of his vision because of the aforementioned veritable influence of Thomas of Erfurt and the Modistae. This is particularly because of what has been called ‘the “linguistification” of reality’ that is brought about by the Modist worldview.⁶⁶ This is a worldview which seeks to critically reassess the ways in which language and grammar are understood to reflect reality, and draws significantly upon hylomorphic theory. It is a grammatical theory which finds its success in a relatively small but enormously significant window

⁶³ *Ibid.* n. 36, LW I/2, 95, 17-8: *Ipsa tamen privatio formae seu formarum est ipsius materiae potentia [...].*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* n. 37, LW I/2, 95, 24-7: *Quarto, quia non solum materiam consequitur, semper ipsi coniuncta, sed etiam ipsi materiae illabitur et ipsam substantiam materiae subintrat, tamquam pars ipsius substantiae. Ait enim Augustinus, sicut dictum est supra: ‘si dici potest “nihil aliquid” et “est et non est”, hoc eam dixerim’, materiam scilicet.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* n. 37, LW I/2, 95, 21-3: *Tertio, quia privato semper consequitur et adhaeret materiae, etiam forma perfectissima, puta hominis, non minus quam si stet sub forma terrae, entis infirmi loco et formalitate.*

⁶⁶ Elena Lombardi, *The Syntax of Desire: Language and Love in Augustine, the Modistae, Dante* (Toronto, 2007), 79.

of history towards the end of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, and is solidified before its general demise in the 'Erfordian School' through Thomas of Erfurt. Its brief introduction to the considerations here serve to emphasise the historical and intellectual ties between Eckhart and the Modistae, but principally to suggest perhaps where the greatest significance lies in considering Eckhart's use of Augustine and the ineluctable issue of language in late medieval thought.

Elena Lombardi's penetrating analysis shows how the link between hylomorphism and Modistic theory is not only strong but evocative of a key element in Eckhart's appropriation of Augustine with respect to matter:

The matter-form relationship shapes Modistic syntax as passion, unorthodoxically governed by a material principle, and installs into language the workings of a hidden although crucial operator: desire [...] Form, as the end point of the movement and the quenching of matter's desire, represents the 'desirable' ('appetibile') of the process. Form desires neither matter nor transmutation but the 'continuation' of the state of perfection.⁶⁷

The question of the nature of desire, as it formulates as a result of first establishing the nature of matter, is perhaps where greater divergences lie with respect to Augustine's reception in the late medieval period. Certainly this is the locus for Aquinas' position of ecstatic unity and non-violent self-rule. It is also significant for Eckhart's understanding of the relationship between language and reality, and goes some way towards explaining why Augustine's *nihil aliquid* seems to have drawn him in.

Eckhart lends himself well to precisely this kind of an analysis of language – not as a means of determining his hylomorphism, but in exploring the ways in which his understanding of language as informed by the reality of matter-form relation seeks to play out or affect ontology. Depending on the fullness of the intimacy between matter and form, a Christian view of both the syntactical function and the capabilities of language, with respect to reality, are not necessarily limited to the level of analogy, where hylomorphism becomes nothing more than a tool to explain the nature of grammar. Instead, and much more like the ecstatic and eschatological orientation of the body issuing from the relationship between matter and form in Aquinas, Eckhart's Modistic and Augustinian influences on the nature of matter and form present an intriguing appreciation for language's ability to be ontologically affective. In other words, Eckhart's appreciation for language's ability to affect the movement of matter towards its eschatological end in the Resurrection.

Whether Eckhart fully adheres to Aquinas' theory of matter-form relation, or whether he still holds matter to be a *res* from Augustine's perplexity over the *nihil aliquid* which must in some sense pre-exist form (something at least

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 80.

Eckhart does not deny in quoting him) does not seem entirely clear. Nevertheless, there appears to be some sense in which the irresolution of Augustine is mirrored in Eckhart's approach, undoubtedly linked to Modistic theory and its concern for matter-form relation which recognises both the Christian commitment to the eschatological orientation of matter (as in Aquinas) and the nature or capabilities of language to take part in such transformative *mutabilitas*. Wittgenstein even seems to have acknowledged something of this link between the Augustinian view of matter (the *nihil aliquid*) and language when he stated (though in reference to pain) that the 'paradox' of the 'nothing-something'⁶⁸ 'disappears only if we make a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way, always serves the same purpose: to convey thoughts'.⁶⁹ This certainly opens the door for the argument that Eckhart's view of language is caught up with his reception of Augustine and the significance of hylomorphism. This element in Eckhart's understanding of language needs further research.⁷⁰

For Eckhart as well as Aquinas, the dilation of the human experience comes from a particular appropriation of Augustine with a view to indicating a frustration of polarities which force a certain opposition. For Aquinas this becomes the beginning of a theory of matter-form relation which gives rise to a distinctive ecstasis, as McAleer has argued. For Eckhart the dissolution of the polarity of 'something' and 'nothing' he finds in Augustine at least gives rise to a developing picture of language, undoubtedly formed by his Erfordian influences, which would seem to want to do justice to that same inherent mysteriousness of matter which is key to 'Ecstatic Thomism'.

⁶⁸ Here I follow the introduction of Wittgenstein to this theme as in James Wetzel, *Parting Knowledge: Essays After Augustine* (Eugene OR, 2013), 106-7.

⁶⁹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, n. 304 as cited in *ibid*.

⁷⁰ See also my forthcoming work on this question with respect to Eckhart's German *Sermon* 109 (in particular *Pr. 109*, DW 4/2, 774, 20-1: 'Enwære hie nieman gewesen, ich müeste sie disem stocke geprediget hân') which looks at interpreting this in light of a growing sense of language as something ontologically affective.

Origen, a Source of Meister Eckhart's Thinking

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ABSTRACT

Though Origen¹ is not one of the main references of Eckhart, those are rather Augustine, the theologian Aristotle, the philosopher, and Maimonides, the Rabbi, and even if the Alexandrian cannot be an authority in the full sense of the term, because of the condemnation that weighed upon his work,² the Thuringian Meister Eckhart explicitly refers forty-six times to Origen in his Latin and German works, mostly to highlight his decisive theological contribution. Moreover, he comes to conclusions similar to those of the Alexandrian, without saying it explicitly, for example, in his *Commentary on John's Gospel*.³ What has he really learned from Origen? Why does he consider him as a reference? We can note a convergence in two ways: the relation to Scripture and the choice of basic anthropological themes, mainly the understanding of the image of God in man and the birth of God in the soul, in other words: the creation and the new creation.

A same search of hidden truth of the Bible

Hebraica veritas

Origen is, by definition, the man of the Bible,⁴ the first exegete and the first to propose rules for the interpretation of the Scripture and to apply them by commenting almost the entire Scripture. Eckhart is also the man of the Bible,

¹ As I had already finished this article, I came across the existence of the dissertation by Élisabeth Boncour, *Maître Eckhart, lecteur d'Origène*, but, unfortunately, I was only able to read the table of contents.

² B. McGinn, 'The Spiritual Heritage of Origen in the West. Aspects of Origen's Influence in the Middle Ages', in L.F. Pizzolato, M. Rizzi (eds), *Origene maestro spirituale – Origen: Master of the Spiritual Life*, Vita e Pensiero (Milan, 2001), 263-89, 289. See also B. McGinn, 'Origène', in M.-A. Vannier, W. Euler, K. Reinhardt, H. Schwaetzer (eds), *Encyclopédie des mystiques rhénans d'Eckhart à Nicolas de Cues et leur réception* (Paris, 2011), 904-6. See also H.U. von Balthasar, *Geist und Feuer* (Salzburg, 1938).

³ Origen's thought about divine sonship, *John's Commentary* XX 18, 152-9, seems to have been the starting point of his reflexion.

⁴ See K. Weiss, 'Meisters Eckharts biblische Hermeneutik', in *La mystique rhénane* (Paris, 1963), 95-108; E. Reffke, 'Studien zum Problem der Entwicklung Meister Eckharts im *Opus Tripartitum*', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 57 (1938), 19-95.

but in another way: as *magister in Sacra Pagina* and as preacher, he daily comments Scripture,⁵ he takes into account the contribution of his predecessors, but he searches, like Origen, the *hebraica veritas*,⁶ the original biblical text, and he defines a method of interpretation of the Scripture, strongly influenced by Origen. He quotes his biblical commentaries, which he must have read in the Latin translations of Rufinus,⁷ Jerome⁸ and the studies of Johannes Scotus Eriugena, in the *Catena*,⁹ but he does not mention the *De principiis*, which was, indeed, questioned in his time, but that he must have known through Rufin's translation.

The contribution of philosophy

The Eckhartian hermeneutics takes into account, as Origen's, the contribution of philosophy.¹⁰ Eckhart clearly explains it in the *Commentary on John's Gospel*, where he offers as a program 'to explain what the holy Christian faith and the two Testaments maintain through the help of the natural arguments of the philosophers (...)'. Moreover, it is the intention of his work 'to show how the truths of natural principles, conclusions and properties are well intimated for him "who has ears to hear" (*Matth.* 13:43) in the very words of Sacred Scripture, which are interpreted through these natural truths. Now and then some moral interpretations will also be advanced'.¹¹ Thereby, Eckhart resumes, like Origen, the tripartite division of philosophy in physics, logic and ethics¹² to understand Scripture, but beyond Origen, the common source is the Stoics. Unlike the Stoics, however, Eckhart aims, like the Alexandrian, to 'rise, thus, to the contemplation of divinity by a pure and spiritual love',¹³ Eckhart being

⁵ The forthcoming book of Markus Vinzent: *Eckhart's Bible* (Leuven), will further our knowledge on the biblical text used by Eckhart.

⁶ *Commentary on Wisdom* nn. 211 and 285 ; Dietmar Mieth, *Meister Eckhart* (München, 2014), 111-2.

⁷ He translated the *Homilies on Genesis, Numbers, Jeremiah...*

⁸ He translated fourteen *Homilies on Jeremiah and on Ezekiel*, nine *Homilies on Isaiah* and two *Homilies* about the *Song of Songs*, thirty-nine *Homilies on Luke's Gospel*, and the *De principiis*, whose translation is lost.

⁹ S. Thomas d'Aquin, *Exposition suivie des quatre Évangiles ... La chaîne d'or*, ed. by Jean Nicolai, 8 vols. (Paris, 1854-1855); *Catena aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels collected out of the works of the Fathers* (Oxford, 1941-1945).

¹⁰ See G. Dorival, 'Filosofia', in A. Monaci Castagno (ed.), *Origene. Dizionario* (Roma, 2000), 171-7.

¹¹ Eckhart, *Commentary on John*, nn. 2-3, LW III 4,4-13, trans. E. Colledge and B. McGinn, *Meister Eckhart. The Essentials Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense* (Mahwah, 1981), 122-3.

¹² See Th. Kobusch, 'Lesemeistermetaphysik-Lebensmeistermetaphysik. Zur Einheit der Philosophie Meister Eckharts', in A. Speer and L. Wegener (eds), *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt* (Berlin and New York, 2005), 239-58.

¹³ Origen, *The Song of Songs: Commentary*, n. 78.

both *Lesemeister* and *Lebemeister*. As Origen, the Thuringian aims to give a rational explanation¹⁴ of the Bible and to highlight the hidden truth of Scripture,¹⁵ as reflected in the *Opus expositionum*, which is unfortunately incomplete. In a different way of Origen, Eckhart emphasizes the intrinsic relationship between the biblical text, the questions it raises, and the clauses that emerge, which is the internal dynamics and originality of his *Opus tripartitum*,¹⁶ intended to help his Dominican brothers in their preaching.

Christ, as the heart of Scripture

In fact, the Alexandrian and the Thuringian are seeking 'the hidden seed in Scripture'.¹⁷ Their method is different but converging: to make it clear, Origen offers the metaphor of 'walnut', 'which is, in the first place, a fruit that is bitter in its outer covering (that of the letter). It is protected and covered by its next layer (that moral education), but with its third layer it feeds and nourishes the one who eats it',¹⁸ which contains 'hidden and concealed the meaning of the mysteries of the wisdom and knowledge of God'.¹⁹ Its 'life is Christ in the mystery of the walnut', that Origen strives to achieve through his long and patient commentary of Scripture. It is the same for Eckhart that does not include the image of walnut he knows, but two others he introduced following the Gospel, that of the *granum sinapis*, to which he devotes a famous poem, which leads him to highlight, even more broadly, the Trinity and breakthrough as we see in the *Sermon 51* and in many other texts of his German work.²⁰ Both authors propose the same fundamentally Christological²¹ hermeneutics and an actualizing reading of Scripture.

