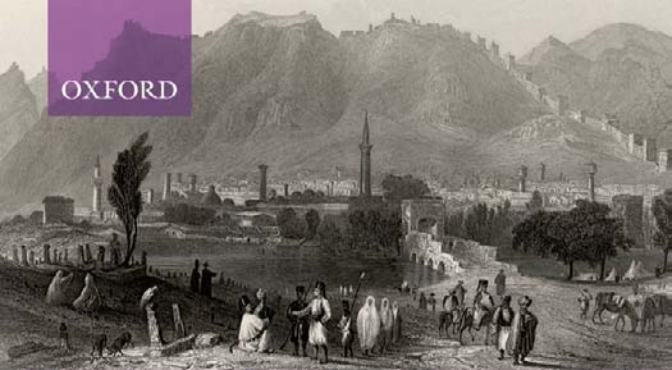




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Ambrose & John Chrysostom

Clerics between Desert and Empire

J. H. W. G. LIEBESCHUETZ



AMBROSE AND JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

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Abbreviations

ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers of the Church</i>
<i>Annales ESC</i>	<i>Annales économies, sociétés, civilisations</i>
BMGS	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
CAH	<i>Cambridge Ancient History</i>
CCSL	<i>Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i>
CT	<i>Theodosian Code</i>
GCS	<i>Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte</i>
FC	<i>Fathers of the Church</i>
HE	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
JAC	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies.</i>
JRA Suppl.	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplement</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
NPNF	<i>Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Church</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
Offic.	<i>Ambrose, De officiis</i>
Pat. Syr.	<i>Patrologia Syriaca</i>
PG	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i>
PL	<i>Patrologia Latina</i>
PLRE	<i>Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i>
PW	<i>Paulys Realencyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft</i>
PW Suppl.	<i>Realencyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft Supplement</i>
RAC	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i>

<i>REG</i>	<i>Revue des études grecques</i>
<i>REL</i>	<i>Revue des études latines</i>
<i>S. Chr.</i>	<i>Sources chrétiennes</i>
<i>Sem. Clas.</i>	<i>Semitica et Classica</i>
<i>TU</i>	<i>Texte und Untersuchungen</i>
<i>Vig. Christ.</i>	<i>Vigiliae christianae</i>

Introduction

This book is about the writings and actions of two famous clerics of the late fourth century AD, John Chrysostom of Antioch and Ambrose, bishop of Milan 374–97. The slightly younger¹ John Chrysostom—he was known as Chrysostom, ‘Golden Mouth’, only from the sixth century—was ordained into the priesthood at Antioch in 386, and was bishop of Constantinople 398–404. Each was bishop of a city where the emperor and his court resided, at the time when court society was for the first time overwhelmingly Christian.²

The idea to write on this topic first came to me when I was translating the political letters of Ambrose,³ and was struck by the similarities and parallels in the writings and actions of these two perhaps equally great, but certainly in many ways very different ecclesiastics. One important experience shared by Ambrose and Chrysostom was an encounter with the ascetic ideal, which greatly influenced the thought and teaching of both men. Both careers provide an illustration of the power and influence of the ascetic movement, which was shaping the culture of the Roman world through the fourth, fifth, and subsequent centuries to an ever increasing extent. The ascetic ideal continued to have enormous influence for long after, in both East and West. Until very recently, separation of the sexes, and a certain distrust of the world and its values, was given much greater emphasis in the education of the

¹ See below, 124.

² John Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and the Imperial Court* (Oxford, 1975), 101–45 (Constantinople), 183–222 (Milan).

³ W. Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches* (Liverpool, 2005).

young than social adjustment and material advancement. Modern scholars, and contemporary men and women generally, find it difficult to understand the enormous and lasting allure of the ascetic ideal, and not least the belief in the amazing powers—amounting to spiritual transformation—that could be achieved through sexual abstinence. It therefore seemed worthwhile to examine not only how the ascetic ideal guided the thoughts and actions of the two Fathers of the Church, but also to examine the earlier history of asceticism, and the commendation of abstinence from sex first in Greek religion, and then under the early Empire in the writings of philosophers, doctors, Gnostics, and Christians, and to discuss how these ideas came to exercise so powerful an influence.

A feature which Ambrose and Chrysostom have in common is outspokenness (*παρρησία*).⁴ Both careers have become famous for episodes of astonishing courage which the two men displayed in the course of their ministries. Their outspokenness was a matter of principle. Both wrote substantial treatises on the duties of the priesthood, and both expressed strong views on the right and duty of a priest to censure wrongdoing by no matter who, even by the emperor. Both men practised what they preached. Each clashed with ‘the powers that be’ when he was ordered to allow a church to be made available for worship by congregations of the Arian sect. Both refused, and both carried their point. Pagan priests had not considered it their duty to exercise such critical outspokenness towards the Roman authorities. The priestly outspokenness of Ambrose and Chrysostom could only happen under a Christian emperor, and was therefore made possible by Constantine’s conversion to Christianity. Even so bishops could only afford to take such risks when the political configuration was exceptionally favourable. Even then, episcopal *parrhesia* was not safe. Ambrose did indeed skilfully avoid serious conflict, but Chrysostom ended his life in exile. The episodes of confrontation provoked by Ambrose and Chrysostom were to remain unparalleled for centuries to come. It is nevertheless clear that the incorporation of the Church into the Roman state involved a fundamental transformation of Roman institutions, because it

⁴ Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity* (Madison, 1992), 61–70: traditional *parrhesia* of philosopher; 116–17, 57–8: *parrhesia* of bishops and holy-men.

created for the first time the dualism of Church and state, and thus made possible a serious clash between the two organizations, something that could not happen, and could perhaps not even be conceived, in the classical Graeco-Roman city state. In itself, the idea that rulers should tolerate and listen to criticism was not new. A history of freedom of speech and its suppression, like that of asceticism, can be traced through much of the history of classical civilization. So it seemed worthwhile to show how the *parrhesia* of bishops was related to earlier classical traditions of outspokenness, particularly the outspokenness of the so-called Stoic opposition to the Julio-Claudian and Flavian emperors.

A third principal theme of this book originated at the Patristic Conference at Oxford in August 2007, where Wendy Mayer talked to me about Martin Illert's revisionist views on the subject of Chrysostom's experience of monasticism,⁵ above all his thesis that Palladius' account of Chrysostom's experiences as monk and hermit is misleading, because Palladius has modelled his account on the lives of the celebrated holy men of the Egyptian desert, whereas the asceticism lived by Chrysostom was in fact of a quite different and characteristically Syrian and city-linked kind. This highly original and challenging view seemed worth investigation. So I set out to check Illert's theory against the evidence of the sources. And as a result I found Illert's arguments, stimulating as they undoubtedly are, not in the end convincing. I was given an opportunity to formulate a response to Illert's book by invitations to lecture at the universities of Bremen and Mainz. Preparation of these lectures required a reconstruction of the early life of Chrysostom and this in turn involved a closer examination of the sources for his early life, including the recently published *Funeral Oration* of Pseudo-Martyrius, as well as of the writings of Chrysostom himself, especially those produced before his ordination into the priesthood in 386. I concluded that Illert was almost certainly right to argue that Chrysostom's asceticism was strongly influenced by ascetic traditions of Syria and Mesopotamia, but that he was wrong to reject Palladius' account of Chrysostom's

⁵ Martin Illert, *Johannes Chrysostomus und das antiochenische Mönchtum*, Studien zur Rhetorik und Kirchenpolitik im antiochenischen Schrifttum des Johannes Chrysostomus (Zurich, 2000).

experiences as a monk and hermit 'on the mountain'. I remain convinced that Chrysostom did indeed spend six years living an ascetic life in the hills north-east of Antioch, as reported by Palladius, four years in a monastery, which seems to have been in effect a multiple hermitage, and two years in a cave as a solitary hermit. I also decided that Socrates' notice that Chrysostom was converted to the ascetic life by the example of Euagrius, the Nicene rival of Meletius, and that he was later for some time associated with Euagrius' group, though generally dismissed as mistaken, is more likely to be correct.

Study of the early writings together with that of sermons Chrysostom preached as a priest shows that his pastoral experience led him to modify some of his views. He never ceased to believe that a truly Christian life required a strictly disciplined ascetic lifestyle, and after his ordination he urged his congregations in sermon after sermon to adopt an ascetic and totally Christian way of life. At the same time he became more equivocal about the value of the complete separation from the community practised by hermits and monks. If there is one virtue that Chrysostom exalted above all others, even above asceticism, it is that of charitable giving, insisting that it is the first duty of every Christian to assist those worse off than him- or herself. It is also noticeable that while Chrysostom always retained an extremely high valuation of virginity, he also began to take a much more positive view of marriage and the family, especially of the role of the parents in giving their children a Christian upbringing. The ascetic teachings of Ambrose and Chrysostom were based on essentially the same theology, but while Ambrose seems to have been mainly concerned to convert his clergy, Chrysostom strove to change the life of his entire congregation. It must be admitted that my comparison of Ambrose and Chrysostom became somewhat unbalanced. Readers can justly complain that Chrysostom has been given favourable treatment.

The fact that there are striking similarities in the lives and writings of Ambrose and Chrysostom raises the question of reciprocal influence, and especially the possibility that Chrysostom, as the younger of the two men, did to some extent make Ambrose his model. If it could be proved, influence by Ambrose on Chrysostom would also be interesting, because it would represent an unusual phenomenon.

Christianity originated in the East, and in ancient Christianity intellectual influence tended to travel from East to West, and not the other way round. In the event, I found no significant evidence in the writings of Chrysostom that they were influenced by writings of Ambrose. On the other hand, Chrysostom surely did know about Ambrose's more provocative interventions, and it is therefore reasonable to conjecture that when he found himself in a comparable situation, as when Gainas and the Arians were to be assigned a church in Constantinople, Chrysostom remembered the stand taken by Ambrose, and was influenced by it. What comparative study of Ambrose and Chrysostom does however show is that the Greek East and the Latin West still shared a single Christian culture, with the result that clerics in East and West still faced the same problems and responded in similar ways, precisely at the time when the political unity of the Empire was breaking down, and when fewer members of the Western elite were learning Greek.

The contrasting outcomes of the careers of the two men, the fact that Ambrose died a pillar of the imperial system in the West, while Chrysostom died in exile, can partly be explained as a consequence of their two very different clerical personalities: Ambrose was a man of many gifts, among them those of an extremely able politician. Chrysostom was above all an outstanding preacher and pastor. One much discussed factor in Chrysostom's downfall is his inability to establish a sound and stable working relationship with a powerful woman, the empress Eudoxia. Ambrose too confronted a powerful woman, the emperor's mother Justina. Their mutual hostility was much more straightforward, and after a year of conflict Ambrose emerged a clear winner. The fact is that Chrysostom operated in a much more difficult political context. The later fourth century saw not only the division of the Roman Empire, but in the West also the beginning of the disintegration of the imperial structure.⁶ The success of Ambrose and the failure, if that was what it was, of Chrysostom reflect the relative strength of the imperial government in West and East. Chrysostom faced a far stronger imperial system than Ambrose. The decline of the imperial administration in the West also resulted eventually in the end of the cultural unity that the Empire had

⁶ S. Mazzarino, *Aspetti sociali del iv secolo* (Rome, 1951).

brought about. The fading of that cultural unity was, however, a much slower process than the disintegration of the imperial structure. It is perhaps paradoxical that many of the ideas of Ambrose and Chrysostom were more relevant in the post-Roman West and in the Byzantine world of the Middle Ages than they had seemed to the contemporaries of the two men.

This then is the background to my writing the present book. The book does not therefore aim at anything like the completeness of comparative biography. It is principally concerned with only two aspects of these men's lives: their response to the ascetic movement, and their attitude to secular powers, particularly to the Roman Empire. There is an enormous literature on many aspects of Chrysostom and Ambrose. In the footnotes I have only cited works which I have found particularly helpful, or from which the reader can gain more information on a particular topic than is to be found in the book.

Part I

Background and Forerunners

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The Classical Roots of Christian Asceticism

(I) SEXUAL PURITY IN THE GRAECO-ROMAN WORLD

Monasticism developed in the fourth century, but the history of the ascetic movement goes much further back in time: the origins of Christian asceticism can be traced in the cultural development of the pre-Christian classical world. As has been noted by Robert Markus, ‘the Christian ascetic movement sought to impose severe standards on all aspects of life and action, endeavouring to subordinate them directly to the sacred,’¹ but one of its most conspicuous features was its stress on the importance of sexual control and the very high value it assigned to celibacy. This aspect of Christianity had no close precedent in classical civilization, but it too has a prehistory. It may well be the case that the idea that sex is somehow impure is deeply rooted in human psychology. One can see that the location of the sexual organs in the human body would tend to associate sex and excretion. Dogs and cats and many other animals seem to know instinctively that excreta should be kept apart from living quarters. It also seems likely that all human societies have feared the disruption and conflicts that would be caused if the sexual urges of their members were allowed unlimited scope. The sense that sex needs to be controlled in some way or other is probably a basic human instinct, with evolutionary advantage. The practical application of this

¹ Robert Markus, ‘Between Marrou and Brown: Transformation of Late Antique Christianity’, in P. Rousseau and M. Papoutsakis (eds.), *Transformation of Late Antiquity: Essays for Peter Brown* (Farnham, 2009), 10.

instinctual sense has, however, varied enormously from society to society.

That gods should be approached with a pure body was required by both Greek and Roman pagan cults.² Purity in this context did not necessarily require moral conduct. In Greek religion, purity is a quality which is lost by pollution (*miasma*), which in turn is incurred by a polluting act. The act of killing produces pollution, as does contact with a killer, for pollution, like a disease, is infectious. From our point of view, deliberate, unprovoked killing, i.e. murder, is an immoral act, but for the Greeks pollution was incurred irrespective of the motive and mitigating circumstances of the killing. Pollution can even be brought upon oneself by natural activities which in themselves have nothing to do with morality, such as contact with a corpse, sexual intercourse, or the act of giving birth. All these actions were thought to require ritual purification before those concerned could safely undertake an act of worship. Acts of natural pollution such as these were thought to render any approach of the individual concerned distasteful to the gods. This was not because the Greek gods were opposed to sex and reproduction as such; natural pollution could be easily washed away, and did not impose any restraint on sexual activity in everyday life. The laws of ritual purity suggest—as Parker concluded—that an aura of shame surrounded sexuality, but that its source was embarrassment about bodily functions rather than a sense of guilt.³ Ritual treatment gave rise to no positive rule of chastity. Abstinence equipped a worshipper to approach temples and sacred objects, it did not render him godlike.⁴ The motive behind Greek sacred laws of ritual purity was not to atone for sin before approaching a god, but to show respect by removing as far as possible all trace of these embarrassing and all too human activities. Ritual purity after sex or giving birth is therefore comparable to putting on Sunday best before going to church.⁵

Parker has shown that one could be stained with *miasma*, as with our ‘dirt’, in a great variety of situations. The pollution which

² Greece: R. C. T. Parker, *Miasma* (Oxford, 1983). Rome: Cicero, *De legibus* 2.19, *ad divos adeunto caste*. Even Ambrose explains the requirement that his clergy must be celibate on the ground that they perform the communion service, which is a sacrifice (*Off.* 1.258).

³ Parker, *Miasma*, 76.

⁴ *Ibid.* 91.

⁵ *Ibid.* 9.

Oedipus brought upon himself by unwittingly marrying his mother, and Orestes by killing his, was something quite different from the pollution of the sacred laws. Its consequences were much more far-reaching, and purification much more difficult. However, it would appear that inhabitants of classical Athens had little fear of divine retribution for incurring pollution of this kind. Murder, incest, sacrilege, and the like were punished by the courts. The ideas about pollution dramatized in tragedy belong to mythology rather than everyday life. They accurately express the abhorrence that Athenians felt for certain actions, but do not describe what the average Athenian thought that the consequences of such actions would be.

But if ideas about pollution have a basis in human psychology, their development is closely linked to social organization. Different societies have different views about the nature of pollution, about its consequences, and about the required techniques of purification; and within the same social group the importance and significance of ideas about pollution evolve in parallel with changes in the organization of the group.⁶ In Old Testament Judaism strict rules of purity (of food, but also sexual) were drawn up for priests sacrificing in the Temple. When the Temple was destroyed, and worship came to be centred on the synagogue, these rules were retained. They were now given a symbolic role as marking out the Jewish people as a nation with a special relationship to God, in a sense as a nation of priests.⁷ A code of purity covering diet, the menstrual cycle of women, and men's emission of seed, as well as disgust at promiscuity, public nudity, and homosexuality, became markers of Jewish identity.⁸

But there were Jewish groups which went much further than this. According to the Elder Pliny, the fellowship of Essenes, settled near the Dead Sea, is remarkable among the tribes of the whole world in that it has no women, and has renounced all sexual desire.⁹

⁶ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London, 1966).

⁷ H. Maccoby, *Ritual Morality: The Ritual Purity System and its Place in Judaism* (Cambridge, 1999), 58–64. J. Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (New York, 2006), also *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford, 2000).

⁸ So Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988), 40.

⁹ Pliny, *NH* 5.15 (73).

Descriptions of the Essenes which are fuller and more accurate are found in the writings of Philo and Josephus.¹⁰ The Dead Sea scrolls have provided first-hand evidence for Jewish ascetic groups which may or may not be identical with Essenes.¹¹ It is clear that both the communal lifestyle of the apostles, and also later Christian ascetic communities, shared important characteristics with the lifestyle of these Jewish sects.

The ecclesiastical historians Eusebius and Sozomen (whose account is based on Eusebius) thought that contemporary Christian ascetics had Jewish predecessors. For Eusebius, followed by Sozomen, paraphrases information from Philo's pamphlet *On the Contemplative Life*, which describes a Jewish ascetic group known as the *Therapeutai*, living in Egypt in the neighbourhood of Alexandria as early as the first century AD, whose practices do indeed strongly recall those of the later Christian ascetics.¹² Eusebius¹³ concluded that this group must have already embraced Christianity.¹⁴ This conclusion is surely mistaken.¹⁵ However, as the *Therapeutai* were contemporaries of Paul the apostle the resemblance is surely not a coincidence.

(II) 'THE CARE OF THE SELF' IN THE EARLY EMPIRE

Latin has no word that simply translates the Greek *miasma*. However, the Vestal Virgins, the priestesses responsible for maintaining the

¹⁰ Josephus, *BJ* 2.110–61; an account by Philo of Essenes is cited in Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 8.11.1–18; text also in Philo, ed. J. W. Colson (London, 1965), ix. 437–43. Cf. G. Vermes and M. Goodman, *The Essenes According to Classical Sources* (Sheffield, 1989).

¹¹ For a concise summary of a much discussed and disputed topic see M. Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations* (London, 2007), 239–42.

¹² Philo, *De vita contemplative*, ed. Colson, ix. 113–64. See also F. Daumas and P. Miguel (eds.), Philo, *De vita contemplative* (text with French translation, Paris, 1963), 11–69 for discussion of text.

¹³ Eusebius, *HE* 2.16–17. Eusebius Christianized the *Therapeutai* somewhat: see R. J. Goodrich, *Contextualising Cassian: Aristocrats, Asceticism and Reformation in Fifth Century Gaul* (Durham, NC, 2007), 132–3.

¹⁴ Sozomen, *HE* 1.12.