The parabolic method

Unlike the Alexandrian, however, the Thuringian does no resort to the different senses of Scripture, but to the parabolic method,²² which involves a

¹⁴ K. Flasch, *Maître Eckhart* (Paris, 2011), 56-61.

¹⁵ See J. Koch, 'Sinn und Struktur der Schriftauslegungen Meister Eckharts', in U.M. Nix and R. Öchsli (eds), *Meister Eckhart der Prediger. Festschrift zum Eckhart-Gedenkjahr* (Freiburg im Br., 1960), 73-103.

¹⁶ As we can clearly see through the first clause.

¹⁷ Eckhart, *Book of the Parables of Genesis*, Prologue, LW I 453.

¹⁸ Origen, *Homilies on Numbers*, trans. Th.P. Scheck (Madison, 2009), 42.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ A.M. Haas, 'Percée', in *Encyclopédie des mystiques rhénans* (2011), 936-45.

²¹ M. Enders, 'Die Heilige Schrift – Das Wort der Wahrheit', *Meister-Eckhart-Jahrbuch 5* (2011), 55-99, 97.

²² See E. Winkler, *Exegetische Methoden bei Meister Eckhart* (Tübingen, 1965).

reinterpretation of Origen in the light of Maimonides,²³ in order to ‘bring to light the more hidden sense of some things contained in them in parabolical fashion (...) beneath the form and letter of the literal sense (...). The truth of Scripture is “like a golden apple covered with silver thread”. Because, “when we see it from afar, or when viewed without understanding, it is believed that it is only silver; but if one is a man with piercing eyes, what lies inside is brought to light and then we know it’s gold”’.²⁴ What is this golden apple, if not the seal of the Scriptures, Christ, the truth, that is hidden and that is to find? In different ways, Origen and Eckhart are in search of the truth of Scripture and try to convey it for their contemporaries, Origen as part of the catechetical school of Alexandria, Eckhart in preaching.

It is the same for the interpretation of creation and new creation. In fact, for Eckhart, as for Origen, through the ‘spiritual understanding of Scripture, it is Christianity itself that appears as taking self-reflective consciousness’,²⁵ which leads, for example, Kurt Flasch, to present Eckhart as the ‘the philosopher of Christianity’.²⁶

The Holy Spirit at work in Scripture

But there is also more, because, when Eckhart, like Origen, engages in scientific research to find the original biblical text and report it to his contemporaries in the most objective way as possible by using all the technical means of his time, in order to develop from there his theology. The fact remains that both are aware of the original status of the text of Scripture, and they focus on *medulla scripturae*: Christ and the inspiration of Scripture.

A mysterious dialogue takes place between the Holy Spirit at work in Scripture and in the heart of each of its reader to give an understanding of Scripture. It is in this perspective that Eckhart reads Scripture, meditates and, according to the old adage of St. Thomas Aquinas: *Contemplata aliis tradere*, he then conveys the fruits of his contemplation in his preaching to others. Origen proceeded in a similar manner, there was for him a sort of eating of the biblical text he knew by heart, as reflected in his work, where he introduced intertextuality before the letter, as in the comment by Eckhart on *John 17:20-3*, from which he develops his thought about the birth of God in the soul.²⁷ This

²³ Yossef Schwartz, ‘Meister Eckharts Schriftauslegung als maimonidisches Projekt’, in G.K. Hasselhoff and O. Fraisse (eds), *Moses Maimonides (1138-1204). His religious, scientific and philosophical Wirkungsgeschichte in different cultural contexts* (Würzburg, 2004), 173-208 rightly stresses the weight of Maimonides for Eckhartian hermeneutics of Scripture, but Maimonides is not the only one. Origen and Augustine, too, have widely influenced Eckhart.

²⁴ Eckhart, *Book of the Parables of Genesis*, Prolog, LW I 453.

²⁵ H. De Lubac, *Histoire et esprit* (Paris, 1950), 9.

²⁶ K. Flasch, *Philosoph des Christentums* (München, 2010).

²⁷ See R. Manstetten, ‘Meister Eckharts Verfahren der Schriftauslegung’, in G. Bonheim and P. Kattner (eds), *Mystik und Schriftkommentierung. Böhme-Studien*, Beiträge zu Philologie und

time, the Thuringian acts as *Lebemeister*, who does not only provide a technical interpretation of Scripture, but seeks its actual sense for his listeners.

As Origen is at the root of the *lectio divina* that structures his work of commenting Scripture, this *lectio* animates the preaching of Eckhart, as is clear from *Sermon 10* for example, where he says: 'The day of God is when the soul is in the day of eternity, in a unique moment, and there, the Father begets his only Son out of time, and the soul is reborn in God'.²⁸ To understand it better, we will see how, with Origen, Eckhart considers the image of God in man, which makes possible the birth of God in the soul, and how both develop a 'metaphysic of the Word'.²⁹

A similar understanding of the image of God³⁰

The source of living water

The Church Fathers have meditated on *Gen. 1:26* for a long time. Among them, Origen is one of those who went furthest in interpretation.³¹ He not only takes up the conventional distinction between image and likeness, but he is considering the 'being an image' in relation to the Word³² as a dynamic reality.³³ Mainly, he brings in a new perspective in his *Homilies on Genesis and Numbers*, using the metaphor of the source or the well, which is none other than the Word. By doing so, he stresses the link between *Gen. 1:26*, which refers to the creation of the human being in the image of God and *Col. 1:15*, where the Son appears as 'the invisible image of God'. Similarly will Eckhart do who borrows from the Alexandrian the metaphor of the source of living water, that everyone carries in oneself, but which has to be cleared to make the spring flow. Eckhart states in his *Sermon of the noble man*: 'To this inner man, this noble man (...), the great master Origen compares: the image of God, the Son of God is in the ground of the soul as a source of living water. But if one throws soil in it, *i.e.* the earthly desire, it is then hampered and covered, so that we do not recognize it and do not see anything; however, it remains alive in itself, and when we remove the earth, it reappears and you drink it'.³⁴

Philosophie 1 (Berlin, Weissensee, 2007), 101-23, 118-22.

²⁸ *Sermon 10*.

²⁹ See É. zum Brunn and A. De Libera, *Métaphysique du Verbe et théologie négative* (Paris, 1984).

³⁰ See M.-A. Vannier (ed.), *Intellect, sujet, image chez Eckhart et Nicolas de Cues*, *Patrimoines Christianisme* (Paris, 2014).

³¹ See H. Crouzel, *Théologie de l'image de Dieu chez Origène*, coll. « Théologie » (Paris, 1956).

³² V. Lossky, *À l'image et à la ressemblance de Dieu* (Paris, rééd. 2006), 123.

³³ H. Crouzel, *Origène* (Paris, 1985), 135.

³⁴ *Sermon on the noble man*.

Eckhart, as Origen and the Church Fathers in general, stresses the responsibility of everyone in the realization of the image, which is in need to be cleared, so that it can be seen again. He also draws,³⁵ as Origen and Clement of Alexandria do, on the metaphor of the painter who realizes his painting, and relates this metaphor to the Son who is the painter of the image in each of his human creatures.

However, for the image's dialectic, Eckhart does not reinterpret Origen, but Augustine, going not from *forma* to a *deformis forma* and then to the *forma formosa* through the *forma omnium*, but from *Bild* to *Entbildung* to come to the *Einbildung* and *Überbildung* and to consider the birth of God in the soul, which is another theme borrowed from Origen.

In his Latin work, Eckhart is already influenced by Origen to account for the nature of the image. Thus he explained in *Sermon XLIX*³⁶ that an 'image is an emanation coming from the ground without a ground in silence and with the exclusion of any externality: a certain life, as if you imagined something expanding from itself and bubbling in itself, and without even understanding it boiling'. Eckhart goes theologically further than Origen, because he does not only focus on the life of the image, but through the *bullitio* he also takes into account the origin and the bubbling from this source as he also did in *Sermon 38*, where he speaks of two fountains, the one of the generation of the Son and the other of creation. Like the Alexandrian he highlights the Trinitarian dimension of the image of God in man, but then states the Trinitarian origin of this image.

The seed and the synderesis, the Commentary on the Song of Songs

Eckhart also uses the image of the seed and explains that 'Origen, a great master, said: "Since God himself has sown, buried, and generated that seed, it may well be covered and hidden, but it is never destroyed or extinguished; it is fiery, it shines, it shines and burns and constantly tends to God"'.³⁷ Relying on the authority of Origen, Eckhart emphasizes the originality of the image of God in man and his inalienable character.

Eckhart stressed that this is the point of dialogue between God and man, as it appears from the *Song of Songs*. It seems as if Eckhart gives little attention to this biblical book, because the commentary which has reached us is reduced to twenty-two lines, while it is the master work of the Alexandrian. In fact, however, Eckhart refers to this book differently at different times and makes it his

³⁵ *Book of the Parables of Genesis XIII 4*, n. 193.

³⁶ See B. McGinn, '*Sermon XLIX: Cujus est imago haec et superscriptio*', in *Lectura Eckhardi III* (Stuttgart, 2008), 209-37.

³⁷ *Sermon XLIX*.

'archipelago'.³⁸ Should we conclude that he takes into account a *Minnemystik* while developing a *Wesensmystik*? Indeed, his interpretation of the *Song of Songs* is different from that of Origen, as he sees a summary of the *Wesensmystik* in the birth of the Word in the soul. In the cycle of the birth of God in the soul³⁹ the Thuringian searches, first, the place of the 'experience of God' which he finds in a placeless place. This placeless place implies receptivity and detachment as attitude, in order to receive the fruit, to know the rest in God in the bosom of the Father 'by eternal generation, in the Mother assuming a physical body, in the angelic mind by divine illumination, in the creature by conservation',⁴⁰ in other words: to experiment the birth of God in the soul in different ways, according to one's condition. Keeping the basic idea of Origen: deification,⁴¹ Eckhart goes further in his reflection.

In fact, the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* of Origen contributes to Eckhart's understanding of the union of the soul with the Word, not only in the birth of the Word in the soul, but also in its creation,⁴² as can be seen in the *Book of the Parables of Genesis*, where Eckhart explains that 'the Song of Songs seems to be built on the image of God, with God and from God'.⁴³ It is clear that *the Song* is taken as the cornerstone of his reflection about the image of God and its fulfillment.

At other times, Eckhart borrows from Origen,⁴⁴ and more broadly from the Platonic tradition,⁴⁵ the idea of *synderesis* to evoke the image of God in everyone and to highlight its originality.

In fact, he revisits the Platonic problem of *mimesis* to explain that 'the image receives all its being from its model'⁴⁶ or that 'a picture takes directly and solely from what it is the image of', and that 'it has the same being with it', and that 'it is the same being'.⁴⁷ Thus Origen allows Eckhart to see what is fundamental in the image, its relational being, that one must let emerge. Is not this the dynamics of his preaching program? It seems so.

³⁸ J. Casteigt, 'Le baiser entre le ciel et la terre : mouvance générique et exégèse dans le commentaire du Cantiques des Cantiques d'Eckhart', *Cahiers de recherche médiévale* 18 (2009), 217-38.

³⁹ See M.-A. Vannier, 'Naissance de Dieu dans l'âme', in *Encyclopédie des mystiques rhénans* (2011), 839-44.

⁴⁰ *Exposition of the Song of Songs*, 289.

⁴¹ Origen, *Homily I 10 on the Song of Songs*.

⁴² Eckhart, *Sermon 22*.

⁴³ Eckhart, *Book of the Parables of Genesis*, n. 136, trans. J. Casteigt, 'Le baiser entre le ciel et la terre' (2009), 229.

⁴⁴ In his *Commentary on Exodus*, n. 217 he reinterprets Origen's XXIIIrd *Homily on Numbers* (§ 2).

⁴⁵ See M. Tardieu, '*Psuchaios spinthèr. Scintilla animae*. Histoire d'une métaphore dans la tradition platonicienne jusqu'à Eckhart', *REAug* 21 (1975), 225-55.