¹⁵ M. Delors, *Les Hymnes de Qumran* (Paris, 1962), 126–7; J. C. O'Neil, 'The Origins of Monasticism', in Rowan Williams (ed.), *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick* (Cambridge, 1989), 270–87.

sacred fire of Vesta, were bound to strict chastity. Any sexual activity on their part was thought to endanger not only themselves and anyone who had contact with an unchaste virgin, but also the security of the whole Roman state.¹⁶ Though the Romans did not have a vocabulary that mirrored the Greek discourse of pollution and purification, they had comparable views about situations and actions which made men unfit to approach the gods, or at least to approach them without danger to themselves and others.¹⁷

But ideas about pollution were not the only elements in Graeco-Roman culture which favoured the development of something like Christian asceticism. Classical writers, whether Greek or Roman, were very much concerned with the need for self-discipline and control of the emotions, or, to use Michel Foucault's phrase, 'the cultivation of the self'.¹⁸ Foucault has pointed out that this tendency too goes back to classical Greece, and Apollo's injunction 'Know thyself!' Xenophon has Cyrus, that model king, reflect on his victories. He comments that 'if great success has the consequence that a man is not able to have some leisure for himself, nor time to enjoy himself with his friends I have no time for that kind of happiness'. He insists that a man must continually exercise himself in self-control (ἐγκράτεια) and temperance (σωφροσύνη) otherwise he will lose these essential components of virtue (ἀρετή).¹⁹ Plato makes Socrates advise the young Alcibiades that it would be quite presumptuous for him to want to take charge of Athens if he has not learned that which it is necessary to know in order to be capable of governing. So, he must first attend to himself, and do so right away while he is young; at the age of 50 it will be too late.²⁰ Socrates claimed as his special wisdom that he was aware of his own ignorance, and much of his conversation with his disciples is designed to make them aware of their own lack of true knowledge. Wisdom and moral and spiritual

¹⁶ M. Beard, 'The Sexual Status of the Vestal Virgins', *JRS* 70 (1980), 12–27; Tertullian, *Exhort. cast.* 13 lists pagan priesthoods that require chastity.

¹⁷ e.g. Cicero, *De legibus* 2.8 (19), 10 (24), *Ad deos adeunto caste*. But Cicero stresses the importance of *castimonia*, mental purity, which however also includes purity of the body.

¹⁸ The following owes much to Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, iii: *The Care of the Self*, trans. Robert Hurley (Harmondsworth, 1986).

¹⁹ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.5.75–7.

²⁰ Plato, *Alcibiades* 127d–e.

growth are closely linked to self-awareness. In the early Empire insistence on the need for self-awareness, and cultivation of the self, became the central topic of moral discourse. Care of the self was recommended by nearly all the competing philosophical groups: Epicureans, Stoics, and Neoplatonists. The different groups used different arguments to justify their recommendations, but the lifestyles they recommended were very similar. Perhaps the most complete Stoic account of looking after the self is found in Seneca's letters to Lucilius, while the *Meditations* of the (Stoic) emperor Marcus Aurelius describe how he tried to put the Stoic recommendations into practice.

The care of the self involved a regular training in self-discipline. A time of the day is to be set aside for reflection and regular self-examination with a view to necessary self-improvement.²¹ Musonius advocated periods of retreat to contemplate one's life as a whole, and to read edifying books.²² The care of the self also involved taking care of the body, taking reasonable exercise, for example, and eating healthy food in moderation. For soul and body are interdependent.²³ Marcus Aurelius' self-examination included thinking about arguments to persuade himself not to become angry, either with other people or with Providence.²⁴ Many a leading Roman found it helpful to submit to the advice of a moral guide. For this role he would choose not a priest, but a man with a reputation for wisdom and philosophy, whom he would expect to give him the kind of advice that Seneca gave to Lucilius.

Many passages in the treatises concerned with 'the cultivation of self' advocate techniques for achieving mental and physical health, and the efficient working of body and soul. They are not on the face of it religious treatises. The focus is on man as a whole, not on the soul, or the gods or God. Nevertheless a religious spirit pervades many of these writings. This is particularly the case in those of the

²¹ Seneca, *De ira* (On Anger) 3.36; Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.20; 2.21.2; Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 4.3; 12.19.

²² Musonius Rufus, *Reliquiae* 60; the fragments are translated in C. E. Lutz, *Musonius Rufus the Roman Socrates*, Yale Classical Studies 10 (New Haven, 1947), 3–147.

²³ Seneca, *Ad Lucilium* 55, 57, 58.

²⁴ *Meditations* 4.3.

Stoics²⁵ and, somewhat later, the Neoplatonists. The self is worth caring for because it has a divine origin. So, according to an image used by Epictetus, man has his soul on loan from God. 'If God had committed some orphan to your care, would you have neglected him? Now it is yourself that he has committed to your care, saying; "I had no one fitter to trust than you. So look after this person for me, and preserve him as he is by nature: modest, faithful, sublime, fearless, calm and without passion". Will you then not preserve him?'²⁶ As the focus of religion turned away from sacrifice to moral behaviour, and to the individual worshipper's address to God, the purity required by religion also shifted from physical cleanliness to purity of thought and motive, and hence to the suppression of sinful thoughts through bodily austerities and discipline.

In order to prove that offerings to gods (or humans) are meaningful, it is helpful to show that the giving involves some personal renunciation by the giver. That is why the Latin *sacrificare*, to make something sacred by offering it to a god, has gained its modern meaning to give up something in return for something else, without God or gods being involved in any way. Offering a sheep to a god is a sacrifice in both the old and the modern meaning of the word, but so is renunciation of food, sex, etc.

Unlike Christian advocates of asceticism, the philosophers of the early Empire did not advocate celibacy as a way of life, much less as a way of life particularly favoured by the gods.²⁷ The Stoic taught that marriage was natural and a duty. But voices were raised warning that sex could endanger a rational lifestyle. Satirists pointed out numerous disadvantages and inconveniences of marriage, and unwittingly provided arguments for the Christian ascetic writers of the fourth century.²⁸ Rhetors and their students debated whether or not one

²⁵ Both Seneca and Marcus Aurelius derived emotional comfort from belief in a personal God, while at the same time accepting a view of the natural order in which every event on earth is predestined by a chain of cause and effect going back to the beginning of the universe. See e.g. W. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion* (Oxford, 1979), 114–16, 206–9.

²⁶ Epictetus, *Discourses* 2.8.3.

²⁷ See S. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage* (Oxford, 1991), 215–27.

²⁸ Juvenal, *Satire* 6; Martial 1.74; 6.22, 39; 8.12; 9.15; 10.69; On Christian use of this material see below 67–8.

should marry.²⁹ Doctors discussed the effect of respectively too much and too little sex.³⁰ To live a healthy life it was necessary to get the balance right. But as time went on the perceived damage caused by sexual activity loomed larger. The doctor Soranus (AD 98–138) wrote that men who remain chaste are stronger and better than others, and pass their lives in better health.³¹

The anxiety of philosophers echoes the recommendations of doctors. Stoic philosophy aimed at self-control, at mastery of the self in all conceivable circumstances. The life of a true Stoic will be governed by reason. He will not be swayed by emotions, whether of pain or pleasure, anger or fear. The attraction of women and the emotional turmoil so easily aroused by them was an obvious threat. So philosophers counselled restraint in sexual matters. This centred on a revised view of marriage, emphasizing the closeness and mutual obligations of the relationship. This implies—to quote Foucault—‘an intensification of the value and meaning of sexual relations within marriage’. For these writers advise that sex should be restricted to marriage and that husbands should be bound by the same standards of marital fidelity as wives.³² But at the same time they warn that even in marriage passion should be restrained, and the striving for pleasure should not be made the centre of the relationship.³³ In his *Meditations* the emperor Marcus Aurelius thanks the gods that he has been able to exercise sexual restraint in his youth,³⁴ and after insisting that fine food and drink and prestigious clothing ought rationally not to be valued any more highly than their basic raw materials, he defines sexual intercourse as nothing more than internal friction combined with a convulsive expulsion of mucus.³⁵ The passage is already very near to the message of Christian ascetic writing. But neither Marcus Aurelius, nor contemporary philosophers, asserted that sex was bad in itself. They did not teach that abstention from sex

²⁹ Libanius, *εἰ γαμήτέον*, ed. Foerster, viii. 550–66.

³⁰ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, iii. 104–23.

³¹ Soranus, *Gynaecia* 17.30.2, cited by Brown, *The Body and Society*, 19; see also Aline Rouselle, *Porneia* (Paris, 1983), 30–3. Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (Harmondsworth, 1986), 361.

³² Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, iii. 176–85 on especially Plutarch, Musonius Rufus, and Epictetus.

³³ *Ibid.* 206–13.

³⁴ *Meditations* 1.17.6.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 6.13.

by itself actually brings an individual nearer to the gods (or to God), and they give advice, not commands.

There was, however, another and more strictly religious development which increased the urgency of 'care of the self', and was more directly hostile to sexuality as such: this was a growing emphasis on the duality of mortal body and immortal soul. The idea that the material world and the body are inferior to the soul, and tend to degrade it, was nothing new,³⁶ but in the second and third centuries people began to turn the idea that the soul can be set free from the entanglements of the body by asceticism into practice, and to make the saving of the immortal soul the objective of an austere lifestyle.

Again philosophy had taken the lead.³⁷ Already in the writings of Plato purification did not simply mean ritual ablution in preparation for worship, but an entire disciplined life, striving for knowledge of the Good, however that was to be interpreted. Knowledge of the Good was (and is) extremely difficult, if not impossible, to achieve by mental effort alone. So the work of the intelligence had to be reinforced by strict disciplining of the body. Up to a point this is also the message of the protagonists of 'the care of the self'. But in Plato and his followers self-discipline has a wider function. A pure life becomes a preparation for a pure death.³⁸ We are much nearer to Christian asceticism.

Plato was of course extremely influential—as he has continued to be until quite recently. Plato's teachings were developed by Middle-platonist and Neoplatonist philosophers. So Porphyry (AD 234–c.304) argued, like the Christians, that the traditional bloody sacrifices were demanded by malevolent demons.³⁹ He was also of the opinion that the true philosopher lives in solitude and in abstinence,⁴⁰ and he claimed that all cultures have traditions of abstinence.⁴¹ Porphyry's

³⁶ e.g. *igneus est ollis vigor et caelestis origo seminibus, quantum non corpora noxia tardant* (Virgil, *Aen.* 6. 730–1).

³⁷ John Dillon, 'Rejecting the Body, Redefining the Body: Some Remarks on the Development of Platonist Asceticism', in V. L. Wimbush and R. Valentasis (eds.), *Asceticism* (New York, 1988), 80–8.

³⁸ Parker, *Miasma*, 281–2, with references above all to the *Phaedo*.

³⁹ Porphyry, *De abstinence* 2.42.3.

⁴⁰ *De abstinence* 2.49.1; 1.36.3–4.

⁴¹ Gillian Clark, 'Philosophic Lives and the Philosophic Life', in T. Hägg and P. Rousseau, *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 2000), 29–51.

ascetic views are summarized in a letter he wrote to his wife Marcella, when he was about to leave her on her own for an indefinite period:⁴² 'All passion is the worst enemy of the salvation of the soul. We must free ourselves from the passions, and of the failings resulting from passions.'⁴³ 'It is worse to be slave to passion than to tyrants.'⁴⁴ 'Whether you are a man or a woman do not occupy yourself with the body. Do not think of yourself as a woman, because I have not thought of you in that way either.'⁴⁵ 'Never use your limbs for mere pleasure.'⁴⁶ The message of the letter is that during the absence of her husband Marcella is to devote herself to philosophy and the elevation of her soul. The letter is therefore quite close in spirit to the advice Chrysostom and other Christian writers were to give to widows and virgins. But the philosophy, the underlying view of man's relation to the universe, is still fundamentally different. Marcella is not to abstain because abstention will make her more pleasing to God. She is to undergo a training, which will enable her to look into herself, and to gather the scattered notions of her soul to their original unity, to enable them to ascend from a vision of world of sense to one of the world of intelligibles (ibid. 10).

By no means all pagan philosophers, nor even all Neoplatonists, advocated total abstinence, or rejected marriage.⁴⁷ Iamblichus, perhaps the most influential of Neoplatonists, demanded that his followers live a strictly self-disciplined life, one not so very different from the Christian way of life,⁴⁸ but in his philosophy self-discipline and intellectual effort were ancillary to the rituals of theurgy, rituals which were closely related to the traditional cult of the gods, but gave them a new interpretation.⁴⁹ But many philosophers chose to remain

⁴² Porphyry, *Vie de Pythagore, Lettre à Marcella*, ed. É. des Places (Paris, 1982), 103–62.

⁴³ *Ad Marc.* 9.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 34.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 33.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 35.

⁴⁷ G. Clark, 'The Domestic Philosopher in Late Antiquity', in H. Amirav and B. ter Haar Romeny, *From Rome to Constantinople: Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron* (Leuven, 2007), 153–72.

⁴⁸ Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Life*, trans. with notes and introduction by Gillian Clark (Liverpool, 1989), c. 31 (187–211).

⁴⁹ Iamblichus, *Über die Geheimlehren*, trans. T. Hopfner (Leipzig, 1922; repr. 1987).

celibate, taking the view that marriage and philosophy were incompatible.⁵⁰ This was also the view the young Augustine was to take, and we know enough about his life to be able to watch how his ideal developed from that of individual philosophic *otium*, to that of the communal life of a small number of like-minded seekers after philosophic truth (including women, in this case Augustine's mother), whose lives involved strict abstinence from sex, and finally to something like the full monasticism which, after he had become bishop of Hippo, he organized for himself and his clergy.⁵¹

In the preceding paragraphs literary evidence, notably the evidence of philosophers, has been cited as evidence for the development of religion. However, this procedure is now somewhat problematical. On the whole recent writers on Roman religion have avoided it. So Nicole Belayche claims that 'intimate attitudes, existential questions or ethical preoccupations, like those of Cicero in his philosophical works, Seneca in his *Letters to Lucilius*, Marcus Aurelius' *Thought for Himself* [traditionally, and elsewhere in this book, *Meditations*] belong to intellectual and philosophical thinking not to religion'.⁵² But to draw so strict a division between the ritual and beliefs of religion and the intellectual writings of philosophers is unhelpful. The thoughts of intellectuals and what 'ordinary' people believe about the meaning of their religious practices interact. It can even be argued that the writings of philosophers and philosophical moralists often represent a systematic and logical arrangement of the thoughts and values that are current among some, or even most, of their unphilosophical contemporaries. Certainly, examination of the thought of men like Seneca, Epictetus, Plutarch, and Marcus Aurelius greatly helps us understand how it could come about that Christianity, which started very much as a religion of foreigners and outsiders, could become the accepted religion of the Empire and of most of its inhabitants.

It was after all not only philosophers who adopted austerity in order to free the soul from the dark encumbrance of the body. The

⁵⁰ Clark, 'The Domestic Philosopher in Late Antiquity', 63 n. 48.

⁵¹ Ibid. 153–63.

⁵² Nicole Belayche, 'Religious Actors in Daily Life: Practices and Related Beliefs', in J. Rüpke (ed.), *A Companion to Roman Religion* (Oxford, 2007), 270–91, on p. 291.

goddess Isis made similar demands on her initiates. Before the hero of Apuleius' *Golden Ass* could become an initiate of Isis he had to swear an oath of abstinence, which it seems would be lifelong.⁵³ We know of a whole series of theosophical groups, more or less contemporary with Apuleius, who pursued the aim of achieving salvation by offering esoteric knowledge which would enable the souls of their adherents to free themselves from imprisonment in matter, and to return to their celestial home. They are generally described collectively as the Gnostics.⁵⁴

At the centre of Gnostic belief was a distinction between a supreme divinity and an inferior god who had created the world, including the material bodies in which the human souls are imprisoned. The relationship between the supreme God and the creator of this world (the demiurge) and of mankind was explained in complicated myths. The myths of different groups differed considerably in detail, but they generally included a messenger, or at least a message, from the highest realm to mankind, sent to remind humans of the existence of a heavenly world more perfect than the earthly world in which they find themselves. Knowledge (*Γνωσις*) of the truth conveyed by the myth offered the believer a way to free his or her imprisoned soul from the bonds of the body, and make it ready to return to its original spiritual perfection. But in most of these groups knowledge was not enough unless it led to action, that is to persistent striving for moral perfection. As in contemporary philosophy and in Christianity, perfection required establishing control of the passions, and above all of sexuality.⁵⁵ Most, though not all, Gnostics depre-

⁵³ 11.6.1: *tenacibus castimoniis*; 11.30: *castimoniae abstinentiam satis arduam*. This is ritual purity for a man dedicated to lifelong service of the goddess. It need not include lifelong abstinence from sex. See F. Solmsen, *Personal Religion among the Greeks* (London, 1954), 162–3 n. 32. The known austerities required of priests of Isis involve dietary laws.

⁵⁴ M. A. Williams, *Rethinking 'Gnosticism': An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, 1997). Throughout his book Williams emphasizes the great variety of belief that scholars have classified as 'Gnosticism'. He is no doubt right. But Gnosis and Gnosticism remain convenient terms to describe what most of these groups have in common.

⁵⁵ Gnostic sects claimed to liberate those who had obtained knowledge from the laws imposed by the world, as Pauline Christianity freed its believers from the Jewish law. This may have led some groups to teach libertinism. At least that is what Christian opponents of Gnostic ideas claimed. But so far no libertine Gnostic

cated sexual intercourse, and praised sexual abstinence. Many passages in Gnostic writings seem to disparage marriage. On the other hand, some of the few Gnostics about whom we have personal information appear to have been married. On the subject of marriage the Gnostics in fact displayed the same ambiguity as Christian ascetic writers.⁵⁶

Historians have been unable to obtain a clear picture of the numerical size and the social location and organization of these different and perhaps not very large groups.⁵⁷ Many elements of their cosmogony were, however, shared by the relatively well-documented religion of Mani (AD 216–71), which won followers all round the Mediterranean from the late third century.⁵⁸ All these dualistic groupings clearly troubled many generations of leaders of main-line Christianity. For their ideas were obviously so closely related to those of Christianity that Christian leaders found it difficult to convince their followers that their doctrines were distinct from Christian doctrines, and even totally incompatible with them.⁵⁹ It is generally agreed that it was in order to prove the legitimacy of their office and the authority of their doctrines, and to defend them from attack by Gnostics, that Christian theologians created the doctrine of apostolic succession, and consolidated the

writings have been found. The alternative to totally rejecting conventional rules is to set up new and stricter ones, and that is what surviving Gnostic writings seem to be doing. See Kurt Rudolf, *Die Gnosis: Wesen und Geschichte einer antiken Religion* (Göttingen, 1978), 259–81.

⁵⁶ Williams, 'Rethinking "Gnosticism"', 143–54.

⁵⁷ G. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes* (Cambridge, 1986), 186–95, argues that Hemetists, Gnostics, and Neoplatonists alike operated in small, informal literate urban groups, clustered around a charismatic teacher. Plutarch, himself a Platonist, favoured a dualistic view of the world. See *On Isis and Osiris* 369–70 (46–9). He ascribes the view to the Persian magi, but argues that Greek philosophers are essentially in agreement. His own basic argument for dualism is: 'For if nothing comes into being without a cause, and if good could not provide the cause of evil, then nature must be in itself the creation and origin of evil as well as good' (ibid. 369D, trans. J. G. Griffiths).