⁴⁶ *Commentary on John*, n. 61.

⁴⁷ *Sermo 16b*.

Does Origen influences the preaching program of Eckhart?

More broadly, Eckhart seems to find in Origen the aim of his preaching program, as it is presented in *Sermon 53* and which is not unlike the dynamics of the image. First, detachment replaces Origen's idea of purification; second, the 'reintroduction' of the soul 'into the simple Good which is God' is not unlike Origen's second *Homily on Ezekiel* (2:5);⁴⁸ third, 'the nobility' of the soul, that Origen stressed with the metaphor of the source and the *synderesis*, as just mentioned, and, finally, fourth: 'The purity of the divine nature' which is not unlike Origen's concept of nature in the *Homilies on Exodus and Jeremiah*. Eckhart probably offers a program that includes elements which derive from various works of the Alexandrian, but, as shown, there is surely a common background and convergence in specific areas between the two authors, particularly with regards the concept of the image which finds its fulfillment in the birth of God in the soul.

Birth of God in the soul

The actuality of God's birth in the soul

In fact, if Irenaeus is the first among the Church Fathers to talk about the deification of the human being, Origen is the first to consider the birth of God in the soul and to emphasize that this is not so much a past event than a current reality. At the beginning of Eckhart's *Sermon 101*, which opens the cycle of the birth of God in the soul, but also in his *Commentary on John* (n. 117) and in the *Book of Parables of Genesis* (LW I/1, 663), Eckhart takes Origen's *Homily XXII* (3) on *Luke* and *Homily IX* (70,12-4) on *Jeremiah*. In the latter place the Alexandrian states: 'What is the importance for you that Christ once came in the world if he did not also come into your soul?'.⁴⁹ The copyist was wrong in attributing the quote to Augustine. But the authority of Origen is always a support for the Thuringian, and allows him to explain the reason for the Incarnation and to highlight its current relevance, showing how everyone is involved in its process. This is the heart of Eckhart's work, as he said himself in *Sermon 38*: 'Why God is it that man – what was the most sublime? – I would say, for God to be born in the soul and the soul being born in God. This is the reason why all Scripture is written, why God created the world'.

In *Sermon 31*, as in the *Sermons 101* and *102*, Eckhart explains with Origen the condition that is none other than God's suffering being without reason.

⁴⁸ Eckhart, *Commentary on Wisdom*, n. 209.

⁴⁹ *Homilies on Luke XXII* 3.

The birth of God in the soul, a continual process

As Origen in his *Homilies on Jeremiah*, so does Eckhart speak of the birth of God in the soul which is not conceived as an event, but as a continual process. This makes him speak of an eternal birth, particularly in his cycle of sermons on the birth of God in the soul with the righteous man being the central place for it. Thus, he says, both in his *Commentary on Wisdom* (n. 55), as in his *Commentary on John* (n. 341)⁵⁰ that the 'just is the one who, for every virtue, is born always from God'. He is not just once and for all, but he is just by constantly answering to God's project who introduces him into the dynamics of Trinitarian life. In fact, Eckhart, like Origen, has the intuition of an eternal presence of divine life, or of the emergence of eternity into time, as is clear from Eckhart's *Sermons and Lectures on Ecclesiastes* (n. 23) and Origen's *Homilies on Jeremiah*.

The just lives in an eternal present which is also synonymous with perpetual renewal, and he is the joy of the Trinity, as is the unjust who converts, as Eckhart⁵¹ explains, following the XXIIIrd *Homily on Numbers* (§ 2) of Origen.

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Eckhart is strongly influenced by his reading of Origen, and perhaps more, there is, in depth, an analogy of experience between the Alexandrian and the Thuringian, which are both men of Scripture who are trying to bring Scripture's fundamental contribution to their contemporaries, outlining an anthropology grounded on the human being, created in the image of God and called to deification. This makes Eckhart one of the easternmost Western thinkers. Both thinkers stand for the actuality of the Word of God through the centuries, that Word sown in each one and expected to emerge.

⁵⁰ See also *Sermon 39*.

⁵¹ *Commentary on Wisdom*, n. 67; *Commentary on Exodus*, n. 244 ; *Sermon 39*.

The Patristic Sources of Eriugena's Exegesis of the Parable of the Bridesmaids

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ABSTRACT

Eriugena's thought is traditionally interpreted as the result of the encounter between East and West. Using the parable of *Matth. 25:1-13* as a case study, this article's aim is to determine the extent of this statement's truth. This parable was commented on by many Western theologians, most famously by Augustine, but also Ambrose, Gregory the Great and Bede. Contrariwise, most Eastern theologians – e.g. Origen, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa – partially overlooked this text. Western exegesis certainly influenced Eriugena, but his use of these sources appears highly selective. However, while he frequently quotes Western sources, especially Augustine, his allegorical bridal imagery is more akin to the eastern exegesis. To demonstrate my argument, I will compare Eriugena's exegesis of the parable's main images, such as the lamps, the oil and the sleep, with previous patristic interpretations. In addition, given that the parable was used in eschatological discourses, I will also investigate Eriugena's eschatology. In conclusion, Eriugena uses the parable, a gospel text suggesting an exclusive soteriology, to symbolise his idea of universal salvation; and such an unexpected exegesis can be explained only through his original use of patristic sources.

The influence of Greek and Latin theologians on Eriugena's speculation has plagued the scholarly discussions of the last century. While great scholars have been troubled by Eriugena's use of patristic sources, many different conclusions have been drawn over time.

At the beginning of the 1920's, Gilson wrote that Eriugena was 'le découvreur occidental du monde immense de la théologie grecque'.¹ Contrariwise, at

¹ Étienne Gilson, *La philosophie au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1947), 222. Similarly, John Meyendorff, 'Remarks on Eastern Patristic Thought in John Scottus Eriugena', in Bernard McGinn and Willemien Otten (eds), *Eriugena. East and West* (Paris, 1994), 51-68 investigates in depth the dependence of Eriugena's theology on eastern patristic theologians, claiming that Eriugena failed in 'bridging the intellectual and spiritual gap between the two worlds' of Eastern and Western theology. In this brief article, I will try to explain to what extent Meyendorff's conclusion might be true. Recently, Gaetano Lettieri, 'Eriugena e il *transitus* di Agostino nei Padri greci. Apocatastasi ed epektasis nell'eschatologia del V libro del Periphyseon', *Adamantius* 22 (2016), 349-97, radicalises Gilson's position, affirming: 'L'eschatologia eriugeniana [...] può quindi essere definita come una metafora speculativa, [...] quindi come un transitus allegorico-ermeneutico patristico, ove la dura *littera* dualistica agostiniana (seppure spiritualizzata nella distinzione tra universale

the end of 1980's O'Meara stressed the influence of Augustine and his platonic speculation;² later on, other scholars, such as Beierwaltes, underlined the Greek Neo-Platonic debt of Eriugena's work.³ In more recent years, in his introduction to the critical edition of the *Periphyseon*,⁴ Jauneau has highlighted the importance of Dionysius and Maximus the Confessor for the Irish theologian.⁵

Such wide variety in scholarly contributions gives us a glance of the complexity of Eriugena's relation with his sources.⁶ What is the reason of such great variance of scholarly positions? Whence the complexity of Eriugena's relationship with the Fathers? And, most of all, why is the parable of the Bridesmaids relevant in this regard?

The aim of my article is not to investigate thoroughly all these massive problems, but rather to present a *prima facie* case using Eriugena's exegesis of the parable of the Bridesmaids (*Matth.* 25:1-13) to cast some light on his use of patristic sources. Given that this parable is used by Eriugena to conclude his *Periphyseon*, it gains an unusual prominence within his work. Hence, this parable is a fruitful ground to explore his theology, for many of his anthropological, soteriological and eschatological doctrines are founded here.

reditus generalis e non universale *reditus specialis*) è relativizzata, allegorizzata, infine tolta nella nella spirituale *epektasis* gregoriana, il cui dinamismo approda nell'apocatastasi origeniana, culminante nella mistica tenebra apofatica dionisiana'.

² John J. O'Meara, *Eriugena* (Oxford, 1988). Brian Stock, 'In search of Eriugena's Augustine', in Werner Beierwaltes (ed.), *Eriugena. Studien zu seinen Quellen* (Heilderberg, 1980), 85-104, attempts to smoothen the scholarly differences in interpreting Eriugena's use of patristic sources stating that Eriugena 'was an author who read both the Greeks and the Latins and thought for himself'.

³ Werner Beierwaltes, *Eriugena: Grundzüge seines Denkens* (Frankfurt, 1994). Similar positions are held by Tullio Gregory, *Giovanni Scoto Eriugena. Tre studi* (Firenze, 1963) and Matteo Andolfo, 'Theoria and Theophania in Scoto Eriugena', *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica* 91 (1999), 88-117.

⁴ *Periphyseon* will be abbreviated *PPhy* in the footnotes. For the English translation see Johannes Scotus Eriugena, *Periphyseon: The Division of Nature*, trans. Inglis P. Sheldon-Williams; rev. John J. O'Meara, *Cahiers d'études médiévales* 3 (Montreal, 1987).

⁵ Édouard Jauneau, *Iohannes Scotti seu Eriugena Periphyseon*, CChr.CM 161-5 (Turnhout, 1994-2003).

⁶ For his relation to the patristic theologians as *auctoritates*, see Giulio D'Onofrio, 'The Concordia of Augustine and Dionysius: Toward a Hermeneutic of the Disagreement of Patristic Sources in John the Scot Periphyseon', in B. McGinn and W. Otten (eds), *Eriugena* (1994), 115-40, 124-6, who highlights that 'the final and fundamental rule for the resolution of controversies among authorities consists in the medieval theologian's own engagement in carrying forward the investigation of the Fathers on the basis of the same means which they themselves had already put in practice in their own time – rationality illuminated by faith' (*PPhy* IV, 829A-B). D'Onofrio believes this method brought Eriugena closer to the Eastern tradition rather than to the Western one. This topic has also been explored by Willemien Otten, 'Eriugena and the concept of Eastern versus Western Patristic Influence', *SP* 28 (1993), 217-24. In order to evaluate Eriugena's relation to his sources, it is also important to take into account his consideration and use of biblical sources. To deepen this topic, see Thomas O'Loughlin, 'Biblical Contradictions in the Periphyseon and the Development of Eriugena's Method', in Gerd Van Riel, Carlos Steel and James McEvoy (eds), *Iohannes Scottus Eriugena: The Bible and Hermeneutics* (Leuven, 1996), 103-26.

I. The parable in the earlier patristic tradition

The exegesis of this text differs greatly between eastern and western theology.⁷ Both traditions attempt to explain the symbols and metaphors of this parable – such as the lamp, the oil, the sleep – reaching very different conclusions.

The eastern exegesis is greatly influenced by Origen, who first established those interpretations which became 'traditional'. In his *Commentarium in evangelium Matthaei*, he identified the virgins with all Christians, justifying their division in two groups of five by means of their righteous or unrighteous use of the five senses.⁸ Only those who preserved the purity of body and the virtue of mind will enter the marriage chamber with the Bridegroom; hence, he interprets the oil as the 'oil of charity and peace and the remaining virtues'⁹ and also as the 'light of knowledge'.¹⁰ Origen's explanation was focused on the moral and pedagogical intent of the parable, that is to say, on how all Christians might become wise virgins. Consequently, he seems very little concerned about the issues raised by the exclusion of the foolish bridesmaids from the marriage feast. Therefore, the interpreter can only deduce what is here implicitly expressed. In fact, according to Origen's notion of ἀποκατάστασις,¹¹ the exclusion of the

⁷ The study of the patristic exegesis of this parable has been neglected by scholarship. As far as I am aware, there are only few studies on this topic. See Marcello Marin, 'La parabola delle dieci vergini da Origene ai Cappadoci', in Mario Girardi and Marcello Marin (eds), *Origene e l'Alessandrino Cappadocia (III-IV secolo)* (Bari, 2002), 243-54 and *id.*, *Ricerche sull'esegesi agostiniana della parabola delle dieci vergini (Mt. 25,1-13)*, Quaderni di "Vetera Christianorum" 16 (Bari, 1981).