⁵⁸ S. N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China* (Manchester, 1985), 85–90. On its extreme asceticism, which could only be lived by a chosen few, the Elect, ibid. 19–20, 143–9.

⁵⁹ Gnostic writers make much use of both Jewish and Christian biblical traditions. At the same time their use of myth and personified abstractions bears some similarity to that of contemporary Platonist philosophy.

canon of the New Testament. The long-term importance of these developments can scarcely be exaggerated. They also are a measure of the pressure exerted by dualistic ideas at that time. Christian asceticism did not evolve in a vacuum.

The dualism of the Gnostic opens a wider perspective on the prehistory of Christian asceticism. What we know about the Gnostics from their own texts and those of their Christian opponents suggests that there existed a widespread syncretistic religiosity, contemporary with but independent of Christianity,⁶⁰ which involved a radical rejection of the things of this world together with the adoption of an unworldly, or even anti-worldly, lifestyle, a religiosity that already had a long history in the Near East.

For many ideas related to those of the later Gnostic sects⁶¹ are already found in post-exilic Judaism, so that it can be argued plausibly that Gnosticism grew out of Judaism. But the dualism that was central to Gnosticism seems to have originated in Persia. So that this negative view of our world, of its origins, and its relations with the supernatural, appears to have first spread following the establishment of Persian rule over the Near East. After the conquest of the East by Alexander the Great these ideas became heavily Hellenized, and Judaized. So Gnosticism might be said to be—among other things—a by-product of imperialism, a movement of private religion which distanced itself from the traditional cults of the local gods, in favour of a more cosmic account of the supernatural, and adopted many ideas from the ruling imperial culture, whether Persian or Greek, and, eventually and not least, elements of Platonic philosophy. Religious doctrines which rejected the existing world-order may well have been particularly attractive to individuals who resented the subjection of their society by an imperial power, and longed for a time when this state of affairs would come to an end. However if

⁶⁰ J. M. Dillon, s.v. 'Gnosticism', *OCD* (3rd edn.), 641: The existence of a pre-Gnostic religiosity is controversial because it has left little or no written evidence of its existence, which has rather been deduced from features which later developments in Judaism, Hermeticism, Christianity, and the Gnostic sect have in common.

⁶¹ The Gnostic sects known by the names of their founders, with their systematic mythologies, sharing many features with Judaism, are so close to early Christianity that they were treated by contemporary Christian writers as heretical sects, and by some modern scholars as alternative versions of early Christianity. They date from the second century AD.

Gnosticism began as something of a protest movement, it had ceased to be that when the Gnostic systems were drawn up in the second century AD. By this time significant numbers of peoples were receptive to forms of religion that promised salvation through faith combined with asceticism and sexual abstinence.

(III) THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN ASCETICISM⁶²

The reader of this section may well find that the account of the prehistory of the Christian ascetic movement is oversimplified, in that it ignores the tensions and conflicts between different interpretations of what it meant to be a Christian that mark the history of the early, as of the later Church. Christianity certainly had, indeed needed to have, also a more family-friendly face,⁶³ which in the New Testament is presented by the Pastoral Epistles.⁶⁴ After all, Christianity was a religion for ordinary men and women and families. Indeed apologists made it an important part of the case for Christianity that the family life of Christians was purer than that of pagans.

But this book is concerned with two individuals whose courage and dynamism were, at least in my opinion, largely fired by the ideals of the ascetic movement. That is why the history of asceticism and sexual abstinence figures so prominently in the first chapter of my book. Of course Ambrose and Chrysostom accepted the authority of the Pastoral Epistles, on all of which Chrysostom wrote sympathetic commentaries. It is evident from Chrysostom's sermons that he was aware that his own ascetic ideals were not shared by the majority of his hearers. But that was precisely the state of affairs that he passionately wanted to change.

⁶² Not that ascetic doctrine was monolithic. Thus Tatian's views were not identical with those of Tertullian, or indeed those of the young or middle-aged Tertullian with his views as an old man who sympathized with the Montanists.

⁶³ David G. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy and Heresy in Ancient Christianity* (Oxford, 2007), especially 90–105. The main theme of this excellent book is the opposition to the advance of ascetic ideals in the later fourth century, which Chrysostom and Ambrose helped to bring about.

⁶⁴ See below 25–6, 178–9.

The roots of a specifically Christian asceticism go back to the New Testament. The injunction to abandon wealth and to give it to the poor was made by Jesus: 'Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God';⁶⁵ and again, 'if you would be perfect, go and sell what you possess, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow me'.⁶⁶ Jesus asks his follower to cut all earthly ties: 'If any one comes to me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes even his own life, he cannot be my disciple... Whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple'.⁶⁷ 'There is no one who has given up home, or wife, brothers, parents, or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not be repaid many times'.⁶⁸ And in the matter of the relations of the sexes Jesus taught: 'Everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away. It is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body is thrown into hell'.⁶⁹ There must be no divorce: 'what God has joined let no man sunder'.⁷⁰ The sayings of Jesus include one which can be, and of course was, interpreted as a rejection of marriage: 'The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age, and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die any more, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God'.⁷¹

Paul in his Letter to the Corinthians makes marriage second best to celibacy: 'To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion... Concerning the unmarried I have no command from the Lord, but I give my opinion... that in view of the impending distress it is well for a person to remain as he is'.⁷² So praise of

⁶⁵ Luke 6: 20. ⁶⁶ Matt. 19: 21; also Luke 12: 33. ⁶⁷ Luke 14: 26, 33.

⁶⁸ Luke 18: 28. Sons released for duty to fathers, Matt. 8: 21, Luke 9: 59.

⁶⁹ Matt. 5: 28–9.

⁷⁰ Matt. 19: 6; Mark 10: 9.

⁷¹ Luke 20: 34–6.

⁷² 1 Cor. 8: 25; cf. Matt. 19: 10–11, also *ibid.* 12: 'There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.'

poverty, the demand that the rich should give up their property to assist the poor, separation from the 'world', above all praise of the celibate life and of lifelong virginity had been Christian ideals from the beginning.⁷³ All this prefigures the ascetic movement.

It has already been remarked that advocacy of separation from the world and of abstinence from sex did not have a monopoly of teaching in early Christian communities. The New Testament corpus includes not only the two Letters to the Corinthians, but also the Pastoral Epistles⁷⁴ with their 'household codes'.⁷⁵ The Letter to the Colossians reads: 'Wives be subject to your husband; that is your Christian duty. Husbands love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children obey your parents in everything, for that is pleasing to God.... Fathers do not exasperate your children, for fear they grow disheartened. Slaves give entire obedience to your earthly masters.... Out of reverence for the Lord.... Masters be just and fair to your slaves, knowing that you too have a master in heaven.'⁷⁶ It is generally agreed that the Pastoral Epistles are not by Paul, and that they are later than the genuine Pauline epistles,⁷⁷ but one should not put too much stress on the incompatibility of the two lines of teaching. After all Paul himself was not trying to convert his addressees to a life of wandering preachers. He was addressing men and women living ordinary family lives, and even though he clearly thought that celibacy was best both for himself and others, he was not ordering everyone to change their way of life to his. His advice is rather: 'Let each one order his life according to the gift the Lord has granted him, and his condition when God called him.'⁷⁸ Paul might well have agreed that something like the household code of the Pastoral Epistles was a necessary supplement to the teaching of 1 Corinthians 7.

⁷³ e.g. see survey in R. Gryson, *L'Origine du célibat ecclésiastique du premier au septième siècle* (Gembloux, 1970).

⁷⁴ 1 and 2 Tim. and Titus.

⁷⁵ Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy and Heresy*, 90–7.

⁷⁶ Col. 3: 18–25 (NEB), also Titus 2: 1–10.; Eph. 5: 25–6: 9.

⁷⁷ Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 130–6 on epistles which are certainly Pauline (1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, Galatians) and those which are not. The Pastorals are almost certainly post-Pauline.

⁷⁸ 1 Cor. 7: 17.

Thus it was natural that when towards the end of the second century the New Testament was assembled into more or less the form in which we now have it, its compilers included not only writings which presented extreme ascetic and eschatological doctrine, but also others which did not anticipate an imminent end of the world, and advocated a much more moderate form of asceticism. Subsequently the sayings of Jesus and of Paul were repeated and developed by a succession of ecclesiastical writers to provide authoritative guidance to Christian communities.⁷⁹ Sometimes the former interpretation was more influential, sometimes the latter, but in the third and fourth centuries the more radical view became the dominant one, or at least the one that came to dominate patristic literature, and hence also modern discussions.

Even though they already esteemed the celibate life extremely highly, and in a way which had no parallel in the pagan world, Christian communities of the first and early second centuries do not appear to have given abstention from sex by young men, and particularly by young women, the importance which it was to be given later, as indeed in the writings of Chrysostom and Ambrose. Clement of Alexandria (AD 150?–215) still reassured householders that they need not feel ashamed to have married clergy, nor should they be afraid that as married persons they would be unable to achieve Christian perfection:⁸⁰ ‘Parenthood is cooperation with the creator.’⁸¹ ‘It is wrong to consider virginity more spiritual than marriage.’⁸²

In the writings of Clement’s near contemporary Tertullian (AD 155–230), however, particularly in later writing composed under the influence of Montanism, the attitude to marriage and virginity is already very similar to that of Chrysostom and his fourth-century contemporaries, even to the extent of displaying the same inconsistencies. Tertullian praises marriage most eloquently. He insists of course on strict division of labour between man and wife, the

⁷⁹ Elizabeth Clark, *Ascetic Piety and Women’s Faith* (New York, 1986), 4–42.

⁸⁰ Brown, *Body and Society*, 138; Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy and Heresy*, 105–13.

⁸¹ Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2. 83; cf. *Str.* 3.66.

⁸² *Str.* 3.105; 7.70; but in *Str.* 4.147–9 virginity is superior. See H. Chadwick in A. H. Armstrong (ed.), *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1967), 175–6.

woman's work being in the house. But he also gives his assent to Paul's teaching that it is the purpose of marriage to avoid fornication, and he praises the status of the dedicated virgin. Tertullian insists that widows should not remarry.⁸³ There is some tension between his conception of the high status of the consecrated virgin and of that of the dedicated widow: the dedicated virgin is purer than the widow, but the virtue of the widow is greater because she achieves purity by her own effort.⁸⁴ Sexual desire is bad. Women must not dress to make themselves attractive to men. Tertullian does not allow that a desire to have children, or even the fact that children are needed to propagate the human race, could justify remarriage after the first marriage has been childless. He was never entirely consistent about marriage, but as he came under the influence of the Montanist movement he came close to condemning it altogether.

The prophet Hosea had accused the Jewish people worshipping foreign idols as being guilty of adultery, implying that the relationship of Israel to God was that of marriage. Paul adapted the image when he described the Church of Corinth as the bride of Christ: 'I betrothed you to Christ, to present you as a pure bride to her one husband.'⁸⁵ Subsequently Christian writers regularly pictured the Church as the bride of Christ: pure, unblemished, and uncorrupted. Tertullian,⁸⁶ and Cyprian after him,⁸⁷ adapted Paul's metaphor to represent the consecrated virgin as a bride of Christ, or even as married to God.⁸⁸ Men too were encouraged to remain celibate, and though male celibates could not be represented as brides, abandonment of male celibacy too could be equated with adultery.⁸⁹

In practice this meant that Christian teachers generally insisted that widows and widowers should not remarry. Widows who did not remarry were given a special status, and were supported by the

⁸³ References in T. Brandt, *Tertullians Ethic* (Gütersloh, 1929), 191–207; T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford, 1971), 137–41. The principal writings are *De cultu feminarum*, *Ad uxorem*, *De monogamia*, *De virginibus velandis*.

⁸⁴ K de Brabander, *Le Retour au paradis: une étude sur la relation entre la sanctification de l'homme et l'ascèse sexuelle chez Tertullien* (Rome, 2004), 155–7.

⁸⁵ 2 Cor. 11: 2; Eph. 5: 22. Hermas, *Vis.* 4.2.1.

⁸⁶ Tertullian, *Exh. cast.* 13; *Res. carn.* 61.

⁸⁷ Cyprian, *Hab. virg.* 20.

⁸⁸ Tertullian, *Ad ux.* 1.4.4; *De cast.* 13.4.

⁸⁹ Tertullian, *Virg. vel.* 10; *De cast.* 3–4.

community. For the early period the fullest evidence comes from Carthage,⁹⁰ but the practice seems to have been almost universal.⁹¹ Girls who remained virgins were held in high honour. There was a significant number of dedicated virgins in the Carthage of Tertullian (AD c.160–240) and Cyprian (AD c.200–58). But it seems that there was not at that time a public ceremony at which young girls dedicated themselves to virginity and the service of God. They would appear to have taken their vow at home and continued to live at home.⁹² Early Christian asceticism was not anti-feminine: women, including virgins and female slaves, are prominent among the revered early martyrs.⁹³ By the later fourth century the Church of Antioch supported 3,000 virgins and widows.⁹⁴

The development of Tertullian's thought anticipated what became the most influential theological tendency in Christian asceticism in the third century.⁹⁵ Sexual relations came to be seen as a principal symptom of the fallen state of man, while to fight, and if possible suppress, the sexual urge was the strategy which offered the best hope of reversing Adam's fall, and of restoring human beings to something approaching their paradisaical state.⁹⁶ But if to be a perfect Christian a

⁹⁰ In Carthage in the time of Tertullian an *ordo* of widows was recognized by the Church. This was a distinct group of widows over 60 who had renounced second marriage, and lived a life consecrated to God. See *Ad ux.* 1.7.4; *Virg. vel.* 9.2–3; *De cast.* 13.4; cf. de Brabander, *Le Retour au paradis*, 348–54.

⁹¹ G. Schölgén, 'Ecclesia sordida: Zur Frage der sozialen Schichtung frühchristlicher Gemeinden am Beispiel Karthagos zur Zeit Tertullians', *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum Ergänzungsband*, 12 (Münster Westfalen, 1984), 260–2, esp. n. 270.

⁹² Tertullian, *Virg. vel.* 16.4; *De res. mort.* 61.6; *De orat.* 22.9; Cyprian, *Hab. virg.*; *Ep.* 4, cf. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 368–73.

⁹³ On the novel of Paul and Thecla see Brown, *Body and Society*, 156–7, G. Dagron, *Vie et miracles de sainte Thècle*, Subsidia hagiographica 62 (Brussels, 1978). Virgin martyrs: Tertullian, *Apology* 50.15; *Acts of Potamiaena and Basilides* 1–2. Female martyrs: Martyrs of Lyons (ed. Musurillo): 24 Biblis; 17–18, 51 Blandina (slave whose heroism is emphasized), *Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas* 2 (Perpetua a married woman, Felicitas a slave). There was a woman among the companions of Justin martyred at Rome c.165, and also among Scillitan martyrs martyred at Scillium in North Africa in 180.

⁹⁴ Chrysostom *Hom. in Matt.* 66.3 (PG 57.630).

⁹⁵ Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy and Heresy*, 114–29.

⁹⁶ 'L'ascèse sexuelle comme instrument *aeternitatis*', De Brabander, *Le Retour au paradis*, 265–8. Brown, *The Body and Society*, 89: 'sexuality became the privileged symbol of human bondage.' K. S. Frank, *Angelikos Bios: Begriffsanalytische und begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum engelgleichen Leben im frühen Mittelalter* (Münster, 1964), 12–47.

man or woman needed to concentrate his or her mind on heavenly things; it was necessary to avoid all earthly distractions. The theology was most fully expounded by the highly intellectual Origen,⁹⁷ but its basic ideas came to be held by many who had certainly never read Origen, and even by many who were illiterate, but who had reached the conclusion that in order to be perfect men and women would do well not only to abstain from sex, but also from all sexual temptation by withdrawing from everyday social life. This calls for an explanation.

We have seen that the development of Christian asceticism was paralleled by similar trends in the philosophical and religious thinking in the wider society. It might be argued that Christian asceticism was simply a particular variant of the general philosophical consensus that it was the duty of every human being to take care of himself or herself and to develop his or her inherent personalities, or in religious terms, to look after their souls. But Christian asceticism was much less individualistic, in that it was linked to the collective organization of the Church, from the teachings of which it drew strength. Moreover, it was not merely a system of training which individuals could choose to employ in order to improve their mastery over body and mind, but it was seen as a complete way of life, adopted for its own sake, because it involved the most perfect compliance with the laws of God.

As we have seen, the New Testament was, and indeed still is, a very radical document,⁹⁸ which urges Christians to imitate the exacting example set by Christ as completely as possible. What became the defining characteristic ideals of the monastic movement, poverty, love of enemies, charity, and simple life, are all upheld in the New Testament. Christian moral teaching was reinforced by powerful incentives which were without parallel in the pagan world:⁹⁹ it promised eternal life to the virtuous, and threatened sinners with eternal

⁹⁷ Brown, *The Body and Society*, 170.

⁹⁸ Irenaeus, c. AD 185–90, is the first Christian writer who seems to have used the New Testament more or less in its present form.

⁹⁹ Certainly this is the impression left by much of classical literature, but the claim, memorably proclaimed by Lucretius, that the philosophy of Epicurus could free men from the fear of death and of punishment after death suggests that for many the myths of the underworld were more frightening than mere old wives' tales.

punishment. Every Sunday regular worshippers listened to a sermon which reminded them what God required of them, and what were the rewards and punishments involved. Besides, the Church employed a discipline of penance and exclusion. The early Christian communities were strictly ordered and plain living societies.¹⁰⁰

Wayne Meeks has proposed a sociological explanation of the sexual and social radicalism of the early Christian communities: Paul had abandoned the dietary and ritual rules of purity that had helped to maintain the social boundaries of Jewish communities, and which marked out the Jews as a people dedicated to God. Christians too thought of themselves as a people dedicated to God, a new Israel. Therefore there was need for new rules to establish the separateness and holiness of the Christian community. These would define the purity of the community more directly in social terms, and not least in rules governing sexuality. This may well be right, but on a conscious level this procedure will have been seen by his followers, and probably also by Paul himself, not as community building, but as obedience to the will of God.

Moreover it might be argued that the same kind of motivation would continue to stimulate some Christians to adopt ever more radical forms of asceticism. It is a common, though not universal, trait of human nature that somebody who asks for a favour feels that he needs to show his worthiness by giving up something himself. That is why so many young people ask to be sponsored for charitable activities. They are not happy simply to ask for money for a good cause. They must demonstrate their own sincerity and worthiness by being prepared to face the exertion, and possibly agony, of, for example, running many miles. Unlike Jews, early Christians could not demonstrate the depth of their piety by observing onerous food laws, and unlike pagans they could not do it by offering sacrifices, but what they could do was to discipline, and in extreme cases even torture, their bodies.

Another factor favouring the propagation of radical asceticism was the prominence of the devils and demons, that is of personified evil,

¹⁰⁰ Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, 1983), 97–103, summed up 103.

in the Christian world picture. Demons are filled with an irrational hatred of mankind. It is they who cause disease. It is demons who turn men away from God by presenting themselves as deities. Candidates for baptism are warned to be ever on their guard against the wiles of demons trying to subvert them. They are in fact being mobilized to be soldiers in a never-ending struggle between good and evil. Soldiers have always had to submit to strict discipline. At the same time a real war was going on. From as early as the reign of Nero, Christians were under a permanent threat of persecution, which could at any moment turn into actual prosecution on a capital charge. As the religious organization of an oppressed minority, the Christian Church had to solve a problem which the traditional and established civic cults did not have to confront: how to retain its membership, in face of widespread hostility.

The maintenance of collective discipline under external pressure calls for strong leadership. Christian communities had this in the monarchical episcopacy, an institution which had no parallel in other religious communities in the Roman world.¹⁰¹ For the bishop had the power both to admit new and to exclude existing members, in all likelihood condemning the latter—as they thought—to eternal punishment in hell. It was the bishop who had the decisive voice in determining penance for moral transgression.¹⁰² He was therefore closely involved in the private lives of members of his community. The setting and enforcement of strict rules, particularly in the field of sexual relations, certainly strengthened a bishop's social control, a fact of which many bishops must have been well aware, and this certainly will have encouraged them to set and enforce the strictest of standards.

But strong leadership and strict discipline were not enough. Survival, and indeed expansion of the Christian communities, could not have happened unless their morale had been extremely high. No doubt faith was an important part, but equally important must have been confidence in their own moral superiority, a superiority which Christians could demonstrate by conspicuously excelling their pagan neighbours in precisely those virtues of self-control and

¹⁰¹ Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 492–506.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* 337–8, 500–1.

austere living recommended by acclaimed pagan philosophers.¹⁰³ So it may be suggested that the increasing emphasis on ascetic ideals was at least in part a result of the need of a persecuted minority to build up its morale and ensure its survival by showing itself superior to the majority in living up to the values which the majority itself professed.¹⁰⁴

It would have been tempting to account for the development of Christian asceticism simply by looking at the New Testament and the ways it was interpreted by successive generations of Christian writers seeking guidance in order to be able to cope with the problems they faced themselves. But a wider perspective is needed. As we have seen, the attitudes of the whole of society were developing in the same direction, if not to the same degree. The Christian ideal of virginity, which set up the virgin and the male celibate as exemplary models of the perfect Christian life, certainly had no parallel in traditional paganism. But the attitudes of the followers of some Gnostic sects and of Manichaeans to sexuality came close to Christian views. The way of life of Manichaean 'elect'¹⁰⁵ was quite similar to that of Christian ascetics, particularly to that of the wandering encratite ascetics of Mesopotamia.¹⁰⁶ The Christian attitude to sex evidently did not deter converts to Christianity, if anything quite the reverse. People all over the Roman world were becoming suspicious of the body, and its needs and desires. The trend is clear. To find a full explanation remains difficult, perhaps especially difficult for the present generation, which is experiencing a development in precisely the opposite direction.

However, even though the moral high ground was being occupied by advocates and practitioners of Christian perfection, most converts to Christianity, and indeed most Christians by birth, continued to live in, and to be fully part of, a functioning traditional society. For

¹⁰³ The problem is well expressed by J. Lightstone, 'Roman Diaspora Judaism', in Rüpke (ed.), *A Companion to Roman Religion*, 353: 'The social norms and institutions of a minority community must: (1) serve the community's needs for perpetuating a distinctive social grouping... and (2) must be so conceived as to appear to reflect... those of the host society.'

¹⁰⁴ e.g. Justin, *Apology* 1.12–17, 27–9; Tertullian, *Apology* 9.13–20, 39–40.

¹⁰⁵ Brown, *The Body and Society*, 99–102.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 85–102.

them, total observance of the teachings of the Gospels was an impossible ideal. They had to live in the world as it was, and they could not change it.¹⁰⁷ But at the same time many clerics, and many dedicated laypeople too, did their best to realize the teachings of the New Testament in their entirety, and indeed made this the central aim of their lives. They created a new ascetic lifestyle, which might be described as 'full-time Christianity', a way of life that involved extreme physical self-discipline, celibacy, and renunciation of property; a disciplined life which might be lived in solitude, or in a community, or even at home, with as near as possible complete separation from the world. They always remained a minority, but a minority that demonstrated to the majority that a way of life which the latter could not attain nevertheless represented a practicable ideal.

The ideological foundations of the ascetic movement had been laid by the end of the third century, and the withdrawal of individuals into an ascetic life also began well before the end of the century,¹⁰⁸ even though the great explosion of asceticism happened only after the conversion of the emperor Constantine. Classical philosophy had always been very much a well-to-do activity, which required a high degree of education and leisure. Seneca, Epictetus, Plutarch, and the rest addressed an elite public. Christian ascetic life was presented by its advocates as an alternative philosophy,¹⁰⁹ which was open to anyone; and in important respects this was true. From the start the Christian ascetes were drawn from all layers of society. It is significant that already in the Africa of Tertullian and Cyprian some of the dedicated virgins came from rich families.¹¹⁰ However, the great majority of the Christian ascetes came from humbler stock and were far from being well read in philosophical, or in any kind of literature; indeed many were illiterate. It is indeed a remarkable feature of the ascetic movement that many highly educated members of the governing class were enormously impressed by the ascetic

¹⁰⁷ Tomb inscriptions suggest that normally Christian girls married very early, like their pagan counterparts. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 367.

¹⁰⁸ See below 37.

¹⁰⁹ e.g. Origen, *C. Celsum* 1.9; 3.44 ff.; 6.1. Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 32.

¹¹⁰ Tertullian, *Virg. vel.* 10; Cyprian, *Hab. virg.* 9–11. Virgins lacking family resources might live with clergy or even with men dedicated to celibacy, see Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 369–70 and below, 156–8.

achievements of humble peasants.¹¹¹ If Christianity brought about a certain democratization of culture,¹¹² the ascetic movement was an important factor in the process.¹¹³

(IV) CHRISTIAN ASCETICISM BECOMES A MASS MOVEMENT AND INSTITUTIONALIZED: THE ROLE OF ANTONY

In the fourth century the informal spontaneous full-time asceticism of earlier times began to be institutionalized. It became a movement. The disciplining of human passions and above all of sexuality, advocacy of a simple life, simple clothes, simple and sparing food, and a general disdain of earthly values characterized Christianity from the beginning.¹¹⁴ However, the explosive intensification of concern with these aspects, leading to the withdrawal of numerous individuals from everyday life into some kind of ascetic existence, whether as hermits or as members of an ascetic coenobitic community, whether within the city, or outside its walls, or on the fringe of the desert, is an extraordinary development of the fourth century, whose influence was to be felt right up to our own times.¹¹⁵

At this stage I prefer to talk of 'ascetic movement' rather than 'monastic movement', of 'ascete' rather than 'monk'. This is because the words 'monk', 'monastery', and 'monasticism' today have institutional and historical associations which are not yet relevant to the ascetic movement of the fourth century, whose institutions were still coming into existence. Even the use of the word 'monk' in contexts

¹¹¹ Rouselle, *Porneia*, 178–9.

¹¹² See essays in *Antiquité tardive*, 9 (2001), esp. J.-M. Carrié, 'Antiquité tardive et démocratisation de la culture', 27–46; and J.-M. Salamito, 'Christianisation et démocratisation de la culture: aspects aristocratiques et aspects populaires de l'être chrétien aux iii^{ème} et iv^{ème} siècles', *ibid.* 165–78.

¹¹³ Rouselle, *Porneia* (summarized 244–50), suggests that the coincidence of three sociological situations favoured the universal appeal of asceticism: the ideal of control of the self of upper-class men, a rejection of the status of dependency by upper-class women, and the precariousness of the subsistence of peasant families.

¹¹⁴ e.g. Luke 6: 20–36; 12: 27–31; 1 Cor. 7: 25–31.

¹¹⁵ Brown, *The Body and Society*.

related to the ascetic life was still quite recent. The earliest known use of the word in a literary text is found in Eusebius' commentary on Psalm 68: 6, written between 330 and 340. The earliest known non-literary use dates from 329.¹¹⁶ The basic meaning of the word is 'single', 'solitary'. It could be applied to the condition of living alone without any implications of asceticism, or to life apart from society, or to a single-minded life, irrespective where it was lived, that was dedicated to God.¹¹⁷ As used by Christian writers in the fourth and early fifth centuries, it does not distinguish a monk living in a monastery from an anchorite or hermit,¹¹⁸ nor does it, at least as it is used by Chrysostom, tell us anything about the location of the monk. The monks of his *Adversus oppugnatores* are ascetes living apart from the city on the mountain or in the desert,¹¹⁹ but Chrysostom also uses the word to describe an ascete living an essentially domestic life in the city, a lifestyle that has been described as 'proto-monasticism'.¹²⁰

Various reasons have been put forward for the dramatic development of asceticism in the fourth century.¹²¹ It has been suggested that what made the austerities of an ascetic life attractive was a sense that the strict moral standards observed in the Christian community in the age of persecutions had been allowed to slip when Christianity became safe, and even privileged, after the conversion of the emperor Constantine. While the Church was permanently in danger of persecution, merely being a Christian called for moral courage,

¹¹⁶ E. A. Judge, 'The Earliest Use of *Monachos* in Sense of "Monk"', *JAC* 20 (1977), 72–89.

¹¹⁷ Its range of meanings seems to correspond more or less to those of the Syriac *Ihidaya*, see S. B. Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World View of Ephrem the Syrian* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1992), 136.

¹¹⁸ Cassian, *Conv.* 18.9–10 (*PL* 49.1110–11): 'Monastery can mean the dwelling of even a single monk, while coenobium can only mean a place where a number of men live together in a united community.'

¹¹⁹ Chrysostom, *Adversus oppugnatores vitae monasticae*, *PG* 47. 317–86, English translation by D. G. Hunter, *A Comparison between a King and a Monk & Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life* (Lewiston, NY, 1988). Translations are taken from Hunter.

¹²⁰ *De sacerdotio* 1.2.2: ὁ τῶν μοναχῶν βίος; *ibid.* 1.2.27 shows that here the monastic life meant a shared house in the city. So also in *Contra eos qui subintroductas habent*, ed. J. Dumortier (Paris, 1955), 9.71: μονάζων.

¹²¹ e.g. R. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, 1990), 63–73.

steadfastness, and the readiness to die for one's faith. When Christianity was on the way to becoming the religion of the state, idealists sought for new ways of demonstrating their commitment.¹²² They did not have to look far. All that was needed was to try to realize in their lives the commandments of the New Testament in their full literal sense. In this, some went further than others. Early asceticism took many forms. Rules and institutionalization came gradually. When martyrdom was no longer an option for those who aimed high, the life of a monk, the hardships of 'the desert', could be an attractive substitute. There are many passages in the writings of the Fathers of the Church which assimilate the merit of monasticism to that of martyrdom.¹²³

As far as the turning of members of the upper class to asceticism, it is evident that the conversion of Constantine was a decisive factor. For Constantine made it much easier for members of the upper class to opt for the ascetic life when he abolished the Julian law which had penalized individuals belonging to the ruling classes who remained childless. Subsequently it also became increasingly common for women of the highest aristocracy to opt for the life of a consecrated virgin, sometimes much against the wishes of their families. One reason may have been that this state offered women a certain degree of emancipation.¹²⁴ No doubt economic considerations also furthered the movement. Among the propertied, fathers who had a daughter consecrated to a life of virginity saved what would have been her dowry. The withdrawal of young men into a celibate life could be seen as a form of population control.¹²⁵ In any case, for a peasant the austere standard of living in a monastery or hermitage might not be harsher than what he or she was already used to; and the monk or hermit had no family to support.¹²⁶ In time, Christian ascetics developed a culture, which was at first mainly oral, but

¹²² Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, 71–2.

¹²³ Ibid. 71 n. 27.

¹²⁴ P. Escolan, *Monachisme et église: Le Monachisme Syrien du iv^e au vii^e siècle: un monachisme charismatique* (Paris, 1999), 160: virgins flee to monastery to escape marriage.

¹²⁵ E. Patlagean, 'La Limitation de la fécondité dans la haute époque byzantine', *Annales ESC* (1969), 1353–69.

¹²⁶ For the nourishment of monks and comparison with that of villagers see Rouselle, *Porneia*, 205–16, 222–4, 246–7.

which literate ascetics put into writing in the form of the 'sayings of the fathers'.¹²⁷ This literature was to have great influence on the religious life of monks and laymen alike.

As we have seen, the ascetic ideal appealed to all classes. It was unusual in the ancient world, as it is perhaps in ours also, for a movement to win adherents over so wide a social spectrum. The man who was, and often still is, represented¹²⁸ as the originator of monasticism was St Antony, who was born in Middle Egypt c.260–70 and died around 356. He owes his fame to the fact that St Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, completed a biography of him around 357. This came to be very widely read, and soon came to be recognized all over the Empire as providing a model of an exemplary ascetic life.¹²⁹ Although Antony was by far the most famous of the early hermits, he was not the first. For we are told that at the time when he opted for the ascetic life there were already numerous men living such a life, and even some dedicated virgins.¹³⁰ In fact, the movement seems to have arisen quite spontaneously towards the end of the third century, and, without the active encouragement of the organized Church, more or less simultaneously in various areas of the Near East. But as a rule these early ascetics lived in cells not far from their homes. It was Antony—if we believe Athanasius—who initiated a further development of the ascetic movement by becoming the first ascetic to withdraw to the desert, thus separating himself entirely from society, reaching the condition of complete isolation by stages.¹³¹ It is in fact largely due to Athanasius that Antony is widely seen to have set the decisive precedent,¹³² though Athanasius almost certainly exaggerated the originality of his hero. Subsequently many individuals opting for the ascetic life did not consider it sufficient to free their mind from worldly concerns by disciplining their body. They must also cut

¹²⁷ W. Bousset, *Apothegmata* (Tübingen, 1923). *Les Sentences des pères du désert*, introd. L. Regnault, trans. J. Dion and G. Oury (Solesmes, 1967).

¹²⁸ Antony was not in fact the first hermit.

¹²⁹ On the literary genre of this biography see G. J. M. Bartelink, 'Die literarische Gattung der *Vita Antonii*', in *Vig. Christ.* 36 (1982), 36–62, and M. van Uytanghe, s.v. *Biographien 1* (griechische): *Vita Antonii*, *RAC Supplmt.1* (Stuttgart, 2001), 1181–7.

¹³⁰ *V. Ant.* 3–4.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* 3, 8, 49.

¹³² Augustine, *Conf.* 8.6.15; R. Lorenz, 'Die Anfänge des abendländischen Mönchtums im 4. Jahrhundert', *ZKG* 77 (1966), 4 (Rom), 16 (Trier).

themselves off totally from the environment of their former existence. So total separation from the everyday world, by removing oneself far from human settlement to the edge of the desert, or on to a mountain, became a widely popular form of asceticism. The total separation was to some extent theoretical because the monk had to exchange the products of physical work for the necessities of life, and even more because holy men attracted visitors who came to gaze, but also to consult, to have disputes resolved, to be healed, and, of course, to learn about this way of life for themselves.¹³³

Antony seems to have been born of comfortably-off peasant stock. However, as he is represented by Athanasius, he conversed and preached in Coptic, having no Greek, and no literary education. He is said to have refused schooling, and expressed the opinion that 'One who has a sound mind has no need for letters.'¹³⁴ Whether he was really quite as uneducated as Athanasius suggests has been questioned. He certainly knew the Bible well, and there have survived letters purporting to have been written by him,¹³⁵ which reveal knowledge of a theology of asceticism derived from Origen.¹³⁶

But if Antony had more Greek and Christian book knowledge than Athanasius gives him credit for, the question arises as to why Athanasius was so anxious to stress his lack of education. A possible reason is that from the start of the movement, many hermits and monks were in fact Coptic-speaking and even totally illiterate peasants,¹³⁷ and that Athanasius intended his biography of Antony to be accepted by men of this class as a model of how the ascetic life ought to be lived.¹³⁸

¹³³ In practice at least the famous ascetics attracted large numbers of visitors who came to gaze, to consult, to have disputes resolved, or to join their way of life. Cf. Euagrius Ponticus, *Foundations* 8.

¹³⁴ *V. Ant.* 1, 16, 20, 33, 72; also 20, 33.

¹³⁵ It has been suggested that the letters were genuinely written, or perhaps dictated, by Antony. However S. Rubenson, *The Letters of Antony: Monasticism and the Making of a Saint* (Minneapolis, 1995), 145–62, argues that they were composed in the 390s, after the Origenist controversy, which they seem to reflect.

¹³⁶ The sermon in the *Life* shows knowledge both of Greek culture, and of literary Christian apologetic. But no doubt that speech, like speeches generally in ancient historiography, owes more to the author of the *Life* than to Antony. See M. Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism* (Oxford, 2000), 3–6, on ideas of Origen in the letters.

¹³⁷ Palladius, *HL* 8.3; 19.1; 22.1; 35.1, 49. Cassian, *Conlationes* 16.1.

¹³⁸ Illiterate ascetics would have to have the biography read to them, which would also be the only way in which they could get to know the Bible.

As bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius wanted to show his sympathy with these ascetics, and at the same time to achieve a measure of control—something which he and his successors at Alexandria, but by no means all bishops elsewhere, did in fact achieve.

By the time Athanasius published his *Life of Antony*, a wide range of different varieties of ascetic life coexisted in Egypt. There were ascetics living in coenobitic communities mainly in the arable Nile valley, as well as anchorites living in what might be called villages of discrete individual cells, situated mainly on the edge of the desert, and known as *laurae*, and true hermits living in more or less remote desert regions.¹³⁹ Communities of celibate men and women continued to exist within towns and villages, although this kind of monasticism was viewed with suspicion by intellectual protagonists of the ascetic movement like Athanasius and Jerome.¹⁴⁰ Institutionalization of asceticism started early. Already in the 320s, Pachomius drew up a set of rules for his coenobial settlement.¹⁴¹ These rules were widely adopted by other coenobial institutions in Egypt, and influential elsewhere.¹⁴² The Pachomian houses were the first ‘monasteries’ in the sense in which we now use the word. Though they were usually situated on farmland in the Nile valley, their inhabitants sought complete separation from normal village life. They constituted what Peter Brown described as a chain of ‘man-made deserts’.¹⁴³

By the second half of the century withdrawal had become a mass movement. According to Palladius, writing his *Lausiac History* in 419–20, there were at the time no fewer than 5,000 monks living on the desert edge on the mountain of Nitria, around 14 km from the

¹³⁹ D. J. Dervas, *The Desert a City* (Oxford, 1966); Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 28–36.

¹⁴⁰ On varieties of monasticism see also R. S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, 1993), 293–303; on the by no means basic architectural structures of some of these cells see G. Husson, ‘L’Habitat monastique en Égypte’, in *Hommages Serge Saugneron*, vol. ii (Cairo, 1979), 191–207; on urban monasticism in and near Alexandria see C. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity* (Baltimore, 1997), 456 n. 38.

¹⁴¹ P. Rousseau, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley, 1985).

¹⁴² See Lorenz, ‘Die Anfänge des abendländischen Mönchtums im 4. Jahrhundert’, 45–61 on parallel rules in ascetic writings of Basil and Augustine and those of Pachomius. These are not necessarily evidence of direct influence. The similar problems in the running of a religious community called for similar rules everywhere.

¹⁴³ Brown, *The Body and Society*, 113.

city of Hermopolis Parva (Damanhur), 65 km south of Alexandria. Some lived alone, others in pairs, others in larger groups. All shared certain facilities, including priests.¹⁴⁴ Sixty-four km further south was Scetis (Wadi el Natrun), another area with numerous ascetic communities of different kinds.¹⁴⁵ There were other large settlements of monks in many other locations: for instance 1,200 monks lived in the neighbourhood of Antinoe in the Thebaid.¹⁴⁶

Men and women from all over the Empire came to see and to be edified by the hermits and monks of Egypt. So Hilarion, a student at Alexandria, went out into the desert to visit Antony. He was converted, and returned home, gave away his property, and retired to a tiny cell in the desert 3–4 km from his village. He was one of the earliest hermits in Palestine.¹⁴⁷ Later in the century (c.374), the widowed Roman aristocrat Melania the elder (c.340–c.310) travelled to Alexandria and visited the desert Fathers. Deeply impressed, she went on to Jerusalem and founded two monasteries, one for men and one for women.