⁸ Origen, *Commentarium in evangelium Matthaei* 17, 63-4 (PG 13, 1699C-1703A).

⁹ Origen, *Homeliae in Leviticus* 1, 5, 2: 'They are like those "five foolish virgins" who certainly were kept virgins and had the purity of body. But they did not know how to store up the "oil" of charity and peace and the remaining virtues "in their vases"; therefore, they were excluded from the marriage chamber of the bridegroom. Hence, the continence of the flesh alone is not able to reach to the altar of the Lord if it is lacking the remaining virtues and the priestly ministry'.

¹⁰ Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6, 5, 34: 'But that a light is suddenly kindled in the soul, as by a fire leaping forth, is a fact known long ago to our Scriptures; as when the prophet said "Light ye for yourselves the light of knowledge" [...] the simple language of the holy Scriptures has led to their honest readers being filled with a divine spirit; and this light is nourished within them by the oil, which in a certain parable is said to have preserved the light of the torches of the five wise virgins'. It is worth noting these imageries and their allegorical meanings will be extremely important for Eriugena.

¹¹ Here, I am assuming that Origen believed in universal salvation (ἀποκατάστασις), see Origen, *De principiis* 1, 7, 5. Not only do I deem ἀποκατάστασις to be a significant element of Origen's theology, but also I strongly believe that Origen's entire system finds its coherence in universal salvation. See the numerous articles of Manlio Simonetti, *Origene esegeta e la sua tradizione* (Brescia, 2004). In addition, see Emanuela Prinzivalli, 'L'uomo ed il suo destino nel Commento a Giovanni', in *ead.* (ed.), *Il Commento a Giovanni di Origene: il testo e i suoi contesti* (Villa Verrucchio, 2015), 361-79. Not all scholars identify ἀποκατάστασις as part of Origen's speculation, see Mark J. Edwards, *Origen against Plato* (Farnham, 2002), 111-4. Edwards also denies the pre-existence of the souls in Origen's work, see M.J. Edwards, *Origen* (2002), 87-111.

virgins from the marriage chamber may only be temporary, since all humans will be married eschatologically to the Bridegroom.¹² Moreover, a controversial passage of his *De principiis* suggests that the foolish ones are not yet worthy of entering the marriage chamber, but they will be on the final Day.¹³ This hypothesis is also confirmed by Origen's insistence on the *καρπός* – namely, the opportune moment to fulfil good actions – missed by the virgins because of their negligence, allegorically symbolised by their sleep.

Most eastern theologians, as the Cappadocian fathers, follow Origen's interpretation. Basil of Caesarea emphasises the parenetic aspect of this parable, exhorting every Christian to vigil constantly for the coming of the Bridegroom so that one shall not miss the *καρπός*.¹⁴ Gregory of Nazianzus highlights the connection between the parable and the sacrament of baptism, connecting the nuptial with the paschal procession.¹⁵ Gregory of Nyssa does not comment on this parable, only mentioning it briefly in his *Contra Eunomium*.¹⁶ Moreover, it is worth considering also the beginning of his eleventh homily *In Cantica canticorum*,¹⁷ where he implicitly hints at the parable. In this text, he actually refers to *Lk.* 12:35-40, but the two parables present many similarities. Indeed, in his exegesis the sleep symbolises the unexhausted yearning for material success – such as power, wealth, pride – whereas the lamp represents the intellectual ability that, when properly used, guides the rational soul. Hence, it is likely that Gregory had hinted to both texts in his work, due to the focus on nuptial imagery.

It has been shown that the parable's eschatological separation received very little attention from eastern theologians.¹⁸ A modern interpreter can only deduce

¹² Origen, *Commentarii in Canticum canticorum* 1, 1, 3-4 Origen's work has a very rich bridal imagery, which is particularly developed in his *Commentary and Homilies on the Song of Songs*.

¹³ Origen, *De principiis* 4, 2, 4: 'Now Grapte, who admonishes is the bare letter, which admonishes the souls of those children who are not yet able to enrol God as their Father and are on this account called orphans, and which also admonishes those who while no longer associating with the unlawful bridegroom are in widowhood because they have not yet become worthy of the true one'. In truth, this passage is not universally acknowledged as quotation of *Math.* 25:1-13, mostly because of the differences between the Greek and the Latin texts, but I still find it noteworthy concerning Origen's interpretation of the passage.

¹⁴ Basil of Caesarea, *De baptismo* 2, 8-9.

¹⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 40, 46; for his insistence on the *καρπός*, see his *Carmen theologico* 1, 27, 51-61.

¹⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* 3, 7, 40. See also Gregory of Nyssa, *De instituto Christiano* 83, 6-10, which presents an accurate exegesis of the parable, but it will not be taken into account here since the authorship of this work has not been established. To deepen this argument see Werner Jaeger, *Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius* (Leiden, 1954). However, the absence of *Math.* 25:1-13 from Gregory of Nyssa's work does not diminish the importance of Gregory's works for Eriugena.

¹⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *In Cantica Canticorum* 11, 1.

¹⁸ Other eastern theologians were important sources for Eriugena's work, such as Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor, but, as far as I know, there are no significant references to this parable in their works.

the eschatological implications of these exegeses, since the exclusion of the foolish virgins from the marriage chamber is never addressed openly. Presumably, the eschatological exclusion of one group of virgins from the reunion with the Bridegroom was simply too problematic for eastern theologians who shared Origen's belief in universal salvation. This might indeed be the reason for the scant use of this text among eastern theologians, who rather preferred to lay emphasis on its moral meaning, avoiding or minimising the main eschatological point, according to which some of the virgins will be eternally excluded from the communion with God.

Among Latin theologians, the first relevant mention of *Matth.* 25:1-13 is in the work of Ambrose of Milan.¹⁹ His interpretation is very close to the eastern one, for his exegesis is mainly focused on the moral aspect of the parable. In particular, he analysed its implications for the lives of those virgins entrusted to his pastoral guidance. Contrarily to what one might expect, Ambrose's exegesis has very little connection to the ecclesiastical nuptial metaphor, whereas it is strictly related to the virginal lifestyle. Women who decide to consecrate their life to chastity must not only preserve the purity of their lamps (their soul), but they also need to watch until the coming of the Bridegroom by buying the oil (their virtue) to keep their lamps lit, just as the wise virgins. The wise virgins represent the standard that all Christians should meet, especially those who have chosen to devote their life to virtue.²⁰ Therefore, as well as the Greek interpreters, Ambrose mainly overlooks the eschatological meaning of the parable, stressing instead its pedagogical exhortations.

Few years later Augustine, showing a perfect awareness that the exegetes of the parable of the ten virgins had not yet explored all the possible implications, notes:

Among the parables told by the Lord, the one that was proposed with respect to the ten virgins usually exercises inquirers a great deal. And indeed many persons have thought many things in regard to it that are not alien to the faith, but how an explanation might take into account all its parts is what must still be elaborated.²¹

Augustine comments on this parable on several occasions. Four works are particularly interesting: 1) *De diversibus questionibus octaginta tribus* 59; 2) *Sermo* 93; 3) *Epistula* 140; 4) *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 147. To a certain

¹⁹ Most references are quite brief and scattered in different works; nonetheless they form a coherent and consistent interpretation of the parable of the Bridesmaids. The most important are: *Expositio psalmi CXVIII* 14, 7; *De paradiso* 2, 11; *De Joseph* 7, 42; *De Isaac vel anima* 5, 39; *De institutione virginis et Sanctae Mariae virginitate perpetua* 17, 111.

Before him, Jerome commented on this text in his *Commentarium in Mattheum* 4, 25, 1-13. Jerome is systematically commenting every single verse of the parable. As many before him, he associates the number five with the five senses and, similarly to Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus, he relates the vigil of Christ with the Easter vigil.

²⁰ Ambrose, *De institutione virginis et Sanctae Mariae virginitate perpetua* 17, 111.

²¹ Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus* 59, 1.

extent, he follows the traditional interpretation – according to which the virgins symbolise all Christians and the number five alludes to the five senses²² – but he is extremely original when it comes to the interpretation of the lamps and the oil. The former symbolises the good works that everyone should fulfil during one's life, the latter is the pure intention of human's hearth, which I suggest to identify with the *gratia Dei*.²³ Only the grace of God, enlightening human hearths, makes them worthy of entering the thalamus with the Bridegroom. Such identification is supported by Augustine's definition of the foolish virgins as *gratiae inimici*,²⁴ who have praised themselves for their good work and have looked for the praises of humans rather than acknowledging God acting through them. For this reason, they will be banished from the Kingdom, from the company of the Bridegroom and from the glory of redemption. For this reason, similarly to the saints of *De civitate Dei*, the *sapientes virgines* will eschatologically mock them for their wretched condition.²⁵

Augustine is an important turning point for the interpretation of this passage. From this moment forward, all interpreters will stress the eschatological meaning of the parable. For instance, Gregory the Great²⁶ and Bede,²⁷ though using some traditional metaphors, are much more concerned about the eschatological separation of the two groups of virgins than Greek interpreters. In particular, Gregory's homily has a strong eschatological shade, which emphasises the wretched condition of the damned in the Doomsday, thus exhorting all Christians to vigil because no one knows when the moment will come.²⁸ Gregory is here proposing once more the theme of the *καίρως*, although entirely revolutionising its original Greek meaning, colouring it by a radically negative connotation that

²² Augustine, *Epistula* 140, 33.

²³ For the general interpretation of Augustine's grace, see Gaetano Lettieri, *L'altro Agostino. Ermeneutica e retorica della grazia dalla crisi alla metamorfosi del De Doctrina Christiana* (Brescia, 2001); and Gaetano Lettieri, *Donum Libertatis: grazia e libero arbitrio dal Nuovo Testamento all'VII secolo* (Rome, 2007), 252-78. In addition, see Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity* (Oxford, 2006), 238-87.

²⁴ Augustine, *Epistula* 140, 37.

²⁵ The Latin text is here particularly explicit: *Irridentium quippe responsio mihi videtur, cum eis sapientibus virginibus dicitur: "Ite potius ad vedentes, et emite vobis"; sicut quodam libro Sapientiae scriptum est, ubi contemptoribus dicit: "Et ego perditioni vestrae superirridebo".*

²⁶ He wrote an entire homily on *Matth. 25:1-13*, mentioning it in several other works, such as the *Epistula* 11, 27. His exegesis greatly depends on the works of Augustine and Ambrose.

²⁷ Bede, *In Genesis* 2, 7, 16; *De tabernaculo* 2, 13; *In Lucam* 3, 8, 6; 11, 21, 26 and 5, 16, 1-4; *Expositio apocalypseos* 33, 19, 7. Although none of his references to the parable is very thorough, they are all very cogent and meaningful. For the dependence of Eriugena on Bede, see John J. Contremi, 'John Scottus and Bede', in James McEvoy and Michael Dunne (eds), *History and Eschatology in John Scottus Eriugena and His Time* (Leuven, 2002), 91-140.

²⁸ See Gregory the Great, *Homelias in Evangelia* 12: 'There will be no relief from punishment then. What a shame will we feel in the sight of all human beings because of our own guilt! [...] Then the door of the Kingdom, which only today was open to those who wait. Even then there will be repentance, but it will be fruitless. No one will find pardon then'.

presupposes an Augustinian influence. Likewise, Bede stresses the moral and final difference between the wise and the foolish ones: 'The other five that do not accomplish good works by means of a pure hearth are casted away from the Kingdom, rejected because of their darkness. In fact, they were five, and five are judged because of what they did in the flesh'.²⁹

Hence, the exegetical traditions from which Eriugena can draw from for his interpretation are various and very different one from the other. It is now time to analyse closer his work.

II. The parable in Eriugena's exegesis

Since the beginning of his exegesis, the difference with previous exegeses is striking. Eriugena revisits the text of the Gospel entirely in light of his philosophy, so that most of its theological arguments are summarised in this passage.³⁰

Eriugena exploited this text to address the notion of a *reditus specialis* of some creatures to God. In fact, Eriugena acknowledges two different kinds of returns to God:

For there is a general Return and a special Return. The general Return is the lot of all things which shall be brought back to the Principle of their creation: the special Return, of those which shall not only be restored to the Primordial Causes of their nature, but shall achieve the consummation of their Return, beyond every rank in the hierarchy of nature, in the Causes of all things, which is God.³¹

²⁹ Bede, *De tabernaculo* 2, 13: *Quinque aliae, quae opera castitatis non casto animo exeruerant, repulsae cum suis tenebris, procul a regni januis ejiciuntur. Quinque enim erant et quinque, quia utraque secundum ea quae in carne gesserat, judicatae sunt.*

³⁰ As far as I am aware, there are only two articles on Eriugena's exegesis of this parable: Deirdre Carabine, 'Five Wise Virgins: Theosis and Return in Periphyseon V', in G. Van Riel, C. Steel and M. Richter (eds), *The Bible and Hermeneutics* (1996), 195-207, and Paul A. Dietrich and Donald F. Duclow, 'Virgins in Paradise: Deification and Exegesis in Periphyseon V', in Guy H. Hallard (ed.), *Jean Scot Écrivain* (Notre Dame and London, 1994), 29-49, who stresses the importance of the *θεωρία* for the salvation of rational creatures. See also G. Lettieri, 'Eriugena' (2016), who denies the difference between *reditus generalis* and *reditus specialis*. According to him, if there will be a universal *reditus* of all creature in the One, the perfect unity of God will not admit any differences within Himself. Moreover, since the yearning for God is a natural faculty, equally possessed by all rational creatures, there is no ontological explanation for such dualistic eschatological return. Lettieri underlines the insoluble tension between the ontological speculation of the Greek Father and biblical-apocalyptic dualism of Augustine; Eriugena is in between these two theological traditions: adhering to the Greek ontological approach, he has to deny the biblical-apocalyptic dualism, even in its smoothed forms as in the case of the two *reditus*.

³¹ *PPhy* 1001 A-B: *Reditus omnium [...] est enim generalis et est specialis, generalis quidem in omnibus qui ad principium conditionis suae redituri sunt, specialis vero in his qui non solum ad primordia naturae revocabuntur, sed etiam ultra omnem naturalem dignitatem in causam omnium (quae est Deus) reditus sui finem constituent.*

To explain the difference between these two eschatological endings, he starts from the traditional exegesis of the ten virgins as symbol of *totius rationabilis creaturae*, which obviously includes humankind.³² Then, he makes explicit how the parable symbolises the different eschatological destinies of rational creatures: ‘There is nothing in nature which is totally deprived of participation in the One; nevertheless all the virgins will not equally go out to meet the Bridegroom and the Bride’.³³ Stressing the different levels of participation to the One, he draws the limit between two groups of virgins; that is, between those that will experience the special return and those who will experience the general one. The levels of participation to the One are determined by the virgins’ minor or major proximity to God, which depends on their *capacitatem aeternae lucis cognoscendae*, their capacity of knowing the eternal Light, which is symbolically represented by the lamps.³⁴ All rational beings have been endowed with the faculty of apprehending God, but not all of them are able to receive the Light in the same way.³⁵ In other words, all ten virgins are gifted with this natural, original and protological *capacitas*, since all of them are ‘receptacle of Divine Light’,³⁶ but only some of them will marry the Bridegroom, whilst others will never know his intimate secrets. Eschatologically, this natural possession will allow the foolish virgins to partake in the natural goods, for they were given to mankind before the edenic transgression:³⁷

Those who only possess the faculty of apprehending the Light, and are not illuminated by and conformed to the Light itself, although they will go forth to meet Christ, that is to say, will ascend not only in the desire which is innate in their nature but also in actual

³² See *PPhy* 1011A. One might think that I am doing an injustice to Eriugena’s system in reducing the category of *totius rationabilis creaturae* to humankind, but I would like to draw the attention on *PPhy* 1011C, where Eriugena limits the broader concept of *totius rationabilis creaturae* to *tota humana natura*, because rational nature *specialiter in homine create est*. Moreover, *PPhy* is based on the assumption that there are four divisions of nature: 1. *Natura quae creat et non creatur* (God as beginning of all creatures); 2. *Natura quae et creatur et creat* (*causae primordiales*); 3. *Natura quae creatur et non creat* (rational creatures); 4. *Natura quae nec creat nec creatur* (God as eschatological return) (*PPhy* I, 441A–446B). These four divisions include all that exists, even God Himself. All nature is dominated by a dialectic movement of *exodus* and *reditus* (*PPhy* V, 865C–867A), thus all that flows out of God will eschatologically return to Him. Hence, the end coincides with the beginning.

³³ *PPhy* 1011D: *Nullum tamen est in natura rerum, quod eius participatione omnino privetur, ideoque non aequaliter obviam sponso et sponsae virgines exhibunt.*

³⁴ *PPhy* 1011C and 1012B.

³⁵ As explicitly stated by Eriugena, this notion rests on the doctrines of Dionysius the Areopagite.

³⁶ *PPhy* 1012A–B. As naturally provided faculty, it does not know any increase or diminution and nobody can be deprived of it.

³⁷ *PPhy* 1014B: ‘This was the condition of the first man and woman before their transgression, and it is to this condition, namely enjoyment of their natural goods alone without the adornment of the virtues that that part of the human race which is signified by the five foolish virgins shall return’. See also *PPhy* 1013C–D.

experience to those things which are their sole natural goods, which subsist in Christ, yet they shall not attain to the supernatural Grace and joy of deification of Him.³⁸

According to the text, the foolish virgins will be saved, but they will experience only a partial redemption, since they are unable of an utter participation in the One. Although they will be restored to the natural glory of their rational nature, they will be excluded from the true marriage feast. At this point, a question spontaneously arises: if the foolish virgins are redeemed, what characterises the higher level reached by the wise virgins? And consequently, what is the meaning of the oil? Eriugena explains it with these words:

But we may reasonably suppose that the other part of human race, which is represented by the five prudent virgins, is to be raised up beyond all natural goods to that height which man would through Grace have ascended had he not sinned, that is to say, to participation in the highest wisdom and all the virtues, and through that participation attain to deification and the contemplation of the truth: and thus it will enter into the spiritual marriage feast with the Bridegroom.³⁹

The oil is therefore the grace of God, which raises humans above their natural condition to the highest pinnacle of divine contemplation. At a first glance, one could think that he follows Augustine's interpretation of the oil as divine grace; nonetheless, at a more accurate reading, one will discover that, even if he could have taken the cue from Augustine's works, his idea diverges completely from Augustine's. If in Augustine we found the idea of the *gratia gratis data*,⁴⁰ Eriugena understands it as reward for the 'obedience to the commandments of God and the most perfect knowledge'.⁴¹ According to the Irish theologian, the rational nature can 'earn' its '*ineffabile deificatio*'⁴² by means of discerning the True Light. Hence, the wise virgins, who did not neglect their Christian duties and their intelligence,⁴³ will 'come into the

³⁸ PPhy 1012A-B: *Qui vero solam luminis capacitatem habent, non autem ipso lumine illuminantur et ornantur, obviam Christo procedent, hoc est non solum naturali appetitu, sed etiam re ipsa et experimento ad sola naturalia humanitatis bona, quae in Christo subsistunt, ascendent, non autem ad supernaturalem deificationis in eo gratiam et laetitiam pervenient.*

³⁹ PPhy 1014B-C: *Ad ipsam vero excelsitudinem, ad quam homo per gratiam, si non peccaret, ascensus esset, hoc est, ad participationem summae sapientiae omniumque virtutum, quam, participationem dico, deificatio et contemplatio veritatis sequitur, alteram humanae numerositatis partem, cuius symbolum est quinarius prudentium virginum numerus, sublimandam ultra omnia bona naturalia, et ad spirituales nuptias sponsi sui intraturam, non incongrue existimandum.*

⁴⁰ Augustine, *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus* 86, 2.

⁴¹ PPhy 1014C-D: *Non enim illuc natura humanam mentem sublevat, sed gratia, et mandatis Dei oboedientiae, purissimaeque, quantum in hac vita datur, Dei per litteram et creaturam cognitionis meritum sublevit.*

⁴² PPhy 1015A.

⁴³ PPhy 1017C-D and 1018A: 'But while this tardiness and negligence were being displayed the Bridegroom came and took those virgins who were prepared and arrayed for His coming and brought them into His marriage feast, that is to say, into His Deification, where He glorifies the most perfect intelligence with the supernatural Grace of contemplation of Himself; while the others He left in

presence of God'.⁴⁴ Reaching the perfect knowledge, they will be able to understand the theophany of the divine, or, even better, to understand the world as a theophany of God himself.⁴⁵ The difference between the wise virgins and the foolish ones lies not only in the faculty of apprehending the True Light, but also in the 'possession of the Light itself'.⁴⁶

Conceiving universal salvation in terms of a general return of all creatures to God, Eriugena's soteriology owes a great debt to Origen. In addition, his eschatology re-elaborates Origen's correspondence between protological and eschatological time,⁴⁷ equating the heavenly condition of humankind to the eschatological condition of redeemed beings. Furthermore, Eriugena's notion of progressive apprehension of the One presents many similarities with Gregory of Nyssa's idea of *ἐπέκτασις*, infinite progress in God.⁴⁸ Notwithstanding these similarities, Eriugena affirms here a new notion of universal salvation, which could be summarised by his own comments on *Matth.* 25:12, 'I do not know you':

I allow you to be ignorant of the intimate secret of marriage feast of My divinity and of My humanity, which before the world was made, I have prepared for those whose intelligence of me is pure, and to which, now that the world is at an end I have brought them in. For while you were still living in the flesh you did not prepare yourselves to become worthy of the delights of that feast: but I permit you to remain within the bounds of the natural goods which I created in you.⁴⁹

the enjoyment of natural goods, but excluded from the heights of that ineffable Deification 'which the eye has not seen nor the ear heard, nor has it ascended into the heart of men'.

⁴⁴ *PPhy* 1015B.

⁴⁵ *PPhy* I, 450B-450C: 'And from this you are to understand that the Divine Essence is incomprehensible in itself, but when it is joined to an intellectual creature it becomes after a wondrous fashion manifest [...] Therefore it is through bodies in bodies, not through Himself, that He shall be seen. Similarly, it is through intellect in intellects, through reason in reasons, not through itself, that the Divine Essence shall appear. For so strongly shall the excellence of the Divine Power be manifested in life to come to all those who shall be worthy of its contemplation that nothing but itself shall be apparent in either these bodies or these intellects. For "God shall be all in all" – as if the Scriptures said plainly: God alone shall be manifest in all things'. The term theophany indicates a manifestation of God in the world. Furthermore, in a broader sense, every creature can be understood as manifestation of the One. The concept of theophany in Eriugena is extremely complex and depends greatly on the Confessor's doctrines. To deepen this argument, see Jean Trouillard, 'Érigène et la théophanie créatrice', in John J. O'Meara and Ludwig Bieler (eds), *The mind of Eriugena* (Dublin, 1973), 98-113. See also P.A. Dietrich and D.F. Duclow, 'Virgins in Paradise' (1994), 48-9.

⁴⁶ *PPhy* 1012A: *Nam qui non solum capacitatem veri luminis, verum etiam et ipsum lumen (quod oleum conformat) possident ad ipsum sponsum pervenient et cum ipsum in spirituales nuptias intrabunt.*

⁴⁷ Origen, *De principiis* 2, 9, 7.

⁴⁸ It is worth noting that Eriugena translated Gregory's *De opificio hominis*, which is greatly focused on the idea of *deificatio*.

⁴⁹ *PPhy* 1018B-C: 'Amen dico vobis, nescio vos.' *Hoc est, intimas secretasque mea divinitatis et humanitatis nuptias, quas mei purissime intelligentibus priusquam fieret mundus preparavi,*

III. Conclusion

This analysis has shown how significant the influence of Greek theologians, particularly Origen, is for Eriugena's work. Despite some differences in his exegesis of the parable of the Bridesmaids, I believe that Eriugena follows Origen's intuitions. Firstly, Eriugena's interpretation of the lamps as *capacitates aeternae lucis cognoscendae* finds its only precedent in Origen's exegesis. Secondly, they both shared the belief in universal salvation as return of all rational creatures to God. Lastly, they both believed in the importance of the good works to merit the access to the marriage chamber and to the intimate secrets of the Bridegroom. It is also important to acknowledge that many of these doctrines are re-elaborated starting from ideas of Gregory of Nyssa, especially his notion of infinite progress towards God. Although it is impossible to prove a direct textual dependency, I believe Eriugena's interpretation of this parable also takes many cues from Origen and Gregory of Nyssa's works on the *Song of Songs*, where he finds many references to similar imagery, such as the oil, the lamps and the sleep.⁵⁰ In the only passage where Eriugena seems closer to Augustine's interpretation than to Origen's – that is, the one regarding the metaphorical meaning of the oil – this similarity is resolved in an empty shell due to the radically different interpretations of divine grace.