The life of the elder Melania, like that of the slightly younger Paula (347–403), another great Roman senatorial lady, and disciple of Jerome, illustrates an important aspect of the ascetic movement mentioned earlier, the fact that it attracted men and women of the most elevated social class.¹⁴⁸ It is also worth noting that asceticism evidently had a strong appeal for some of the most highly educated young men. The famous Basil, later bishop of Caesarea, had studied philosophy at Athens in the mid-350s. Soon after he became interested in the ascetic life. In 356–7 he toured ascetic sites and monasteries in Syria, Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Egypt,¹⁴⁹ and then retired to Annesoi in Pontus to live a life of ‘philosophy’, that is an

¹⁴⁴ H. G. Evelyn White, *The History of the Monasteries of Nitria and Scetis* (New York, 1932). Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 7.2.

¹⁴⁵ C. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity* (Baltimore, 1997), 260–2; E. Wypszycska, ‘Le Monachisme égyptienne et les villes’, *Travaux et mémoires*, 12 (1944), 1–44.

¹⁴⁶ Palladius, *HL* 7, 57.

¹⁴⁷ Sozomen, *HE* 3.14.

¹⁴⁸ Upper-class ascetic women: G. Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Lifestyles* (Oxford, 1993), 113–18; E. A. Clark, *Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends: Essays and Translations* (Lewiston, NY, 1979), also ‘Ascetic Renunciation and Feminine Advancement: A Paradox of Late Ancient Christianity’, in Clark, *Ascetic Piety and Women’s Faith*, 175–208.

¹⁴⁹ Basil, *Ep.* 223.2.

ascetic life, on his family's estate. Gradually, Basil reached the conclusion that it was his duty to take an active role in the Church, so he had himself ordained, and later became a bishop.¹⁵⁰ Basil's ascetic writings are sometimes described as Basil's *Rules*. But unlike the *Rule* of Pachomius they do not provide a complete blueprint of how a monastery was to be organized. They are rather collections of answers to questions about problems of monastic life which Basil had been asked by different ascetics still living in a variety of informal groupings.¹⁵¹ His friend Gregory of Nazianzus had a similar conversion to asceticism, and though he too became a bishop, he did so reluctantly, and was not unhappy to be deposed from the see of Constantinople, and to return to an ascetic life of contemplation.¹⁵² In fact, the Church Fathers, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine,¹⁵³ and Jerome, differing widely, as they did, in character and career, had this in common that, after having undergone a very thorough secular classical education, they became enthusiastic practitioners and advocates of asceticism, and dedicated their remaining life to the service of the Church. It is perhaps also significant that they had all been brought up by parents of whom at least one was strongly Christian.¹⁵⁴ Thus there was no conflict between a high degree of intellectualism and a dedication to the most rigorous discipline of body and emotions.

Egypt became the showpiece of asceticism. Egypt was where men and women from all over the Empire, from Asia Minor, Italy, and even Gaul, travelled to see the monks and hermits, to listen to them, and sometimes to join them. Egypt inspired the development of asceticism everywhere. When John Cassian wrote his books on life, organization, and ethos of monasticism which were to be very

¹⁵⁰ P. Rousseau, *Basil of Casarea* (Berkeley, 1994), 61–92 on Basil's conversion to 'philosophy', i.e. the ascetic life, and his subsequent opting for the active life of a cleric.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 190–232; P. Humbertclaude, *La Doctrine ascétique de saint Basile de Césarée* (Paris, 1932). Before rules came into general use, early monasteries were guided by the oral advice of experienced and respected ascetics or clerics with ascetic experience.

¹⁵² R. R. Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus, Rhetor and Philosopher* (Oxford, 1969).

¹⁵³ Also his friends Alypius and Nebridius.

¹⁵⁴ The psychological development of the Cappadocians, and above all that of Augustine, are much better documented and easier to follow than that of Ambrose and that of Chrysostom.

influential in the West, he claimed that he was transmitting the wisdom of the monks of Egypt., the *instituta Aegyptiorum*.¹⁵⁵ But this does not mean that the movement originated in Egypt. Its roots were in the otherworldliness of Christianity itself. It is therefore hardly surprising that individuals adopted an ascetic lifestyle quite independently in many areas of the Near East. For instance Eustathius (c.300–377), later bishop of Sebaste, set up a very strict monastic movement in Armenia, Pontus, and Paphlagonia. We are told that his disciples were very hostile to marriage.¹⁵⁶ Syrian asceticism, though it was to be influenced by that of Egypt, certainly had local roots. Illert was right to insist that full understanding of the asceticism of Chrysostom requires consideration of its Syrian background.

Towards the end of the fourth century the basic principles and disciplines of ascetic life were being put into writing. One of the first to do this systematically was Euagrius Ponticus, a near contemporary of Chrysostom. His various writings amount to something like an introductory course to the ascetic life or, to use his description, an introduction to a life of philosophy, and they form the basis of a more systematic exposition of Egyptian monasticism. In the fifth century there arose a whole ascetic literature describing the lives of monks and hermits and recording their sayings. These writings were enormously influential,¹⁵⁷ and provide a much more vivid and indeed realistic view of the ascetic life as actually lived by these men and women than the writings of Chrysostom. Sayings of the Egyptian fathers together with the writings of Euagrius provided the basis of the *Institutes* and *Conferences* with which Cassian presented something like a textbook of Egyptian monasticism to the West.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ R. J. Goodrich, *Contextualising Cassian: Aristocrats, Asceticism and Reformation in Fifth Century Gaul* (Durham, 2007), 136–45; Cassian, *Inst.* 2.4–6.

¹⁵⁶ Sozomen, *HE* 3.14.31–6; Socrates, *HE* 2.43.3–7. On his influence on female monasticism see R. Albrecht, *Das Leben der heiligen Makrina auf dem Hintergrund der Thekla-Traditionen: Studien zu den Ursprüngen des weiblichen Mönchtums im 4. Jahrhundert in Kleinasien* (Göttingen, 1986), 174–91.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. C. Neri, 'Influenze monastiche e nuovi codici di comportamento per le élites laiche e le gerarchie ecclesiastiche', in R. Lizzi Testa (ed.), *Le trasformazioni delle élites in età tardoantica* (Rome, 2006), 297–310.

¹⁵⁸ The writings of Cassian were one vehicle by which Egyptian traditions were, with some adaptations, transmitted to the West. See A. M. C. Cassiday, *Tradition and Theology in John Cassian* (Oxford, 2007), 118–60 and below 273–4.

The Classical Roots of Christian Outspokenness (παρρησία)

(I) REPUBLIC AND EARLY EMPIRE

Outspokenness (Greek *parrhesia*), like asceticism, has a long history, too long to cover in this context. Here the story will start with the Roman Republic. The Republic had a system of open politics. The candidates for election to magistracies had to submit to every kind of criticism and abuse, which they naturally answered in kind. It was an accepted part of the political game. With the establishment of the principate this changed. The principate, the concentration of power in hands of one man, ended a long period of civil strife, and established a more orderly society; but while conferring these benefits, the principate also—as Tacitus observed—made great political oratory redundant,¹ and it made outspokenness in public life dangerous. It is true that the Senate remained a public debating chamber where issues of great importance continued to be debated. But the emperor was chairman, and the emperor decided the career prospects of the men whose debates he chaired, and it was not only disadvantageous from a career point of view, but actually dangerous to offend him. So the freedom of speech of senators was very limited. ‘Upper class survivors found that slavish obedience was the way to succeed both politically and financially... They liked the security of existing arrangements better than the dangerous uncertainties of the old regime.’² Freedom of speech, including freedom of criticism, survived at the public

¹ Tacitus, *De oratoribus* 36, 41.

² Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2; translation by Michael Grant.

games, where the crowded spectators were allowed to shout complaints and demands together with their ceremonial acclamations of the emperor, and the emperor was expected to tolerate these expressions of mass opinion and to take notice of them.³

While the majority of senators and would-be senators were ready to sacrifice their traditional liberty (*libertas senatoria*) there was a small group of senators who insisted on displaying their criticism of current imperial policies. Thrasea Paetus expressed his dislike of measures of Nero by staying away from the Senate. His son-in-law Helvidius Priscus tried to exploit a power vacuum at Rome during the civil war of 68/9 to persuade the Senate to act independently while awaiting the arrival of the victorious new emperor Vespasian.⁴ The Stoic philosopher and teacher Epictetus has recorded an anecdote which, whether true or false, illustrates the attitude of this circle. After the emperor Vespasian had forbidden Helvidius to attend meetings of the Senate, a dialogue took place between the emperor and the senator:

Helvidius: 'You can stop me from being a senator, but as long as I am a senator I must attend the senate.' Vespasian: 'Well then at least be silent while you are there!' Helvidius: 'Do not ask me my opinion and I will be silent.' Vespasian: 'But I must ask it.' Helvidius: 'And I must say what I think right.' Vespasian: 'But if you do, I will put you to death.' Helvidius: 'Did I ever say to you that I was immortal. You will do your part and I will do mine.'⁵

Helvetius was eventually executed.

The way Thrasea, Helvetius, and their followers are recorded by our sources, above all by Tacitus and the Younger Pliny, is ambiguous. Tacitus points out that these men drew attention to themselves without doing any good. Against them he commends his father-in-law Agricola for his diplomatic if somewhat compromising conduct during the reign of the tyrant Domitian: 'Let it be clear to those who insist on admiring insubordination, that even under bad emperors men can be great, and that a decent regard for authority, if backed by ability and energy, can ascend to that same peak of honour which many have scaled by precipitous paths; who have won fame,

³ Cameron, *The Circus Factions*, 157–83.

⁴ Tacitus, *Hist.* 4.5–7, 9.

⁵ Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.2.4.

without benefit to their country, by a melodramatic death.⁶ At the same time Tacitus, like many contemporaries, felt considerable admiration for these men. For Pliny the Younger they were simply heroes who had behaved as all senators ought to behave, and for long after Thrasea and his imitators remained models of senatorial courage and outspokenness, even if few senators felt obliged to follow their example.

The object of Thrasea and Helvetius had been to uphold the traditional rights and dignity of the Senate and its members. Their views about rights and duties were therefore thoroughly and traditionally Roman. But what gave them the will power and courage to express their views—even if only negatively by abstention at great danger to themselves—was their Stoic philosophy.⁷ This was recognized by the authorities. Nero exiled both the Stoic philosopher Musonius Rufus and the Cynic Demetrius. Vespasian exiled Demetrius for a second time, while Domitian accused the biographers of Thrasea and Helvidius of treason and had their books burnt publicly in the forum. He also exiled a number of philosophers. 'The government imagined that it could silence the voice of Rome, and annihilate the freedom of the senate and the moral conscience of mankind; it even went as far as to banish the professors of philosophy, and to exile all honourable studies, so that nothing decent might be left around to vex its eyes.'⁸

After the fall of Domitian, and for most of the second century, the age of the 'good emperors' from Nerva to Marcus Aurelius, we do not hear of any outspoken opposition group. It would seem that emperors and philosophers had reached a compromise. The emperor treated the Senate and its members with respect, and philosophers like Dio Chrysostom⁹ lectured the emperor on kingship, expounding abstract rules, but avoiding the controversial issues of practical politics.

⁶ Tacitus, *Agricola* 42, trans. H. Mattingly.

⁷ M. T. Griffin, *Seneca: A Philosopher on Politics* (Oxford, 1976), 360–6; C. Wirszubski, *Libertas as a Political Idea at Rome during the Republic and Early Principate* (Cambridge, 1950), 138 ff.

⁸ Tacitus, *Agr.* 2; translation by H. Mattingly.

⁹ *Or.* 1–4, *Dio Chrysostom*, ed. J. W. Colson in Loeb series, vol. i (London, 1971), 2–233, were addressed to Trajan. Dio had been one of the philosophers exiled by Domitian.

The 'Stoic' opposition of the early Empire is prominent in our sources because it was made up of members of the ruling class of the Empire, and because these men clashed with the ruler himself. The ideal of frank and open criticism of men in authority irrespective of possibly dangerous consequences for the critic was much more widespread. The most conspicuous proponents of this view were the wandering preachers of the Cynic philosophy. Like the Stoics,¹⁰ but much more bluntly, they taught that men must live a life as close to nature as possible. They rejected conventional values and conventional objectives such as comfort, wealth, fame, even health, and they advocated self-control, suppression of anger, self-sufficiency, and a life of continuous introspection and self-discipline. Their founder, Diogenes, had demonstrated his rejection of conventions by deliberately flouting conventional seemly manners, and his followers acquired a reputation for unmannerly and shameless behaviour. That is why they were described as *kunikoí* (κυνικοί), doglike. They were in many ways forerunners of the Christian ascetics. But unlike the best-known¹¹ Christian ascetics, they did not separate themselves from the world. On the contrary, they travelled all over the Empire to propagate their way of life. These wandering preachers covered a wide social range. Some were wealthy and highly educated like Dio Chrysostom. Many were simple craftsmen, and they were heard and supported by men of all classes, including the most elevated.¹² Cynics were from the very beginning disrespectful of men in authority. It is said that Alexander the Great wanted to make the acquaintance of their notorious founder at the Isthmian Games. So he approached Diogenes, who happened to be sunning himself, and asked him if he could do him a favour. Diogenes replied: 'Yes, get out of my sun.' Another story tells how Alexander saw Diogenes examining a heap of human bones. When asked what he was doing Diogenes replied, 'I am looking for the bones of your father, but I cannot distinguish them from the bones of a slave.' The example of outspokenness set by

¹⁰ Diogenes (c.412/403–324/323 BC) preceded and certainly influenced Zeno (335–263 BC), the founder of Stoicism.

¹¹ Especially the wandering Christian ascetics in Mesopotamia and Syria. See below, 98.

¹² See Lucian, *The Runaways* (δραπέται), for a satirical account of these wandering preachers.

Diogenes was followed by his disciples over the centuries, no doubt more provocatively by some than by others. A few Cynics were punished and some even executed,¹³ but on the whole they seem to have been tolerated and even admired. Their preaching evidently met a need.

As has been noted earlier, we have few or no records of confrontational outspokenness by senators or other public figures in the presence of the later emperors. One reason is that during the disturbed third century emperors spent much of their time on campaign, away from Rome, so that there was little opportunity for senators and the emperor to clash in the Senate. In the later Empire, the Empire of Diocletian and Constantine and their successors, emperors more often than not resided elsewhere than at Rome. From time to time emperors must surely have had heated discussions about policy or military strategy with their advisers. But these discussions did not take place in public. The emperors of the later Empire were much more shielded from contact with members of the general public than emperors of the first and second centuries had been. So there was much less opportunity for outspokenness other than the outspokenness behind closed doors of courtiers and officials, though of course emperors still submitted themselves to the mass demonstrations at the public spectacles in the theatre, amphitheatre, and hippodrome.¹⁴

In respect of their outspokenness, Ambrose and Chrysostom were in a sense the heirs of Thræsea and Helvetius. But Christians also had a very important tradition of outspokenness of their own. For under the early Empire, almost from the beginning to the end, they had been subject to a special judicial regime, which has come to be known as 'The Persecutions'. This meant that at any time¹⁵ a Christian was liable to be arrested, taken to court, and ordered by the presiding magistrate, usually the provincial governor, to perform a sacrifice to

¹³ Dio 65.15.5; Herodian 19.2, 5.

¹⁴ Alan Cameron, *The Circus Factions* (Oxford, 1976), 233–44.

¹⁵ In practice trials of Christians and martyrdoms were rare, except on occasions of a localized pogrom or during one of the three 'general persecutions' promoted by the imperial government. See Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 419–92. G. E. M. de Ste Croix's 'Why were the Early Christians Persecuted?', *Past and Present*, 26 (1963), 6–38 was a pioneering study.

a pagan deity. If they refused, their disobedience and contempt of court (*contumacia*) was more often than not punished with the death penalty. Many Christians chose to die rather than to sacrifice, and we have a whole literature of records of trials of Christians, the so-called *Acts of Martyrs*,¹⁶ which often include a longer, or a shorter, dialogue between the Christian and his judge, in which the Christian explains, sometimes more, sometimes less provocatively, why he or she cannot, and will not, obey the command to sacrifice. Ambrose and Chrysostom had authoritative Christian precedents for their *parrhesia*.

(II) CHURCH AND STATE: A NEW SITUATION AND A NEW PROBLEM

At first sight ascetic ideals and the constitutional arrangements of the early Empire seem to have very little in common. The former are inward looking, and belong to the sphere of personal character and values; the latter are part of politics. But they are nevertheless related. Developments in religion and politics interact. So the replacement of the Roman Republic by the principate seems to have been one of the factors making for a more inward-looking attitude to religion and morality.¹⁷ The conversion of the emperor Constantine to the Christian religion not only ended the threat of persecution, but enormously accelerated the expansion of Christianity and of the values and ideas associated with it, not least those concerned with the simple life and the high value of asceticism. As we have seen, the theory and practice of Christian asceticism were already in existence, but Christian asceticism, as a way of life, whether in its solitary or in its communal forms, became a mass movement only after Christianity had become the religion of the emperor.

But the conversion of Constantine to Christianity also opened an age of conflict within the Church. The history of the Church in the fourth century is to a great extent a history of divisions in the

¹⁶ A selection of *Acts* that are probably authentic: H. Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford, 1972).

¹⁷ Michel Foucault, *Le Souci de soi* (Paris, 1984), trans. Robert Hurley, *The Care of the Self* (Harmondsworth, 1988).

Church, sometimes over discipline, sometimes about doctrine, above all between those who accepted the creed of Nicaea, and those, whom their opponents described as Arians, who rejected the Nicene creed. Divisions and disputes of this kind were nothing new; they had been part of the history of Christianity from the beginning. Indeed it is becoming fashionable to argue that when discussing the first centuries of Christianity it is more appropriate to talk of 'Christianities', rather than of a central (or 'orthodox') Christianity with a penumbra of Christian sects (or 'heresies').¹⁸ But after the conversion of Constantine the divisions in what is now indisputably the Church move right into the centre of the picture. One reason may well have been that the conversion of the emperor was followed by a great influx of converts, some highly educated and articulate, who asked new questions, and required answers which might turn out to be highly controversial.¹⁹ But perhaps the most important factor was, paradoxically, that after the conversion of Constantine the emperor offered administrative machinery for enforcing unity.

Within the Empire the Christian Church was a distinct institution with its own administration, and its own traditions and commandments, which the imperial government had made sustained efforts to suppress. The emergence of Christian emperors created a totally new situation, but at the same time new problems for both Church and state. The Roman government whether republican or monarchical had always been concerned to retain the support of the gods for the Roman state, to ensure the preservation of 'the peace of the gods' (the *pax deorum*). Christian emperors too felt responsible for good relations between the Roman state and supernatural powers, but this now meant that they saw it as their duty to secure the well-being of the Church, and above all to make sure that it remained united. Constantine certainly thought that God held him personally responsible for the unity of the Church, and that God would punish not only Constantine himself but also his empire if he failed in this duty. A letter Constantine wrote in the course of the Donatist controversy

¹⁸ e.g. Keith Hopkins, *A World Full of Gods* (London, 1988), 1; 'Perhaps Christianities would reflect the diversities better.'

¹⁹ P. Garnsey, 'The Originality and Origin of the Anonymous *De divitiis*', in Amirav and ter Haar Romeny (eds.), *From Rome to Constantinople*, 29–45, esp. 40–5.

explains his view: 'I consider it absolutely contrary to the divine law that we should overlook such quarrels... whereby the Highest Divinity may perhaps be moved to wrath, not only against the human race, but also against me myself to whom... he has committed the government of all earthly things... For I shall really and fully be able to feel secure and always to hope for prosperity and happiness from... the most mighty God, only when I see all venerating the most holy God in the proper cult of the catholic religion.'²⁰ Subsequently the conviction that God's support for the Empire depended on the emperor's upholding religious unity on the basis of correct belief guided the policy of most of Constantine's successors.

Constantine's practice, which was followed more or less by his successors, was to summon assemblies of bishops to decide what the correct faith was, and then to enforce the implementation of their decision. Councils were expected to reach consensus. There was no counting of votes. If disagreements persisted the emperor or his representatives would eventually decide the formula which would be enforced as the decision of the council.²¹ Bishops who refused to accept the agreed creed would be deposed. The Church, or at least that part of it whose faith Constantine upheld, went along with this procedure, which was to be adopted by all Constantine's Christian successors, though the creed that they supported was not necessarily the creed of Nicaea. This situation resulted in regular intervention by emperors in the affairs of the Church, a state of affairs which was to cause serious difficulties for both Church and emperor.²² For if the emperor intervened in support of one Christian faction, this necessarily meant that he would antagonize its opponents. This could not have happened under pagan emperors. In the classical city the state religion had simply been a department of the *respublica*. There could

²⁰ Optatus, Appendix no. III.

²¹ The emperor therefore saw his role as that of an arbitrator rather than that of a supreme head of the Church. See K. M. Girardet, *Kaisertum, Religionspolitik und das Recht von Staat und Kirche in der Spätantike* (Bonn, 2009), 73–104.

²² On some effects of Constantine's conversion on his legislation see L. Guichard, 'L'Élaboration du statut juridique des clercs et des églises d'après les lois constantiniennes du Code Théodosien XVI.2', in S. Crogiez-Pétoquin and P. Jaillette (eds.), *Le Code Théodosien: Diversité des approches et nouvelles perspectives*, Collection de l'École Française de Rome 412 (Rome, 2009), 209–23; K.-L. Noethlichs, 'Éthique chrétienne dans la législation de Constantin le Grand', *ibid.* 225–37.

be no conflict between the Roman government and Roman priests, between the magistrates and the men responsible for Roman religion: they were part of the same institution, and shared the respect for the same ancestral traditions, unlike the bishops of the Church which had survived centuries of suspicion and active hostility on the part of the Roman authorities.²³

The Christian emperor had a definite role in the government of the Church, as his predecessors had had in the government of the pagan state religion.²⁴ But his task was much more difficult. For bishops who rejected a definition of the faith accepted by the emperor might feel conscience-bound to disobey his orders, when he commanded them to give assent to a creed, or to break communion with an exiled bishop, or to hand over churches to the imperially favoured group. Though it would seem that normally a high proportion of bishops did in the end toe the imperial line, there always were some who refused to give in, and these, with very few exceptions, were forced to go into exile. In most cases such bishops confronted only the emperor's officials, and not the emperor personally, though they might occasionally have produced pamphlets highly critical of the emperor from their place of exile.²⁵ A group of individuals who enjoyed something like a privileged right of outspokenness, even when they addressed the emperor, were holy men.²⁶

But occasionally a bishop did refuse to obey an order he had received from the emperor in person. So Theodoret records a dialogue between pope Liberius and the emperor Constantius in which the

²³ Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change*, 292–3. M. Beard, 'Priesthoods in the Roman Republic', in M. Beard, and J. North (eds.), *Pagan Priests* (London, 1990), 18–48, deals with priests under the Republic but applies to priests of the Empire as well.

²⁴ A full account: F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (London, 1977), 551–607.

²⁵ The historical sources give considerable space to conflict between bishops and emperor on questions of orthodoxy, notably of Nicene bishops against the anti-Nicene policy of Constantius. But bishops very rarely confronted the emperor face to face (cf. below 51–2). Hilary of Poitiers's *Contra Constantium* (PL 10.577–606) was only published after the death of Constantius in November 361. Lucifer of Calaris wrote *De regibus apostaticis* (PL 13.793–818) in exile 356–61. On his view of the ideal emperor and on the circumstances in which an unjust ruler must submit to the judgement of bishops see Girardet, *Kaisertum, Religionspolitik und das Recht von Staat und Kirche in der Spätantike*, 311–33.

²⁶ See below Chapter 6.

emperor urges Liberius to break communion with Athanasius, the exiled Nicene bishop of Alexandria. Liberius persists in his refusal and is exiled.²⁷ We are told that the emperor Valens entered the cathedral of Tomi and ordered Vetranius the bishop to adopt the 'Arian' creed. Vetranius refused and walked out together with the whole congregation, leaving the emperor and his followers alone in the church. Vetranius was promptly exiled, though he was recalled not long after.²⁸ When Valens came to Caesarea he instructed Modestus, his praetorian prefect, to get Basil, the bishop of the city, to assent to the *Homoian* creed. Basil refused, and was about to be exiled when the emperor's son fell gravely ill. Valens asked Basil to visit the sick prince. We are told that the child immediately showed signs of recovery. But unfortunately Valens had also invited some *Homoian* bishops to pray for his son. So the child died after all. Basil maintained his resistance, but was not exiled.²⁹

(III) A LOYAL OPPOSITION

At the same time it seems to have been an unspoken rule that even bitter episcopal or lay opposition to an emperor's religious measures was not taken to the point where religious opposition turned into political opposition. While an emperor might be violently attacked for taking sides in a religious dispute, this did not mean that the party against whom he had decided would deny his legitimacy, and work for his deposition. So Constantine, who upheld the creed of Nicaea,³⁰ was succeeded without difficulty by Constantius, who

²⁷ Theodoret, *HE* 2.13–14. Cf. Sozomen, *HE* 4.11. We cannot of course guarantee the full historicity of this and the following two anecdotes.

²⁸ Sozomen, *HE* 6.21.

²⁹ Ibid. 6.17. That the ecclesiastical historians' anecdotes illustrating the *parrhesia* of Catholic bishops to Valens are somewhat one-sided is pointed out by Neil McLynn, 'Imperial Church-Going', in Simon Swain and Mark Edwards (eds.), *Approaching Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2004), 254–8.

³⁰ Eusebius does not name Eusebius of Nicomedia in his account of the baptism, which took place at Nicomedia: *VC* 4, 61.1–4 and Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall, *Eusebius, Life of Constantine* (Oxford, 1999), 299–343. But according to Jerome, *Chron.* A.337, Constantine had himself baptized shortly before his death by the

favoured a *Homoian*, i.e. what Nicenes regularly called an Arian, creed.³¹ Constantius exiled a large number of Nicene (*Homoousian*) bishops, but this did not induce his Nicene subjects to rally in support of their exiled bishops and to attempt to overthrow the emperor. Constantius was succeeded by the pagan Julian, who strove energetically to revive paganism, but this did not incite Christians to try to depose Julian. The Christian Jovian succeeded Julian. But the army officers did not elect Jovian because of his religion, but because he seemed the most suitable candidate. So it went on. Once an emperor's legitimacy had been accepted, his religious policy was not considered a reason for deposing him. A number of emperors were deposed and died violently, but not because their opponents were dissatisfied with their religious policy.

This state of affairs persisted throughout the fourth and fifth centuries. In both East and West the fact that many of the Empire's Germanic soldiers, including their generals, were 'heretical' Arians was tacitly accepted by bishops and secular authorities. The same was true in the Germanic successor kingdoms. For most of the time, Arian kings coexisted peacefully with Catholic bishops. The one exception was Vandal Africa, where there does seem to have been an almost continuous state of conflict between the Arian rulers and the Catholic bishops.

The conversion of Constantine introduced another situation without precedent. A Christian emperor must seek the salvation of his own soul. This meant that in matters of religion the emperor was subject to the bishop of the city where he resided, while the bishop in turn was answerable to God for the conduct of the emperor. A bishop who took this responsibility seriously might therefore from time to time feel it his duty to reprimand the emperor for something that he had done or failed to do, in a way no pagan emperor had been reprimanded. In the second half of the fourth century emperors presented bishops with a further opportunity to demonstrate their

pro-Arian Eusebius of Nicomedia. Perhaps Constantine was above all interested in conciliation and unity. See R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh, 1988), 172–8; Girardet, *Kaisertum, Religionspolitik und das Recht von Staat und Kirche in der Spätantike*, 14–54.

³¹ On the distinction see below, 58.

displeasure, for they began to attend services in the cathedral, and to exploit the ceremony and publicity connected with church attendance.³² This laid the emperor open to public rebuke. Only a bishop of exceptional personality and courage would dare to use this opportunity. Ambrose had the courage;³³ it is, however, not surprising that for very many years he appear to have had few, if any, imitators.

³² McLynn, 'Imperial Church-Going', 235–70.

³³ There is no evidence that Chrysostom ever confronted the emperor in church.

Part II

Ambrose

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Ambrose Writer and Preacher

(I) LIFE AND LETTERS¹

Ambrose was born in 339 at Trier. His father was praetorian prefect of Gaul under Constantine II. He died not long after. In 340 Constantine II was killed in a civil war fighting against his brother Constans. Ambrose's father's death may well have been linked with the death of his emperor. So Ambrose's life started with a tragedy.² There is not a word about this in his writings. Ambrose was brought up in Rome. His late father's high office gave him senatorial rank, which was unusual for a bishop at this time. This does not necessarily imply that he belonged to the established aristocracy at Rome. It is possible, but not certain, that he was related to Symmachus, the famous pagan prefect of Rome with whom he was to clash over the Altar of Victory.³ The head of the family's death had not involved

¹ On the Life of Ambrose: N. B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1994); a short summary: Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches*, 5–26; still useful: J. R. Palanque, *Saint Ambroise et l'empire romain* (Paris, 1933); H. von Campenhausen, *Ambrosius von Mailand als Kirchenpolitiker* (Berlin, 1929); F. H. Dudden, *The Life and Times of St Ambrose* (Oxford, 1935).

² Santo Mazzarino, *Storia sociale del vescovo Ambrogio* (Rome, 1989), 75–82.

³ Aurelianus was an extremely common name since it was taken by many new citizens after the *constitutio Antoniniana* had conferred Roman citizenship on all inhabitants of the Empire. Symmachus' letters to Ambrose are extremely formal. Ambrose's remark that advice had been given to Satyrus, Ambrose's brother, by 'your parent' (*De ex. fratr.* 1.32), Symmachus, suggests kinship, but not necessarily with one of the famous Symmachi. Symmachus' commendation of Satyrus to Symmachus' brother as 'our common brother' (Symmachus, *Ep.* 1.63) is less significant because 'brother' is often used loosely by Symmachus. But the two passages together do make a case. Is McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 4, 263 perhaps excessively sceptical?

the loss of the family property. Ambrose owned estates in Africa, which were to provide at least part of the resources needed for the construction of his new churches. The family had Christian traditions. Its family tree listed Soteris, a virgin martyr,⁴ and in the early 350s Marcellina, Ambrose's sister, had the veil of a consecrated virgin conferred on her by pope Liberius. Subsequently she shared her house at Rome with other consecrated virgins, in the same way as Chrysostom's friend Olympias did at Constantinople. We know nothing about Ambrose's early life and schooling, but his writings show that he had a full rhetorical education, and that, unusually for this time, he had acquired a good knowledge of Greek

The young Ambrose was not content to live a life of senatorial leisure, but set out on a professional career. His first employment was as an advocate at the court of the praetorian prefect of Illyricum, which was an excellent stepping stone for a career in the imperial service. His first government post was that of assessor to Petronius Probus, who was then serving his third term as praetorian prefect of Illyricum, Italy, and Africa. He was probably the most powerful and influential civilian in the West. Moreover he and his wife were committed Christians. Ambrose could not have wished for a better patron. It was almost certainly Probus who obtained for Ambrose the governorship of Aemelia and Liguria, and it is likely that Probus played an important part behind the scenes in the extraordinary events that led to Ambrose being elected bishop of Milan.

The Christian population of Milan was divided by the Arian controversy. The issue of the controversy was how to define in one definition both the unity and distinctness of God the Father and Jesus the Son. The Council of Nicaea in 325 came out with the definition that Father and Son were of the same substance (*Homoousios*), and condemned two propositions, namely that the Son was in any way inferior to the Father, and that he was part of the created world. Many bishops rejected the definition of Nicaea and a prolonged and bitter conflict ensued.⁵ The emperor Constantius,

⁴ Soteris is said to have been nobly born; Ambrose's mother was buried next to her tomb. Practically nothing is known about her life, or indeed her death. See McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 34–5. C. Pietri, *Roma Christiana* (Rome, 1976), 533, 614.

⁵ See eg.: Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*.

the son of Constantine, sympathized with the opponents of Nicaea, but strove hard to reunite the Church with a compromise. He summoned a succession of synods, and applied the whole weight of imperial authority to compel the bishops to abandon the creed of Nicaea and to sign a compromise definition to the effect that the relationship of Father and Son was similar (*Homoios*). Bishops who refused to sign were sent into exile. After the death of Constantius in 361 many bishops in the West seem to have returned to the definition of Nicaea, though the progress of the Nicæan revival is not well documented. But Milan remained under a *Homoian* bishop.⁶

In 355 Constantius had deposed the Nicene bishop of Milan and installed Auxentius, who accepted the *Homoian* creed, which had been agreed at the Council of Ariminum. While Auxentius became firmly established, a significant part of the inhabitants of Milan remained Nicenes (*Homoiousians*). When Auxentius died in 374, a bitter conflict arose between *Homoians* and Nicenes over the succession. Riots threatened when a deeply divided crowd assembled in the cathedral to elect a new bishop. Ambrose, acting in the capacity of provincial governor, entered the church to restore order. Order was indeed restored, for the two factions united to acclaim Ambrose. Ambrose tried, or at least gave the impression of trying, to escape election. But once he was assured of the support of the emperor Valentinian I, he gave in. He was quickly baptized, and promoted through all grades of the priesthood within a week, at the end of which he was consecrated bishop.⁷

As bishop Ambrose did not face an easy task. He was a Nicene, while his predecessor Auxentius had been a *Homoian*, and a good and successful bishop whose clergy evidently had been content to go along with this brand of Christianity. If Ambrose intended to make the Church of Milan a Nicene Church, as he would seem to have intended from the beginning, he would have to proceed very carefully. His task was made more difficult by the arrival in Milan, probably in 379,⁸

⁶ D. H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian–Nicene Conflicts* (Oxford, 1995), 11–103.

⁷ Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian–Nicene Conflicts*, 104–27; McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 44–52.

⁸ Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches*, 11–12; McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 122 prefers winter 380/1.

of the boy emperor Valentinian II and his formidable mother Justina, who were both *Homoians*, and were escorted by units of the army largely composed of *Homoian* Goths.⁹ Ambrose's position was easier after 381 when the Nicene emperor Gratian moved his principal residence from Trier to Milan. But in summer 383 Gratian was killed while campaigning in Gaul against the usurper Maximus, so that for the next four years Ambrose once more had to coexist with the *Homoian* Valentinian and Justina. In 387 Maximus, who was a Nicene, drove Valentinian and Justina out of Italy. This ended *Homoian* pressure, only to face Ambrose with the new dilemma as to whether it would be wise for him seek close relations with the usurper Maximus, seeing that it was likely that Theodosius would sooner or later invade Italy and overthrow the usurper—which is of course what he did in 388. In 393/4, while Eugenius was ruler of Italy, Ambrose was for a second time faced with the problem of how to behave to a usurper until Eugenius too was overthrown by Theodosius. This is not the place to give a detailed account of these complicated events. It must suffice to note that Ambrose overcame all these difficulties triumphantly. During the last years of his life (395–7) he was a pillar of the regime of Stilicho, guardian of the young emperor Honorius. Milan and indeed all the churches of northern Italy were ruled by Nicene bishops, and the bishop of Milan enjoyed a position of pre-eminence among them comparable to that of the pope in the south, a pre-eminence which Ambrose's successors were unable to maintain. Ambrose certainly cannot be said to have achieved this position by compromise and flattery: he has gone down into history as one of the most outspoken bishops of all times. Ambrose clearly was an outstandingly impressive personality, but he was also an exceptionally skilful diplomat and politician, armed with charm, cunning, and, when the situation seemed to call for it, ruthlessness.

But if Ambrose was too much of a politician for some modern tastes, he was certainly not only a politician. He was a considerable intellectual. He read Greek theology, notably writings of Origen,¹⁰

⁹ At this time Ambrose had to hand over a church for *Homoian* worship (*De Spiritu Sancto* 1.1.21).

¹⁰ G. Madec, *Saint Ambroise et la philosophie* (Paris, 1974).

Philo,¹¹ and St Basil,¹² and he passed on what he had learnt in Latin translation to colleagues who could not read these authors in the original. Though he was not an original theologian, he worked extremely hard at his writings, which fill four volumes of the *Patrologia Latina*. They include commentaries on parts of the Book of Genesis, on some of the psalms, and on the Gospel according to Luke. He wrote books *On the Duties of Ministers*, *On the Faith*, *On the Holy Spirit*, *On the Sacraments*, *On Repentance*, and *On Virginity*, to mention only the most important.¹³ By writing a series of what might be called handbooks of Nicene theology, he became a recognized authority in theological questions, and this certainly helped him to become the leader of the bishops of northern Italy.

Ambrose's writings are a patchwork made up of his own sentences interwoven with phrases and sentences drawn from the Bible. While his synthesis of classical and biblical styles is not as satisfying as that of Augustine in, say, *The Confessions*, he clearly was sensitive to the power of biblical imagery, even of imagery as unclassical as that of the *Song of Songs*.¹⁴ His paragraphs often cohere by association in the manner of poetry rather than by logical sequence.¹⁵ But then Ambrose was also a very good poet, and his hymns inspired the genre of medieval Latin hymns.¹⁶

Ambrose did not write an autobiography, but not long before his death he published a collection of letters.¹⁷ The letters included in this *Collection* have clearly been selected, so as to make sure that

¹¹ H. Savon, *Saint Ambroise devant l'exégèse de Philon le juif* (Paris, 1977); E. Lucchesi, *L'Usage de Philon dans l'œuvre de saint Ambroise: 'Quellenforschung' relative aux commentaires d'Ambroise sur la Genèse* (Leiden, 1977).

¹² e.g. *The Six Days of Creation* (Exaameron); *On Elija and Fasting* (*De Helia et ieiunio*); *On Tobias* (*De Tobia*); *On the Holy Spirit* (*De Spiritu Sancto*) all show strong influence of Basil.

¹³ For a list of his writings see Boniface Ramsey, *Ambrose* (London, 1997), 55–68.

¹⁴ e.g. Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches*, 361–3 on use of imagery from the *Song of Songs* in the funeral oration for Valentinian II.