Nonetheless, Eriugena conveyed the cultural milieu of his time, which might explain why he attributed primarily an eschatological meaning to the parable rather than a moral one as the Greek interpreters did. In conclusion, Eriugena's references to western theologians, especially Augustine, are often ambiguous since they hide an essentially eastern way of thinking. In fact, I believe that Eriugena's exegesis reveals that he is far closer to eastern theology rather than to a western one, in spite of his historical and geographical location.

et ad quas iam finito mundo introduxi, nescire vos permittam. Non enim dum adhuc in carne vixistis, dignos vos illarum laetitia praeparastis. Intra tamen naturalium bonorum, quae in vobis creavi, terminos residere vos concedo.

⁵⁰ It is not possible here to explore more in detail Eriugena's knowledge of Origen's work. I will only mention that his friend Wulfado, to whom the *Periphyseon* is dedicated, had a significant collection of Origen's books. Moreover, the library of Laon had many texts available, among which there was certainly Origen's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. To deepen this argument, see Valerie Petroff, 'Theoriae of the Return in John Scottus' Eschatology', in J. McEvoy and M. Dunne (eds), *History and Eschatology* (2002), 527-79, 549-65; and Caroline Bammel, 'Insular manuscripts of Origen in the Carolingian Empire', in Gillian Jondorf and David N. Dumville (eds), *France and the British Isles in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Woodbridge, 1991), 5-16.

A Polemicist rather than a Patrologist: Calvin's Attitude to and Use of the Early Church Fathers

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ABSTRACT

Some scholars have argued that John Calvin was a respectful and insightful student of the Church Fathers, and Calvin himself claimed that he read and understood the Fathers better than his opponents. But a close analysis of Calvin's treatment of several early Christian writings (including those of Augustine, Chrysostom, and Jerome) reveals that he was more of a polemicist than a patrologist. Calvin appreciated and used the Fathers' writings predominantly as a means to his apologetic ends. Depending on the demands of his arguments, Calvin mistreated the Fathers in various ways: insulting them derisively, quoting from them selectively, claiming their support unjustifiably, and even sometimes misquoting them deceptively. Unlike some of his more scholarly contemporaries, he never produced a work on the Fathers. Thus, Calvin treated the Fathers as ammunition for his doctrinal battles, rather than as holy writings worthy of respect or close study.

Writing in 1530, the radical reformer Sebastian Franck poured scorn upon the 'testimony of the Fathers', writing: 'Foolish Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, Gregory – of whom not one even knew the Lord, so help me God, nor was sent by God to teach. Rather, they were all apostles of Antichrist'.¹ In the city of Lausanne only six years later, the young John Calvin preached a very different message. When Catholics condemned the Reformers for disparaging the 'saintz docteurs',² he stood up and retorted, '[the Catholics] often do not hold them in such great honour as we; nor do they deign to occupy their time reading their writings as we willingly do ... the holy doctors of antiquity ... [are] defenders of our opinion'.³ Throughout his career, when he wished to prove the antiquity of his church, Calvin often repeated his claim that he read, knew, and agreed with the Fathers better than his opponents. Some modern scholars were convinced: for example, in his first great work on Calvin and the

¹ Quoted by Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1999), 156.

² Arthur Piaget (ed.), *Les actes de la dispute de Lausanne 1536* (Neuchâtel, 1928), 204, quoted by Anthony N.S. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Edinburgh, 1999), 26.

³ J.K.S. Reid (ed.), *Calvin: Theological Treatises, Library of Christian Classics*, vol. 22 (London, 1954) 38, 39, 40. Henceforth cited as LCC 22.

Fathers, Tony Lane initially proclaimed, '[Calvin] was destined to become one of the greatest patristic scholars of the sixteenth century'.⁴ But was Calvin truly a passionate patrologist, or simply a pretending polemicist? In this article, I will examine evidence for both sides. We will find that Calvin showed some respect for the Fathers, but often he treated them rather poorly.

Calvin's knowledge and respect of the Fathers was not insignificant. Already during the 1536 disputation at Lausanne, Calvin showed his ability to quote several of the Fathers by memory, even with citations (*e.g.* 'about the eighth or ninth section, I cannot exactly recall which'); furthermore, he tried to separate spurious from genuine writings (*e.g.* 'it is uncertain whether it belongs to him or to some other Father').⁵ Occasionally in his corpus, he praises the Fathers, 'whose godliness, learning, sanctity and age have secured them great authority so that we should not despise anything'.⁶ Indeed, he even claims both Augustine and Tertullian as *totus noster*,⁷ and he casts himself as a re-former who follows 'the model of the early Church'.⁸ Speaking to his humanistic training, Irena Backus discovered some 'very sensitive historical insights' in Calvin, who successfully pieces together historical evidence from Josephus and Eusebius, and who is the 'only sixteenth-century theologian' to attempt to harmonize the Africanus-Eusebius interpretation of the Gospel genealogies with the interpretation of his own day.⁹ Esther Chung-Kim, Diarmaid MacCulloch, and Tony Lane are among those recent scholars who defend Calvin – at least to a point – for his understanding of and respect for patristic writings. His patristic scholarship was substantial, even if not as profound as that of Erasmus. Indeed, MacCulloch recently deemed Calvin the 'Fifth Latin

⁴ Anthony N.S. Lane, 'Calvin's use of the Fathers and Medievals', *Calvin Theological Journal* 16 (1981), 149-205, 156. But later, Lane agreed with Irena Backus that Calvin treats the Fathers more as an apologist would, rather than as a dutiful patristics scholar: Irena Backus, 'Calvin and the Greek Fathers', in Robert Bast and Andrew Gow (eds), *Continuity and Change: The Harvest of Later Medieval and Reformation History: Essays Presented to Heiko A. Oberman on his 70th Birthday* (Leiden, 2000), 253-76; mentioned by A. Lane, *Student* (1999), 26.

⁵ LCC 22:41.

⁶ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Dedication, in David and Thomas Torrance (eds), *Calvin's Commentaries, The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, trans. Ross Mackenzie (Grand Rapids, 1995).

⁷ Peter Barth *et al.* (eds), *Johannis Calvini Opera Selecta* (Munich, 1968), 8:8266, 9:410 (henceforth CO), see in A. Lane, *Student* (1999), 38.

⁸ W. Ian P. Hazlett, 'Calvin's Latin Preface to His Proposed French Edition of Chrysostom's Homilies: Translation and Commentary', in James Kirk (ed.), *Humanism and Reform: The Church in Europe, England, and Scotland, 1400-1643*, Studies in Church History Subsidia 8 (Oxford, 1991), 129-50, 150, LCC 22:227. Although Calvin clarifies, saying he wishes to do even better than the Patristic age (which occasionally introduced innovations into the Word; see below); he will return to the truest model for the Church, which is the apostolic Church found in the Bible.

⁹ Irena Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378-1615)*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought (Leiden, 2003), 430-5.

Doctor of the Church' for his 'precise, careful distillation of the Western Christian tradition'.¹⁰

We must note, however, that none of the aforementioned historians are primarily patristic scholars. Thus, it seems appropriate to examine Calvin's corpus closely with an eye for the Fathers. In so doing, we will find a man willing to use and abuse Patristic writings for his own ends: at various times treating them effectively as ammunition for his doctrinal battles, rather than as holy writings worthy of respect in themselves. We will examine Calvin's abuse of patristic writings under these five categories: first, disrespectful insults; second, selective quotations; third and fourth, unjustified claims for broad or individual support; and fifth, misleading or deceptive quotations. Finally, we will compare Calvin's use of the Fathers to other writers in the same era, and see how he pales in comparison to more serious patristic scholars like Erasmus or Westphal.

Before discussing each of these points, we should first recall where Calvin's true allegiance lay. For Calvin, the only true guide was the Holy Scriptures; the Fathers were not just second, they were in an entirely lower realm: 'The Word of God *alone* lies beyond the sphere of our judgment'.¹¹ In his *Institutes*, Calvin wrote: 'This ... is the difference between the apostles and their successors: the former were sure and genuine scribes of the Holy Spirit, and their writings are therefore to be considered oracles of God; but the sole office of [the] others is to teach what is provided and sealed in the Holy Scriptures'.¹² In other words, the Fathers are respectable only insofar as they respect and reflect the Bible (or Calvin's interpretation of it). In Calvin's mind, the Fathers did well, but not perfectly. Namely, after the time of the apostles, the 'primitive and purer Church' remained largely (but not entirely) faithful to the Word 'for about five hundred years',¹³ but even during that time the Church was slowly deteriorating (by 'certain degrees'),¹⁴ as 'seeds of superstition' were 'sprung from the human brain in place of [God's] Word'.¹⁵ Calvin refers to the 'purity

¹⁰ Diarmaid MacCulloch, 'Calvin: Fifth Latin Doctor of the Church?', in Irena Backus and Philip Benedict (eds), *Calvin and His Influence, 1509-2009* (Oxford, 2011), 33-45, 42.

¹¹ LCC 22:255 (*Reply to Sadolet*). Emphasis added.

¹² J.T. McNeill and F.L. Battles (eds), *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Library of Christian Classics* 20-1, available online at <<http://library.nlx.com/titles>> (Philadelphia, 1960) *Inst.* 1157 (4.8.9). Henceforth cited as *Inst.* pp. (section). For example, Paul's creation of presbyters is a system 'ordained by God himself', but the words of Augustine or Origen or Jerome matter only insofar as they agree with Paul, *Inst.* 1059 (4.3.7), 337 (2.5.17).

¹³ LCC 22:215, *Inst.* 113 (1.11.13).

¹⁴ *Inst.* 1049 (4.2.8), comparing to the corruption of the Israelites.

¹⁵ *Inst.* 1246 (4.12.19), LCC 22:215, 22:247, W.I.P. Hazlett, 'Calvin's Latin Preface' (1991), 140. In his *Necessity of Reforming the Church*, Calvin asks: 'Is there any antiquity of the Church, either earlier or of higher authority, than the days of the apostles?' (LCC 22:214). But Lane offers a helpful corrective of William Todd: Calvin's idea of purity does not depend on antiquity, but on close adherence to God's Word, 'close ... to the mind and will of Christ', William N. Todd,

of that golden age', but he admits that one could easily collect 'dung amid gold',¹⁶ by amassing all of the Fathers' errors and innovations made against the Scriptures (as the papists had). For Calvin, the Bible alone was irreproachable; it was his 'Lydian stone' to test all other writings.¹⁷ Unfortunately for the Fathers, their works are bruised rather badly against Calvin's stone.

Let us examine the five ways in which Calvin uses and bruises the Fathers, and then briefly compare him to other scholars of his time.

First, Calvin sometimes flatly insults the Fathers, particularly when they disagree with him. Jerome is one of Calvin's favourite targets, as the Reformer claims that there was 'no religion in the man', or 'what he says [here] is frivolous', or one of his allegories is 'puerile'.¹⁸ Similarly, at various points Calvin attacks Theodoret for being 'ridiculous and puerile', and Hilary for being 'frivolous'.¹⁹ Origen is treated even worse: Calvin suggests that the great Alexandrian was an instrument used by Satan to introduce allegorical exegesis.²⁰ Although such name calling was common during Calvin's time, it generally suggested disrespect and disagreement: not the admiration and cooperation that Calvin professed elsewhere for the *sainctz docteurs*.

Second, Calvin quotes patristic texts very selectively, often just enough to support his argument without revealing the underlying disagreement. Like a shrewd lawyer at the stand, he calls only those witnesses who will support his case, then permits them to speak only those words that strengthen his case, and tears them down if they begin to weaken his case. Most of Calvin's patristic citations come from a fraction of available patristic writings – namely, the writings of the Western Fathers at the time of Nicaea and shortly thereafter.²¹ In fact, nearly half of all his citations come from Augustine alone, mostly from

The Function of the Patristic Writings in the Thought of John Calvin, ThD Thesis (New York, 1964), 135-7, A. Lane, *Student* (1999), 36, W.I.P. Hazlett 'Calvin's Latin Preface' (1991), 134.