¹⁵ See J. Fontaine, 'Prose et poésie dans la création littéraire d'Ambroise', in G. Lazzati, *Ambrosius episcopus* (Milan, 1976), i. 124–70.

¹⁶ *Ambroise de Milan: Hymnes*, ed. J. Fontaine (Paris, 1992); A. S. Walpole, *Early Latin Hymns* (Cambridge, 1922; repr. Hildesheim, 1966), 16–114. Ambrose's authorship is confirmed by Augustine for *Aeterna rerum conditor, Deus creator omnium, Iam surgit hora tertia, Intende qui regis Israel*.

¹⁷ CSEL 82.1–3. Index in 82.4. The political letters and the letters outside the *Collection* are in CSEL 82.3.

Ambrose was remembered as he wished to be remembered. The *Collection* is in ten books. Only one book has letters that deal with political themes; in the remaining books the letters are essentially theological. Many elucidate difficult biblical passages. In his capacity as bishop and major public figure Ambrose must have written numerous notes and letters to leading men in the Senate, the imperial administration, or the army. But he took very few of these public letters into the *Collection*. Most of the letters in the *Collection* are addressed to clerics, many to quite ordinary clerics. If scholars today are tempted to see Ambrose as a man of noble descent who became a successful bishop-politician, that is not how he wanted to be seen, and he was indeed much more than that.

Sixteen letters have been transmitted outside the *Collection*.¹⁸ They are letters of the same kind as the letters in Book 10 of the *Collection*; that is they are about ecclesiastical politics, including relations with the emperor. What is perhaps the most famous, certainly the most admired, display of Ambrose's political outspokenness, his demand that the emperor Theodosius must do penance for the massacre at Thessalonica, was made in a letter to the emperor which has only been preserved outside the *Collection*. Though Ambrose omitted these letters from his *Collection*, he evidently kept copies in a place where they could easily be found by Paulinus,¹⁹ his biographer. They too contribute to his self-presentation.

The letters whether transmitted within or outside the *Collection* are by far the most important sources for the famous episodes which have shaped the image of Ambrose for later generations.²⁰ It is therefore important to know whether the letters present an accurate record. Unfortunately we do not have adequate alternative accounts against which to check Ambrose's self-representation. We know from Augustine's *Confessions* that Ambrose's personality made a powerful impact on all who met him. We learn from the ecclesiastical historians Sozomen and Theodoret that the fame of his outspokenness was Empire-wide. The surviving fragment of the

¹⁸ The so-called *epistolae extra collectionem*. The letter from Gratian has been transmitted with Ambrose's treatise on the Holy Spirit.

¹⁹ Paolino di Milano, *Vita di S Ambrogio*, ed. M. Pellegrino (Rome, 1961).

²⁰ On the character of the letters see Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches*, 27–46.

Acts of the Council of Aquileia²¹ shows Ambrose in action as the ruthless leader of Nicene bishops. Three large churches built by him are still standing. His literary output is impressive. So we know enough from sources other than the letters that Ambrose was a great and important figure. As for the letters, it seems to me that at least one or two cannot have been sent in the form in which we have them.²² As for the rest it is clear that they have been written by a politician. The 'business letters' are composed to make a case; the descriptive letters Ambrose wrote to his sister are designed to show Ambrose's actions in the light in which he wants them to be seen. The letters therefore do not tell the whole story, and they are never fair to the other side. But historians, even more recent, less than hagiographical, historians,²³ have assumed that the factual information is essentially accurate.

(II) AMBROSE AND THE ASCETIC MOVEMENT

Ambrose was greatly impressed by the ascetic ideal. As we have seen, a very high valuation of virginity, and strong pressure on widows not to remarry, were part of Christianity from its early beginnings. At Rome there must have been some Christian virgins and widows living ascetic lives in domestic circumstances already for a long time; but asceticism became conspicuous only around the middle of the fourth century, when it was taken up by ladies of the senatorial aristocracy, especially widows who turned their houses into ascetic institutions, where they lived with their daughters and servants a life of ascetic simplicity, wearing plain clothing, eating simple meals,

²¹ CSEL 82.3.325–63.

²² Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches*, 349–51: argument that *Ep.* 30 (Maur. 24) cannot have been sent to Valentinian II in the form in which we have it, and that the account of Ambrose's interview with the usurper Maximus cannot be accurate. The last sentence of *Ep.* 74 (Maur. 40) to the emperor Theodosius on the synagogue at Callinicum, as preserved in the *Collection*, ends with a threat which is missing from the version outside the *Collection* (*Ep.* ex. 1A). It looks as if the last paragraph was not part of the original letter.

²³ Even McLynn's revisionist interpretation assumes that accurate facts can be separated from the 'spin' that Ambrose has put on them.

spending much time at prayer and Bible reading. These ladies are well known from the letters of Jerome, who acted as their spiritual guide. According to Jerome it was Athanasius, the famous bishop of Alexandria, while living in exile at Rome in 339, who acquainted Marcella with eastern asceticism, and thus provided the decisive stimulus for the adoption of an ascetic lifestyle by some of the great ladies of Rome.²⁴ But in 339 Marcella can only have been around 10 years old, so Jerome must be mistaken. There is however no doubt that the inspiration for the outburst of enthusiasm for the ascetic life among the great ladies of Rome owed something to the example of the East, perhaps known to them above all from Athanasius' *Life of Antony*, and the monastic *Rule* of Pachomius. Regular, abbot-governed monasteries, that is monasteries as understood by Pachomius, only came later. But when Augustine was in Rome in 387 he saw 'communal lodging-houses' for both men and for women.²⁵

We know much less about early asceticism in the north of Italy. In the middle of the century Eusebius of Vercelli had insisted that the clergy of his cathedral must live a communal life.²⁶ Around 370 Chromatius and other members of the clergy of Aquileia formed an ascetic fellowship, and it was at Aquileia that Jerome acquired his enthusiasm for the monastic life. By the early 380s there was a community of male monks under Ambrose's surveillance outside the walls of Milan. In 386 Augustine, with a few companions and his mother, went into philosophical retreat at Cassiacum. By now the impact of the ascetic ideal was becoming extremely powerful all over the West, particularly so among upper-class women of the elite, and not only among women.²⁷ Men as well as women were inspired to dispose of their property, and to give the proceeds to the

²⁴ Jerome, *Ep.* 127.5; cf. Lorenz, 'Die Anfänge des abendländischen Mönchtums im 4. Jahrhundert', 3–8.

²⁵ Diver scribe: Augustine, *De mor. eccl. cathol.* 1.70–1.

²⁶ J. T. Lienhard, 'Patristic Sermons on Eusebius of Vercelli and their Relation to his Monasticism', *Rev. bénédictine*, 87 (1977), 163–72; cf. Lorenz, 'Die Anfänge des abendländischen Mönchtums im 4. Jahrhundert', 9–12.

²⁷ On Sulpicius Severus' 'Primuliacrum', where he lived a communal life in his own villa, see Paulinus of Nola, *Epp.* 31, 32. On disposal of estates by Paulinus of Nola and other Gallic aristocrats see Sigrid Mratschek, *Der Briefwechsel des Paulinus von Nola*, Hypomnemata 134 (Göttingen, 2002), 78–82.

poor.²⁸ So Ambrose gave his property to the Church of Milan, and his brother Satyrus evidently intended his share of the family property to go the same way.²⁹ The movement was potentially disruptive. It put at risk the wealth and continuity of the great families, and it also threatened the authority of bishops and clergy, because the ascetics could claim to be living a more perfectly Christian life.³⁰ It naturally aroused opposition which is associated with Helvidius, a layman,³¹ and Jovinianus, a Roman monk.³²

During Ambrose's adolescence and early adulthood however (that is in the 350s and 360s), the practical realization of this ideal was still most conspicuous in the lives of consecrated virgins, like Ambrose's sister.³³ The young Ambrose evidently was very much impressed. He came to regard the life of the consecrated virgin as a model of the Christian life fully realized. Ambrose's earliest theological writings praise the vocation of the consecrated virgin, and he remained a very strong upholder of virginity to the end of his life. In due course, Ambrose made his clergy lead a communal and celibate life, and he clearly believed that that was the right way for clergy to live. In what is probably the last of the preserved letters Ambrose addressed the electors of a new bishop at Vercelli, to make a powerful defence of the ascetic life in general, and of the sanctity of virginity in particular. He writes, 'There results a great increase in the grace of a bishop, if he binds young men to the practice of abstinence and the rule of chastity, and while they continue to live in the city, separates them

²⁸ e.g. see E. A. Clark, *The Life of Melania the Younger* (Lewiston, NY, 1984).

²⁹ Ambrose's estates: Paulinus, *V. Ambr.* 1.38. They were administered by his brother Satyrus (*De ex. fratr.* 1.24 (CSEL 73, 222–3). Satyrus refused to marry, or make a will.

³⁰ By emphasizing the importance of the ascetic life for clergy, Eusebius of Vercelli, Ambrose, Augustine, and others were in fact incorporating, and thereby disarming, the potentially disruptive ascetic movement.

³¹ Jerome, *Contra Helvidium* (late 383?); D. G. Hunter, 'Resistance to the Virginal Ideal in Late Fourth Century Rome', *Theological Studies*, 48 (1987), 45–64.

³² See Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy and Heresy*.

³³ When Jerome lived in Rome 382–6, there was still no monastic community for men in the city, but Marcella, a senatorial widow, had already read Athanasius' *Life of Antony*, in the 370s, and was so impressed that she turned her mansion into a monastery for her household and some friends, and thus became the first of a number of great ladies to adopt the monastic life (J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome* (London, 1973), 92, 139).

from the city's customs and social life.³⁴ Someone who has entered a second marriage is disqualified from the priesthood, for 'what distinction would there be between the people and the bishop, if both were obligated to the same rules? The life of a bishop ought to be superior, just as his grace is.'³⁵ Ambrose did not make these rules simply for the sake of discipline and hierarchy. The fact that he was also a very strong upholder of the doctrine of the virginity of Mary, the mother of Jesus, is not a coincidence. For Ambrose the virginity of Mary was the charter which validated the ascetic life of his sister and of others like her, and of course the demands he was making on his clergy.³⁶

(III) AMBROSE ON VIRGINS AND WIDOWS³⁷

The treatise *De virginibus* (*On Virgins*) is probably the earliest of Ambrose's works. It was probably written in 377. Ambrose had been bishop for three years but he had kept silent while learning his job—and perhaps also because he was anxious not to offend the *Homoians* among his clergy and his congregation. The treatise is based on two sermons. One was delivered by Ambrose himself at the feast of St Agnes. The other was preached by pope Liberius on the occasion of the consecration of Ambrose's sister Marcellina. The treatise is in three books. The first book starts with a panegyric of St Agnes, and

³⁴ *Ep. ex. 14* (Maur. 63), 66; cf. *Off. 1.248*. See also Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy and Heresy*, 219–24.

³⁵ *Ep. ex. 14.64*.

³⁶ See Brown, *The Body and Society*, 353–7. Contrast Chrysostom who, though he upheld the ascetic ideal, had no special veneration for the Virgin Mary, e.g. *Hom. in Matt. 4.5* (PG 57, 45, 9–11: angel tells Mary of conception in advance lest she commit suicide; 21 *Hom. in Joh. 2.3* (PG 59, 130, 43–50; also 44 *Hom in Matt. 12, 46*: Mary wants to display that she rules her son. See S. Zincone, 'Maria nell'opera di Iovanni Crisostomo', *Theotokos*, 14 (2006), 31–42. Of Augustine it has been said that 'in his works Mary features as a creedal commodity, or a convenient exemplum of the virginal state, rather than as an object of veneration in its own right', Pauline Allen, 'A Mariological Perspective', in Amirav and ter Haar Romeny (eds.), *From Rome to Constantinople*, 137–51, citation 137–8.

³⁷ On this see McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 60–8. Translations cited below are from Ramsey, *Ambrose*.

continues as a panegyric of virginity. The second book sets out models for consecrated virgins to imitate: the first and most important is the Virgin Mary, the second St Thecla. The third model is an unnamed virgin martyr of Antioch. The third book, which is based on the sermon of pope Liberius, gives guidance on how a consecrated virgin is to live and to spend her time.

St Agnes was eager to lay down her life as a witness (martyr) to Christ when she was still too young to bear witness in a court of law. She rejected marriage, because she wanted to be joined to the heavenly bridegroom, who had chosen her. A consecrated virgin is a bride of Christ. But virginity is a great merit in a man also. It was for this that Elijah was carried up to heaven in a chariot of fire.³⁸ Virgins are assured of immortality.³⁹ Ambrose insists that the high valuation of virginity is peculiar to Christians. Pagans and barbarians are ignorant of it. The Vestal Virgins were only required to serve and therefore to retain their sexual purity for thirty years. So Ambrose could mock them: 'What sort of religion is that, in which young women are commanded to be chaste and old women to be unchaste?'⁴⁰ As Ambrose praises virginity his imagery becomes surprisingly paradoxical. 'In a panegyric it is usual to praise the native land of the man being praised. The native land of chastity is heaven, its author the Son of God.' 'Virginity is of Christ, but Christ is not of virginity... Christ is a virgin who bore us in his womb, he is a virgin who brought us forth... who nursed us with his own milk.'⁴¹ Ambrose insists that he is not advising against marriage. But he agrees with Paul that not to marry is better. 'The one girl does not sin if she marries, the other if she does not marry is immortal.'⁴²

He goes on to describe the inconveniences of marriage, arguing that the virgin is free of them and that her life is therefore preferable. With marriage comes lamentation. Child-bearing is difficult. Bringing up children is burdensome and often brings sorrow. Marriage involves subjection to a husband. Married women feel that they need to alter their appearance with make-up, but virgins have the beauty of virtue. 'Age cannot extinguish it, nor death snatch it away, nor sickness ruin it. Of this beauty the sole judge to be sought

³⁸ *De virginibus* 1.3.12.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 1.8.52.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 1.4.15.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 1.5.22.

⁴² *Ibid.* 1.6.24.

is God.' A marriageable woman is put up for sale to a wealthy man like a slave.⁴³

It is a good thing if a virgin's parents make an effort to encourage her to be pure, but it is more glorious if the girl chooses virginity of her own free will.⁴⁴ 'Not so long ago a woman of distinction by the world's standards, but now more distinguished in God's sight, sought refuge at the sacred altar, when she was being urged to marry by her relatives. Asked whether she would have done this if her father was still alive, she replied: "Perhaps he died, so that nobody would be able to put anything in my way."'⁴⁵

Many of Ambrose's views on virginity can be traced back to Tertullian, for whom the condition of the virgin approaches the state of Adam and Eve in paradise, and of the saved and risen dead.⁴⁶ When we compare Ambrose's writing on virginity and on widowhood with those of Chrysostom,⁴⁷ we find many similarities. The same themes recur, even though the styles of the two authors are quite different. Chrysostom does not create a highly evocative patchwork of biblical imagery as Ambrose does. Even when writing prose, Ambrose works with images in the manner of a poet, and when discussing virginity he makes abundant use of the striking imagery of the *Song of Songs*. Chrysostom's rhetoric is quite different—and his arguments are much easier to summarize. But the theology of virginity of the two men is the same. The virgin is the bride of Christ.⁴⁸ The celibate life is the life of angels.⁴⁹ For a consecrated virgin to marry is adultery or worse. The reward of celibacy is immortality. Compared with that of Chrysostom, Ambrose's upholding of virginity is if anything more enthusiastic about the enormous value of the simple fact of abstinence from sex,⁵⁰ but perhaps less concerned with celibacy as a moral discipline.

⁴³ *De virginibus* 1.6.25 ff.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 1.11.62.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 1.11.66.

⁴⁶ De Brabander, *Le Retour au paradis*, 155–7.

⁴⁷ See below, 251–2.

⁴⁸ e.g. *De virginibus* 1.5.22.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 1.8.48; 8.52: 'Chastity has even produced angels, the one who has kept it is an angel, the one who has lost it is a devil.'

⁵⁰ Ambrose assimilates the status of the consecrated virgin to that of a 'Levite', that is a priest. See *Exhortatio virginitatis* 6.35 and Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy and Heresy*, 229–30. Elsewhere Ambrose insists that priests ought never to have engaged in sexual intercourse, or at least that they must be strictly celibate once they have taken up the ministry (*Off.* 1.50.258).

The reason for the resemblance is clear. Ambrose and Chrysostom were both inspired by the same wave of ascetic enthusiasm. But if they were part of the same movement, they did not represent the movement at the same stage of development. When Chrysostom wrote his ascetic treatises, asceticism already had a wide appeal at Antioch, and indeed through the whole of Syria and Mesopotamia. He belonged to the second, if not the third, generation of ascetic preachers. In Ambrose's West the movement was only beginning to attract numerous followers. We have seen that the movement gained an important following among the great ladies of Rome in the 360s and 370s. But as far as we can tell it had not yet gained a foothold of that kind at Milan.⁵¹ It was Ambrose himself who took the decisive step to propagate asceticism in that city. The ceremony of consecration of a virgin was a great occasion in which the bishop played a central role. So Ambrose's sister Marcelina took the veil, the symbol of her marriage to Christ, from pope Liberius on Christmas Day in St Peter's, in the presence of the consecrated virgins of Rome.⁵² As a rule, the bishop presided at the ceremony, bestowed the veil, preached the sermon, and pronounced the final benediction. He continued to supervise the consecrated virgin, and sometimes even cared for a virgin's welfare after the death of her parents.⁵³ Ambrose was concerned to make his ceremonies of consecration impressive. He induced his friends and colleagues, the bishops of Bologna and Piacenza, to send girls to Milan to take their vows in Milan cathedral. He boasts that 'from the remotest parts of Mauretania and beyond virgins are drawn here in order to be consecrated, and although their families are in chains, still chastity knows no chains'.⁵⁴ This suggests that some of the girls he consecrated were slaves or freedwomen. Presumably they were in the service of ascetic widows or of consecrated daughters who continued to live in the house of their parents.⁵⁵ Perhaps some of these virgins even served Ambrose himself.

⁵¹ Lorenz, 'Die Anfänge des abendländischen Mönchtums im 4. Jahrhundert', 9–10.

⁵² *De virginitate* 3.11.

⁵³ Canon 31 of the Council of Hippo of 397 (CCSL 149.42), cf. Ambrose, *De institutione virginis* 107 and Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy and Heresy*, 228–9.

⁵⁴ *De virginibus* 1.10.59.

⁵⁵ But the twenty virgins of Bologna, who sustained themselves by their own work, seem to have been living collectively in a monastery (*De virginibus* 1.10.60).