¹⁶ *Inst.* 1172 (4.9.8), 11 (*Prefatory Address*).

¹⁷ LCC 22:230. When discussing the ecumenical councils, Calvin says that 'Scripture would stand out in the higher place, with everything subject to its standard', *Inst.* 1171 (4.9.8). Of course, the modern scholar might reflect how Calvin's principle of Biblical primacy still begs the question of *whose* interpretation of the Bible was valid whenever opinions differ. Alister McGrath discusses that, in the aftermath of the Reformation (including the various offshoots of the Radical Reformers), most Reformers became reluctant to allow the masses to interpret the Scriptures on their own: 'To put it crudely, it became a question of whether you looked to the pope, to Luther or to Calvin as an interpreter of Scripture'. A. McGrath, *Reformation Thought* (1999), 164. To go one step further, one could almost say, in the aftermath of increased anarchy and fragmentation, that Calvin's *Institutes* – the handbook for an Antiochene, Augustinian interpretation of Scripture – became a Lydian stone of its own for his followers.

¹⁸ CO 40:128, CO 42:493, CO 44:195, in Jon Balsarak, *John Calvin as Sixteenth-Century Prophet* (Oxford, 2014), 41.

¹⁹ CO 44:388, CO 43:111, in J. Balsarak, *John Calvin* (2014), 41.

²⁰ CO 23:37, in J. Balsarak, *John Calvin* (2014), 45.

²¹ A. Lane, *Student* (1999), 42, 157 and I. Backus, *Historical Method* (2003), 112.

his later anti-Pelagian writings.²² Not surprisingly, these writings are almost the only texts that Calvin can find that approximate his concept of predestination.²³ In his *Institutes*, Calvin begins to admit this inconvenient truth, but he immediately discards his patristic witnesses as self-contradictory: 'Further, even though the Greeks above the rest – and Chrysostom especially among them – extol the ability of the human will, yet all the ancients, save Augustine, so differ, waver, or speak confusedly on this subject, that almost nothing certain can be derived from their writings'.²⁴ Unfortunately, the short list of examples that Calvin subsequently gives to support his claim of patristic support – a quote from Augustine, a quote from Cyprian given by Augustine, and a quote from a spurious work – is remarkably unimpressive.²⁵ Calvin the polemicist quickly brushes aside patristic evidence against his doctrines, focusing instead on those parts of the Patristic corpus that support him.

Elsewhere in his *Institutes*, Calvin uses similar rhetorical acrobatics to avoid published patristic evidence against his doctrines. He quickly leaps over early evidence for Roman primacy: 'There is nothing pertaining to its establishment earlier than the decree of the Council of Nicaea',²⁶ effectively ignoring the published witnesses of Irenaeus, Justin, Clement, or Ignatius ('whoever he was').²⁷ We have seen how Calvin suggested that the 'primitive and purer Church' became corrupt only by 'certain degrees';²⁸ therefore, we might expect that Calvin would find the earliest patristic writings to be the most helpful to his re-formation of a pure Church. In actuality, Calvin quotes very infrequently from available writings of the Apostolic Fathers or Apologists, and he seems

²² In the 1559 *Institutes* there are approximately 400 citations to Augustine; in a very far second place is Gregory the Great at about 70, Johannes van Oort, 'John Calvin and the Church Fathers', in Irena Backus (ed.), *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West 2* (Leiden, 1997), 661-700, 683-4. See A. Lane, *Student* (1999), 55-6. Lane points out quite rightly that Van Oort has borrowed more from previous authors than he has acknowledged; for example, phrases like 'Calvin's use of the Fathers is primarily, but not exclusively, polemical' (671) seem to be lifted exactly from Lane's earlier essay, A. Lane, *Student* (1999), 28.

²³ I. Backus, *Historical Method* (2003), 114. Hazlett points out that the semi-Pelagian position Calvin ascribes singularly to Chrysostom in fact 'represents the entire Greek patristic tradition'. W.I.P. Hazlett 'Calvin's Latin Preface' (1991), 147.

²⁴ *Inst.* 259 (2.2.4).

²⁵ *Inst.* 267 (2.2.9), I. Backus, *Historical Method* (2003), 116.

²⁶ *Inst.* 1118 (4.7.1).

²⁷ These four authors are precisely the 'four witnesses' used by Catholic apologist Rod Bennett against the Protestant position, Rod Bennett, *Four Witnesses: The Early Church Fathers in Their Own Words* (San Francisco, 2002). Notably, the works of both Justin and Ignatius had been published by Calvin's time, I. Backus, *Historical Method* (2003), 102, 258, and the Genevan himself cited both of them, A. Lane, *Student* (1999), 41. Furthermore, Calvin likely would have read the respectful accounts of 1 Clement given by Irenaeus and Soter in Eusebius-Rufinus, Eusebius, *History of the Church*, trans. G.A. Williamson, ed. Andrew Louth (New York, 1989), 4.23, 5.6.

²⁸ *Inst.* 1049 (4.2.8), LCC 22:215.

to wish to discount the epistles of Ignatius and Clement with any evidence available.²⁹ Calvin the professed Church re-builder acts less interested in the early Church than we might expect. Even with later writers, we see that Calvin reads the Greek writers only in Latin translation, and he completely ignores figures like Gregory of Nyssa.³⁰ Similarly, he largely passes over the Greek Fathers' focus on asceticism and monasticism, likely because these realities could undermine his own doctrines.³¹ Calvin focuses on the parts of the Patristic writings that best support him. In particular, he employs the polemicist's ploy of quoting texts only when useful, while simultaneously denying that he is using such a strategy. For example, when trying to deal with the dearth of patristic evidence for his views of predestination, Calvin claims that he could quote more patristic texts, but then adds: 'Lest, however, anyone should charge that I am choosing only what serves my purpose while I craftily suppress what disagrees with it, I shall refrain from such testimony [of giving additional patristic references]'.³² Only a rhetorical or patristic expert could see the irony behind this masterful sleight-of-hand. The astute Backus calls it 'bad faith'.³³

Third, Calvin often claims broad support from all the Fathers, without supporting his claims. In his preface to King Francis, he asserts: 'All the Fathers with one heart have abhorred and with one voice have detested the fact that God's holy Word has been contaminated by the subtleties of sophists and involved in the squabbles of dialecticians'.³⁴ After making this bold claim (which many Fathers might have found issue with), Calvin defers on providing the evidence to prove it, saying his 'discourse would overflow its proper limit' if he did so.³⁵ Several times, Calvin repeats this rhetorical tactic – namely, to assert universal patristic support but defer on a full set of references – using

²⁹ Backus shows that Calvin cited as evidence for his opinion both the fact that Clement's *Letter to the Corinthians* was denounced in the *Pseudo-Gelasian Decree*, and the fact that Servetus' *Epistles of Ignatius* actually included some spurious works, I. Backus, *Historical Method* (2003), 107. However, an interested patrologist would not have stopped there, and Calvin's followers, including Abraham Scultetus, were significantly more sophisticated in their evaluation of Ignatius' authenticity, using Eusebius and Jerome as helpful guides, *Historical Method* (2003), 224-5.

³⁰ A. Lane, *Student* (1999), 48, W.I.P. Hazlett 'Calvin's Latin Preface' (1991), 144. As Lane points out, there were Greek texts available, but Calvin chose to read the Fathers in Latin. Calvin's single Greek citation of Gregory Nazianzus is clearly an anomaly (*Inst.* 141 [1.13.17]), and Backus agrees with Lane that 'the one quotation seems to just about exhaust the extent of the Cappadocian's influence on him', I. Backus, *Historical Method* (2003), 109.

³¹ So that, in the end, Calvin's portrayal of the early Greek Church 'was thus a very partial Church, strangely reminiscent of his own conception of theology and Church organisation'. I. Backus, *Historical Method* (2003), 103 and Esther Chung-Kim, *Inventing Authority: The Use of the Church Fathers in the Reformation Debates over the Eucharist* (Waco, TX, 2011), 48.

³² *Inst.* 267 (2.2.9).

³³ I. Backus, 'Calvin and the Greek Fathers' (2000), 273.

³⁴ *Inst.* 22 (Prefatory Address).

³⁵ *Inst.* 22 (Prefatory Address).

his desire for brevity or propriety as an excuse: 'Indeed, months and even years would not suffice me'.³⁶ When discussing Holy Communion, Calvin states outright that 'we agree perfectly with the holy Fathers';³⁷ indeed, if the Fathers are properly understood, they 'all clearly and uniformly teach' doctrines similar to his.³⁸ On the other hand, the Catholics are 'against the consent of the ancient church',³⁹ and 'the ancient writers do not support such sacrilege [the Catholic idea of sacrifice] at all'.⁴⁰ Calvin creates a strangely monolithic early Church which appears remarkably like his own. At various points in his corpus, the Reformer tends to list Fathers as supporting him without giving a full explanation.⁴¹ He employs the rhetorical tactic of claiming broad support from a group of expert witnesses without allowing these experts to divulge their full opinions.

Fourth, Calvin makes misleading or unjustified claims for a particular Father's support. When a Father is quoted against him, he performs rhetorical acrobatics to dodge the bullet, and then reuse it to fire against his opponents. I will provide three examples.

First, in his debates with Westphal, Calvin quotes Ambrose's words: 'How will you stretch out your hands from which innocent blood is still dropping? How with such hands will you receive the holy body of the Lord, and drink with your mouth the cup of precious blood?' Calvin, trying to scrub these blood-tinged words clean of their corporeal significance, argues that Ambrose was simply being hyperbolic: 'Is it strange if the holy man, to make his rebuke more stinging, spoke in the highest and most splendid terms he could use of that sacred ordinance?' Unwilling to lose Ambrose to his opponent, he presumptively asserts: 'But had any one asked Ambrose whether the body of Christ was actually handled in the Supper, he undoubtedly would have abominated the gross delirium. Therefore, when he says that it is handled by the hands, every sober and sensible man sees the metonymy'.⁴² In posing a loaded question to a witness who now cannot answer, Calvin effectively puts words in his mouth. Calvin thus imposes his own Eucharistic views on Ambrose to make the Catholic bishop fall into his camp.

³⁶ LCC 22:38, 45; *Inst.* 22 (*Prefatory Address*). For similar claims, see LCC 22:6, 215, 238; *Inst.* 1174 (4.9.11), 1166 (4.9.2).

³⁷ John Calvin, *Ultima admonitio*, in Henry Beveridge (trans.), *Calvin's Tracts Relating to the Reformation* (Eugene, OR, 2002) 2:366-7 (henceforth CT), CR 37:157.

³⁸ *Inst.* 4.17.14.

³⁹ *Inst.* 4.17.14, see E. Chung-Kim, *Inventing Authority* (2011), 97.

⁴⁰ *Inst.* 4.19.10, in E. Chung-Kim, *Inventing Authority* (2011), 38.

⁴¹ Calvin, *Secunda defensio*, CR 37:89, in E. Chung-Kim, *Inventing Authority* (2011), 69; LCC 22:231.

⁴² Calvin, *Ultima admonitio*, CR 37:209 (CT 2:437), in E. Chung-Kim, *Inventing Authority* (2011), 85.

Second, Calvin also uses Augustine to support his Eucharistic doctrines. In *Institutes*, he paraphrases Augustine's words: 'Those three thousand men who were converted by Peter's preaching by believing drank Christ's blood', but he must qualify this apparently corporeal statement (about drinking blood) with the quick follow-up: 'But in a great many other passages [Augustine] highly commends that benefit of faith, for through it our souls are as much refreshed by partaking of Christ's flesh as bodies are by the bread they eat'.⁴³ This blanket statement about 'a great many other passages' helps discard the prior pro-corporeal quote, to make Augustine sound more Calvinist. Elsewhere, Calvin repeats twice this trope of pulling the 'correct' Eucharistic doctrines out of Augustine's mouth.⁴⁴

Third, when arguing against the Lutheran-minded Hesshusen, Calvin also twists Justin Martyr to make him agree with his own Eucharistic doctrines. Calvin states: '[Hesshusen] next comes down to Justin Martyr, whose authority I willingly allow to be great. ... [Justin] says, that the bread of the Supper is not common ... He afterwards goes farther, As Christ was made flesh, so we are taught that the food which was blessed by him by the word of prayer, and by which our flesh and blood are nourished through transmutation, is the flesh and blood of Christ himself'. Calvin then continues: 'While all he meant was, that the flesh which Christ once assumed from us is daily given us for food'.⁴⁵ Let us look at Justin's *Apology* itself:

For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made *flesh* by the Word of God, had both *flesh and blood* for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our *blood and flesh* by transmutation are nourished, is the *flesh and blood* of that Jesus *who was made flesh*.⁴⁶

Looking closely, we find Calvin guilty on two accounts: first, his paraphrase leaves out key words, weakening the full force of Justin's triple parallel of bread and drink with the thrice repeated 'flesh and blood'. In so doing, and in omitting the final mention of Jesus 'who was made flesh', the sarcophobic Calvin downplays the flesh and blood of Justin's Eucharist. Secondly, Calvin's

⁴³ Inst. 4.17.6 (see also the 1543 *Institutes* here), Augustine, *Tractate John* 40.2, in E. Chung-Kim, *Inventing Authority* (2011), 38. In the same passage, Calvin seems to put more words in Augustine's mouth, as saying that the reception of Holy Communion meant that 'this eating is of faith, not of the mouth'.

⁴⁴ Calvin, *Comm in Ioann.*, 6:54, CO 25:155, and above (Inst. 4.17.6). Indeed, in the first example, Calvin wrongly states that Augustine did not mention the Lord's Supper until the end of his discourse, and Calvin completely leaves out Augustine's strong phrase 'but in this food and drink, that is, in the body and blood of the Lord...' See Augustine, *Tractate on the Gospel of John*, 26.15, in Philip Schaff (ed.), *NPNF* 7 (New York, 2007), 173.

⁴⁵ Calvin, *Delucida explicatio*, CR 37:492 (LCC 22:294).

⁴⁶ Justin, *First Apology* 66, in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds), *ANF* 1 (New York, 1885). Emphasis added.

interpretation skips over Justin's obvious point about the Real Presence and instead focuses on an issue Justin did not mention: frequent ('daily') communion. Calvin misuses Justin here, as he does again in his disputations with Westphal.⁴⁷

In the interest of space, we note only in passing that Calvin does similar rhetorical gymnastics with Irenaeus,⁴⁸ Cyril,⁴⁹ and Chrysostom in Eucharistic arguments,⁵⁰ with Basil and pseudo-Macarius in free will arguments,⁵¹ and with Irenaeus in a Trinitarian argument: in the last of these, Backus calls Calvin 'heavy handed' and 'by no means innocent'.⁵² Thus, in several examples, we have seen how Calvin forcibly pushes the Fathers to agree with him, rather than re-examine whether his preconceived views are correct.

In our fifth point, we discover that Calvin occasionally misquotes texts deceptively to prove his position. For brevity sake, we will mention only in passing Backus' article on Calvin's misuse of Eusebius Rufinus: there, Backus shows how Calvin will 'simply ... misquote the text, so as to serve his own ends', such as refuting Communion under one species and establishing the authorship of the *Letter to the Hebrews*.⁵³ Similarly, James Payton

⁴⁷ Calvin, *Ultima admonitio*, CR 37:208 (CT 2:435-6), in E. Chung-Kim, *Inventing Authority* (2011), 85.

⁴⁸ Compare Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 5.2.2-3 to Calvin, *Delucida*, CR 37:493, in which Calvin entirely leaves out Irenaeus' strong words in 5.2.3 and attempts to sweep Irenaeus away by discussing the spiritual context.

⁴⁹ See Calvin *Ultima admonitio*, CR 37:208 (CT 2:435-6), apparently paraphrasing the 1528 Latin edition from *In Evangelium Ioannis commentarii* 11:20 (on *Jn.* 17:11), 1:202D: in modern editions this would be 11:9 (PG 74, 517-8, ET 2:515). To deal with Cyril's statement that we 'eat the flesh of Christ', Calvin states: 'We must inform the reader, that, as Cyril was contending against the Arians, he is led into hyperbole, and teaches that believers become substantially one with Christ, just as he is one with the Father'. Although the Latin edition does differ from the Greek (which was likely not available at this time), it still appears that Calvin is twisting the very pro-Eucharistic Cyril to support his own views. See Cyril's *Cat. 22, Mystagogica* 4, 1. 3-6: PG 33, 1098-106, and *In Evangelium Ioannis commentarii* 4.2.

⁵⁰ Calvin interprets Chrysostom's words to mean that faith itself is real, not that Christ's body was real in the Eucharist: see *1543 Inst.*, CO 1:1000, in E. Chung-Kim, *Inventing Authority* (2011), 39. Compare to Chrysostom's strong Eucharistic words in 'Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew' [82,4], *Opera* IV 581, and *Homily IX on Penance*. See also Calvin's blanket statement suggesting that Chrysostom saw the Eucharist as nothing more than a sacrifice of praise: Calvin, *Ultima admonitio*, CR 37:157 (CT 2:366-7).

⁵¹ John Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will: A Defense of Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice against Pighius*, ed. Anthony Lane, trans. G.I. Davies (Grand Rapids, MI, 1996), 75, CO 9:284-6. Compare Basil, *Homily* 9.7, PG 31, 345-6. Pseudo-Macarius, *Spiritual Homilies* 25.1, n. 217 of Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 76; CR 37:208 (CT 2:435-6). Backus puts it bluntly: 'Basil ... was magically made to conform to Calvin's own position', I. Backus, 'Calvin and the Greek Fathers' (2000), 271.

⁵² I. Backus, 'Calvin and the Greek Fathers' (2000), 269 referring to Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 3.19.2 vs. Calvin, *Inst.* 1.13.27 (CO 2:114).

⁵³ Irena Backus, 'Calvin's Judgment of Eusebius of Caesarea: An Analysis', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 22 (1991), 419-37, 425.

has penned two conclusive articles that demonstrate that Calvin's dismissal of the Second Council of Nicaea is based on a 'misrepresentation of the facts'.⁵⁴ Even though Calvin claimed familiarity with the conciliar acts themselves, and even though these acts were available in a new Latin translation, Calvin based his refutation of 'Nicaea II' entirely on error-ridden citations given in the title headings from the very anti-Nicene *Libri Carolini*, which at times had the opposite meaning as the original acts. Thus, Payton charges that '[Calvin] willingly allowed his presentation to be skewed'.⁵⁵ Considering that Calvin's dismissal of Nicaea II was used again and again as a crucial piece of evidence to refute infallible conciliar authority and the use of images,⁵⁶ the point is not insignificant.

Here I will discuss a third example. Calvin's paraphrase of Jerome against Westphal is so loose that he outright puts words in the Father's mouth. Calvin begins: 'Irenaeus says, that whatever is given in the Supper besides bread and wine is spiritual'.⁵⁷ As we have mentioned before, this too is a mistreatment of Irenaeus. But let us continue:

In the same way I interpret the expression of Jerome (Cap 1 ad Ephes): 'The flesh of Christ is understood in a twofold sense, the one spiritual and divine, of which he says, my flesh is meat indeed, and that which is crucified; not that he makes it twofold in reality, but because the mode of participation raises us above heaven'.⁵⁸

But let us examine Jerome's text:

But the *blood and flesh of Christ* are understood in a twofold manner. They are understood either as spiritual and divine, of which he himself said, 'my flesh is truly food, and my blood is truly drink' (*John* 6:56) and, 'unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you will not have eternal life' (*John* 6:54), or as the *flesh and blood* which was crucified and which was poured out by the spear of the soldier (*John* 19:33-4) with this division a distinction of *blood and flesh* is understood also among his saints, so that there is one *flesh* which is to see the salvation of God (*Luke* 3:6) and another *flesh and blood* which cannot inherit the kingdom of God (*1Cor.* 15:50).⁵⁹

We see that Calvin has severely curtailed the quotation to leave out references to *John* 6 and to Christ's blood and flesh. The latter part of Jerome's

⁵⁴ James R. Payton, Jr., 'Calvin and the Legitimation of Icons: His Treatment of the Seventh Ecumenical Council', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 84 (1993), 222-41, 236, and James R. Payton, Jr., 'Calvin and the *Libri Carolini*', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 28 (1997), 467-80.

⁵⁵ J.R. Payton, 'Legitimation of Icons' (1993), 240.

⁵⁶ J.R. Payton, '*Libri Carolini*' (1997), 474, Calvin, CO 7:416-8, *Inst.* 1.11.14, 4.9.8.

⁵⁷ Calvin, *Ultima admonitio*, CR 37 (CT 2:410), in E. Chung-Kim, *Inventing Authority* (2011), 84.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Jerome, *Commentary on Ephesians*, 1, in Ronald E. Heine, *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (Oxford, 2002), 89.

quote is talking about Paul's different sense of 'the flesh' in man, but this fact does not weaken Jerome's apparently pro-Eucharistic words. More importantly, we see that Calvin has put his own words in Jerome's mouth, namely: the 'mode of participation raises us above heaven'. In Calvin's view, in receiving Holy Communion, the believer is raised to Heaven. But Calvin seems guilty of foul play, in simply injecting his own doctrines within his already misleading paraphrase of Jerome.

In our final point, we should compare Calvin's patristic scholarship (or lack thereof) to other leading Catholic and Reformer scholars of his day. Notably, Calvin never produced a florilegium or collection of Patristic quotations, nor did he author a single study, translation, or edition of a particular Father. He apparently hoped to translate Chrysostom's homilies into French, but he never mounted the time and energy to complete this project – never making it further than an unpublished Latin preface.⁶⁰ Thus, he pales in comparison to his more prolific scholars like Erasmus or Rhenanus, who published editions of the Fathers, or even other Reformers like Westphal, who wrote tracts focused on individual Fathers.⁶¹ Compared to his contemporaries, Calvin shows himself more interested in polemical ploys than patristic publications.

To recapitulate: some scholars have claimed that Calvin was a dutiful scholar of the Fathers, but in fact he appears to use them primarily as a polemicist. He occasionally insults them, and selectively or deceptively quotes from them as his argument demands. Of course, we must be cautious of judging Calvin by today's scholarly standards. But even in the sixteenth century, outright misquotation was unacceptable. Indeed, we note that Calvin himself blasted his opponents when he found them mis-quoting texts. Rather than read the original Greek, double check his sources, read more deeply, or publish his own editions, Calvin chose to focus on his polemics, have a family, and dedicate himself to ecclesiastical leadership and pastoral work (whereas, for example, Erasmus avoided marriage and position in order to publish). He could have acquired and used many more of the patristic texts that he generally ignored or dismissed – the acts of Nicaea II, the earlier writings of Augustine, the apologetic and apostolic writings, the works of Gregory of Nyssa, and indeed any of the original Greek texts – but he had other priorities. Rather than finish his work on Chrysostom, or simply give the Fathers a fuller, fairer treatment in successive editions of the *Institutes*, he focused his time and ink on preaching to and defending his church. It seems surprising that the man who wished to re-form a 'primitive and purer Church' actually did not spend more time studying that early Church. Hillaire Belloc's words are harsh, but ring true: 'He evidently first had his system produced in his mind, and then compelled [patristic] evidence

⁶⁰ W.I.P. Hazlett, 'Calvin's Latin Preface' (1991), 129.

⁶¹ E. Chung-Kim, *Inventing Authority* (2011), 90.

to fit in'.⁶² Certainly, his contemporaries, and indeed all scholars since, came to the Fathers with their own personal views. But we should all be loath to claim that the Fathers are 'defenders of our opinion' without investigating such claims dutifully.⁶³ If we scholars cannot see the Fathers as teachers, at least we should not treat them as ammunition for our personal cannons.⁶⁴

⁶² Hillaire Belloc, *How the Reformation Happened* (Magnolia, MA, 1992), 80.

⁶³ LCC 22:38-40.

⁶⁴ I would like to thank Roy Heyne, Michael West, Diarmaid MacCulloch, and especially Tony Lane for helpful suggestions used in researching for and writing this article.