Of the three women whom Ambrose sets out as models for holy virgins to imitate two are martyrs, Thecla and an anonymous virgin of Antioch, who had born witness in circumstances unlikely to be experienced by young women of Milan in the late fourth century. The realistic model is the Virgin Mary, and it is interesting and significant that Ambrose describes her in terms of a very conservative and traditional ideal of the role of women: 'Humble of heart, serious in speech, sparing of words, devoted to reading, placing her hope not in uncertain riches, but the prayers of the poor, intent on work, modest in discourse, accustomed to seek not man but God as the judge of her soul, to slander no one...and to stand up in the presence of her elders...When did she offend her parents? When did she laugh at the feeble? Leaving home was something unknown to her, except when she was going to church.'⁵⁶ The Virgin Mary is a model to be imitated by all women, but especially by consecrated virgins whom she will welcome in heaven and commend to God, saying: 'She has been faithful to her marriage with my son, she has maintained her bridal bed with an unstained chastity.'⁵⁷

Ambrose's active proselytizing for the order of consecrated virgins⁵⁸ met with some opposition. Parents objected to their daughters taking the vow⁵⁹ and thus making themselves unavailable for propagating the family.⁶⁰ They sometimes disinherited daughters who had taken the vow, and in doing so deprived the Church of resources which would otherwise probably have been bequeathed to it.⁶¹ It could happen that a virgin who had already been consecrated was forced into marriage by her parents. A year after the publication of *De virginibus*,⁶² Ambrose delivered a sermon in which he criticizes a father who had arranged a wedding for one of Ambrose's consecrated

⁵⁶ *De virginibus* 2.2.7–2.14.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 2.2.15–16. Chrysostom's friend Olympias at Constantinople, and Jerome's senatorial lady friends Marcella, Paula, and Lea were nothing like this—but then they were widows.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 1.10.61.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 1.10.58: daughters held back from consecration by mothers, even by widows.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 1.7.33.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 1.11.63–4.

⁶² M. Cutino, 'Note sulla datazione del *De virginitate* di Ambrogio', *Augustianum*, 46 (2006), 95–108.

virgins.⁶³ Ambrose's treatise is therefore not simply a panegyric of virginity. It is also a defence of the institution against its opponents. The fact that in the first years of his episcopate Ambrose devoted so much thought and energy to the exaltation of the status of the holy virgin may well have been partly because this was theologically neutral ground, shared by Nicenes and anti-Nicenes. However the fact that a bishop, with so true a political instinct as Ambrose, took up this particular and not uncontroversial cause shows that he knew that he was backing a winner. He realized that asceticism, and the exaltation of virginity, had potentially the same appeal in Milan as it had already been shown to have in the cities and countryside of the East, and among the great ladies of Rome.

As has been mentioned earlier Ambrose established a regular coenobitic monastery outside Milan, and he insisted that his clergy should live a collective monastic life, but the asceticism that Ambrose encouraged so vigorously during the first years of his episcopate was domestic: that means that it involved neither retreat into an organized monastery nor into a hermitage. In this respect the asceticism of Ambrose's treatises is like that described in the treatises of Chrysostom. It is perhaps significant that three of the models that Ambrose put forward for imitation by his holy virgin, that is Thecla, an anonymous virgin martyr of Antioch, and Pelagia,⁶⁴ are Syrian. This may suggest that in this treatise as elsewhere Ambrose has got some of his material from the Greek East, though not from the nearly contemporary ascetic treatises of Chrysostom.

When Ambrose had written his treatise on virginity, he felt that he ought also to compose a treatise advising widows against a second marriage. The themes are related. By their example widows who refuse to remarry teach virgins that chastity is a valuable thing, which is well worth preserving for God. Ambrose points out that it is almost as great a merit for a widow who has known the pleasures of marriage to abstain from them for the rest of her life as it is for a

⁶³ *De virginitate*, PL 16.279–316.

⁶⁴ *De virginibus* 3.7.33–6, cf. Chrysostom, *De S. Pelagia*, PG 50.579–84. Ambrose seems to have combined her story with that of three other Antiochene martyrs, Berenice, Prosdokia, and their mother Domnina, at whose festival Chrysostom delivered *De SS. Bernice et Prosdoce*, PG 50.629–40.

virgin to renounce them altogether.⁶⁵ Of course widows had enjoyed a special place in the Church from the beginning. The first Letter to Timothy lays down the conditions that have to be satisfied for a woman to be placed on the local church's roll of widows. The letter states the rule that in order to be registered a widow must be at least 60 years old. Younger widows should remarry.⁶⁶ Paul, or at any rate the author of the letter, was essentially concerned with the Church's duty to support widows who needed to be supported. But Ambrose looks at this topic not so much from the point of view of the welfare of the widowed woman, as from that of the merit of maintaining chastity. In his opinion a widow should not remarry no matter how old or young she is. The younger a widow is, the greater the temptation, and the greater her merit in remaining chaste.⁶⁷

Like Paul, Ambrose repeatedly insists that he is giving advice not commands, but he nevertheless will not allow practical considerations to serve as a valid argument in favour of remarriage. He refutes all such excuses, and summarizes his refutation most aggressively: 'You wish to remarry? Do so. The simple wish is not a crime. I do not ask for your reason, why do you invent one? If you think it good, say so, if not keep silent! Do not blame God, do not blame your relatives, saying that you have no other protection . . . And do not say that you are protecting the interests of your children, when you are depriving them of their mother.'⁶⁸

Ambrose advises a widow to live religiously, to spend much time at prayer in church and at home, to discipline herself with fasting⁶⁹ and tearful repentance.⁷⁰ Above all she must give to the poor.⁷¹ This is the same kind of advice he gives to virgins. But widows also have more earthly tasks: 'It is a great benefit both for the support and for the advantage of widows that they so train their daughters in law as to have in them a support in old age.'⁷² 'The widow, like a veteran,

⁶⁵ *De viduis* 1.1.

⁶⁶ 1 Timothy 5: 14.

⁶⁷ *De viduis* 2.9.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 9.58. This and subsequent translations are by De Romestin from vol. 10 of the NPNF series. Although this passage might be understood as a rhetorical apostrophe, it seems to have been immediately interpreted, and rightly interpreted, as an attack on a particular woman. Ambrose issued a kind of apology in *De virginitate* 46 as noticed by McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 65.

⁶⁹ *De viduis* 4.22.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 6.35.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 5.27–31.

⁷² *Ibid.* 5.34.

having served her time, though she lays aside the arms of married life, yet orders the peace of the whole house. Though now freed from carrying burdens, she is yet watchful for the younger who are yet to be married, and with the thoughtfulness of old age, she arranges where more pains would be profitable, where produce would be more abundant, which (of the youngsters) is fitted to the marriage bond.⁷³

The tone of the treatise on widows is much calmer and less evocative and poetic than the treatise on virgins. One gets the impression that Ambrose is dutifully presenting the Church's teaching, but that for him widows are much less important than consecrated virgins. In this respect, Ambrose's attitude was quite different from that of Jerome. In *De officiis* Ambrose certainly does not suggest that priests should discuss theology with widows or that they should teach them Hebrew. He is worried about the consequence of young clerics paying frequent visits to either virgins or widows, and advises that they should only do this accompanied by the bishop.⁷⁴ As for looking after widows, Ambrose emphasizes the importance of keeping safe money that widows have entrusted to the church for safe-keeping, to safeguard it even if it is demanded by the emperor himself.⁷⁵

(IV) AMBROSE, PREACHER AND CHAMPION OF THE NICENE CAUSE

As we have seen, Ambrose succeeded in winning Milan for Nicene Christianity. He achieved an extraordinary degree of influence over his congregation. How did he do this? He certainly turned out to be a very effective preacher, but his sermons, as far as we can tell, had very much less human interest than those of Chrysostom or of Augustine. We have few actual sermons, but Ambrose's treatises are almost certainly compilations of sermons, and, if that is right, we can conclude that as a preacher Ambrose was mostly concerned to explain passages of the Bible, with reference to their theological significance.

⁷³ Ibid. 14.85.

⁷⁴ *Off.* 1.20.87.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 2.29 (144–51).

He was much less interested in reforming behaviour. He was himself motivated by the ascetic ideals, and he tried to instil them into his clergy, but he did not try to persuade his congregation to adopt the ascetic life.

It certainly helped Ambrose to establish and strengthen his position that he succeeded in reaching good relations with the emperors resident at Milan. It was particularly important for him that he had already won the strong support of Gratian when that emperor took up residence in Milan in 381. Without Gratian's support he could not have dominated the Council of Aquileia in the way he did later in the same year. That council also showed that the bishops of northern Italy, who by this time were almost all Nicenes, were supporting Ambrose. Some four years later he entered into a serious conflict with Valentinian II and his *Homoian* mother Justina, but this was after he had carried out one, or even two, extremely valuable diplomatic missions to the court of the usurper Maximus on their behalf, thereby winning time for the officials of the boy emperor to consolidate his succession. Ambrose built three great churches outside the walls of Milan, at least partly at his own expense,⁷⁶ and he furnished them with the relics of martyrs.⁷⁷ On three occasions he found graves of martyrs and had the relics reburied in his churches with great ceremony.⁷⁸ He claimed that the fact that he was allowed to make these discoveries was a clear demonstration of divine favour, and proof that God approved the hard-line stand he had taken in the conflict with Valentinian and Justina.

All the ascetic writers of the fourth century made much of their contempt for riches, and of the duty of the rich to use their wealth to support the poor. In the writings of Ambrose these themes are much less prominent than in those of Chrysostom, but they are not entirely absent. There is, however, one sermon which displays a compassion

⁷⁶ Basilica Ambrosiana (San Ambrogio); Basilica Apostolorum (San Nazaro); Basilica Virginum (San Simpliciano), all of which preserve considerable remains of the original structure in the core of their walls.

⁷⁷ Basilicas and relics: McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 226–36; on cult of martyrs at Milan and its shortage of local martyrs: Mark Humphries, *Communities of the Blessed: Social Environment and Religious Change in Northern Italy* (Oxford, 1999), 223–4. On Ambrose and other bishops acting as 'impresarios' of the cult of relics see Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981), 33–41, 93–6.

⁷⁸ Gervasius and Protasius (386) and Nazarius (395) at Milan and Agricola and Vitalis at Bologna (393).

for the poor which very much recalls Chrysostom.⁷⁹ To list a few pointed sayings: 'Who among the wealthy does not make every effort to drive the poor person out of his plot?'⁸⁰ 'The earth was established for all, rich and poor. Nature, which begets everyone poor, knows no wealth.'⁸¹ 'The silk wrappings woven with gold in which the corpse of a rich person is clothed are losses to the living, and no help to the dead.'⁸² 'How pious your fasting would be if you assigned to the poor what you spend on banqueting.'⁸³ 'How many die that pleasure be prepared for you! . . . A man fell from the roof, while he was working on a store for your grain.'⁸⁴ 'Exactions by the rich are forcing the poor to sell their children into slavery.'⁸⁵ Ambrose quotes Luke: 'I will tear down my granaries and build larger ones.'⁸⁶ He comments: 'The right thing for this man to do would be to open his granaries to the poor.'⁸⁷ With obvious approval Ambrose quotes the saying: 'Water puts out burning fire, alms resist sin.'⁸⁸

Some modern comment has been cynical,⁸⁹ probably unjustifiably so. At any rate, during the famine of 384.⁹⁰ Ambrose expressed indignation at the profiteering of farmers, and at the expulsion from Rome of foreigners, including sellers of corn.⁹¹ He regularly used ascetic (originally Stoic) discourse on the subject of wealth. So he tells his congregation that the desire for gold is the root of perfidy,⁹²

⁷⁹ *On Naboth*, PL 14.765–92; CSEL 32.2.467–516, trans. in Ramsey, *Ambrose*, 117–44. It is based on Basil's Sermons 6: *Against the Rich*, and 7: *On Avarice* (PL 31.277–304, 305–28).

⁸⁰ *On Naboth* (*De Nabuthae historia*) 1.1.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 1.2.

⁸² *Ibid.* 1.3.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 2.5.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 5.20.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 5.21.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 6.29; Luke 12: 16–20.

⁸⁷ *On Naboth* 6.29.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 12.52; Syr. (*Ecclesiasticus*) 3: 30.

⁸⁹ McLynn is scathing, *Ambrose of Milan*, 247–8: 'His audience would have known better than to take him literally'; so also P. Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of Augustine* (London, 1972), 2, 332–3: 'Ambrose's *Besitzlehre* is platitudinous, such radicalism in Ambrose's works is textbook dictum unrefined by experience.'

⁹⁰ *Off.* 3.37–44. The food shortage of 384 may well have provided the occasion for the sermon *On Naboth*.

⁹¹ Ambrose, *Off.* 3.49.

⁹² 1 *Apol. Proph. David* 1.4, 17 (CSEL 32.2.310) a variation on 1 Tim. 6: 10. On Stoic influence see also K. Zelzer, 'Die Ethik des Ambrosius und die stoische Tradition der Antike', *Vox Patrum*, 18 (1998), 34–5; (1999), 209–14.

and that the sea was not created so that merchants should sail on it to enrich themselves.⁹³ He goes as far as to maintain that property is contrary to nature,⁹⁴ and that God wished the earth to be held in common.⁹⁵ According to Ambrose wealth is based on *usurpatio*, which Davidson translates as 'greed', and Garnsey as 'appropriation'.⁹⁶ This does not mean that Ambrose wanted to dispossess the rich, but he did want to drive home to them that the only proper use of wealth is to assist the poor. Ambrose set an example by spending large sums of money, his own and that of the Church, on the poor of Milan. When opponents claimed that he was only doing this in order to buy himself the support of the poor as a personal bodyguard, and that this was a misuse of church money, he replied: 'The poor of Christ are my riches. This is a treasure that I know how to amass. May they always charge me with spending gold on the poor!'⁹⁷ Ambrose's rhetoric does not actually disprove the accusation that he had used the money to hire a bodyguard, or at least a dedicated body of supporters. It is more than likely that Ambrose's charitable payments did indeed help to win him the enormous support which enabled him to defy the court. Ambrose was certainly aware of the political advantage he would derive from his acts of charity. But this does not alter the fact that he had given conspicuously. In what is perhaps Ambrose's last letter, and in a sense his testament, he admonishes the electors of Vercelli: 'Do not despise the poor man, he makes you rich . . . Do not scorn the man in want . . . Do not exalt yourself as if you were rich. Christ sent out his apostles without any money!'⁹⁸ That is rhetoric, and it is never easy to assess the sincerity of rhetoric. But whether his professed concern for the poor was sincere or not, it surely helped him to gain an extremely powerful following among the people of Milan.

⁹³ *De Helia et ieiunio* 19, 70 (CSEL 32.2.452).

⁹⁴ *Off.* 1.28 (132).

⁹⁵ *Expos Ps. CXVIII, sermo* 8.22 (CSEL 62.162). See also *Exaameron* 5.15.52 on communism of cranes.

⁹⁶ Ambrose, *Off.* 1.132. On Ambrose's views of the origin of property, and the relationship of his views to a Stoic tradition derived from Cicero and Seneca, see Garnsey, 'The Originality and Origins of the Anonymous *De divitiis*', 29–45, relevant 32–6, and on *usurpatio* *ibid.* 34 n. 12.

⁹⁷ Ambrose, *Ep.* 75A (Maur. 21A), 33.

⁹⁸ Ambrose, *Ep. ex.* 14 (Maur. 63), 87.

Thoughts of Ambrose on the Position of the Emperor and the Duties of the Clergy

(I) *DE OFFICIIS MINISTRORUM*

Ambrose came to the episcopate as an amateur. But he was anxious to do his duty, and he thought carefully about what his new role required of him. He set down his thought in the treatise *De officiis ministrorum*, which he wrote probably not long after the food crisis of 384/5.¹ In the introduction to this work, Ambrose reminds the reader how he was called to the episcopate from being an imperial official, and so became obliged to teach before he had learnt.² He did

¹ *De officiis* has a definite *terminus post*: in 3.49 there is a clear reference to the expulsion of 'visitors' (*peregrini*) from Rome in 384 by the praefectus urbi Symmachus in 384/5 on account of a food shortage, caused by a failure of the corn from Africa to arrive in time (cf. Ammianus 14.6.19). This incident is described by Ambrose as recent (*proxime*). The reference to a *tempus Arianæ infestationis* (1.72) is therefore likely to be a reference to the difficulties Ambrose had with *Homoians* 385–6 as is argued by Davidson (*Ambrose De officiis*, ed. I. J. Davidson, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2001), 511–12). There are no clear references to later events, though there are some to events that are earlier. Ambrose's extremely controversial act of breaking up church vessels, selling the precious metals, and using the proceeds to ransom prisoners taken by the Goths from Thrace and Illyricum (2.15 (70–1), 28 (136–43)) could have happened any time after the peace with the Goths of 382, though this action was still made an accusation against Ambrose in winter 385/6 (Ambrose, *Ep.* 75a.33). *Tempus Arianæ infestationis* could conceivably refer to an earlier crisis, around 380, about which we are much less well informed, but which did result in a Milanese church being handed over to the *Homoians* (*De spiritu sancto* 1.1.21), something which Ambrose successfully resisted from spring 385 to spring 386. But this early a date of publication is ruled out by the reference to the food crisis of 384/5. So all in all there is a strong likelihood that the book was composed in 386 or not long after.

² Davidson, *Ambrose De officiis*, 439–41, points out that Cicero too reminds the reader, i.e. his son, of his own studies and admits that there are many better qualified

not begin to teach immediately,³ but waited almost three years,⁴ that is until 377, before beginning to preach. In fact the first part of the treatise (sections 6–22) is a kind of apology for Ambrose's long silence. The treatise as a whole shows that, if Ambrose had once felt that he had begun his episcopate while still lacking essential Christian knowledge, he had fully made up that deficit by the time he wrote *De officiis*. He now had a thorough knowledge of the Bible, and he had thought deeply about the duties, responsibilities, and difficulties of the priesthood, not least about those confronting a bishop. He had in fact succeeded in writing what must have been a very helpful guide to a young man responding to the clerical calling.

The book is, however, not so much a description of the actual duties which a cleric has to perform, as of the moral principles which should guide him in the varied situations with which his duties will be faced. The book is in fact about basic Christian principles. Ambrose is therefore not only addressing actual or would-be clergy, but a much wider public, which includes pagans.⁵ While the book professes to represent, and does indeed represent, a professional code for young members of the clergy, it is surely also intended to offer a practical Christian ethic to laymen, above all to laymen of the educated upper class. In fact both the title⁶ and the structure of the treatise presuppose such a readership. For Ambrose's book is quite conspicuously modelled on the *De officiis*,⁷ which Cicero wrote for members of the Roman ruling class as a guide to how to live, what to do, and what not to do, both in public and in private life, based on the Stoic philosophy of Panaetius. Ambrose has arranged the main

in philosophy than he is (*De offic.* 1.1–2). But what in Cicero are two sentences of *captatio benevolentiae*, in Ambrose is a much longer and fuller section designed to show the author's own Christian humility and self-restraint.

³ *Off.* 1.2: 'I shall open the mouth that has been closed a long time' (trans. Ramsey).

⁴ *De virginibus* 1.1.3; 2.6.39: 'I have not even been a bishop for three years.'

⁵ H. Savon, 'Pourquoi saint Ambroise a-t-il écrit un *De officiis*?' *REL* 85 (2007), 135–46.

⁶ He had to explain why he described the moral requirements as *officia* 1.8.25, cf. Davidson, *Ambrose De officiis*, 470. Augustine (*Ep.* 82) points out that *officium* in the title of Ambrose's *libros utilium praeceptionum plenos* is not a Christian concept.

⁷ The index of references to Cicero's work in Davidson, *Ambrose De officiis*, 953–6, shows how closely Ambrose follows the argument of Cicero. Even the contemporary allusion to two food crises at Rome in 376 and 384/5 (Ambrose, *Off.* 3.46–9) has a parallel in two cases of expulsion of strangers from Rome (Cicero, *De offic.* 3.11).

divisions of his work in the same order as Cicero. The first book deals with the good (*honestum* and *decorum*), and the classical virtues of prudence (*sapientia*, *prudentia*), justice (*iustitia*), courage, greatness of mind (*magnitudo animi*), and self-control (*modestia*, *temperantia*). The second book deals with expediency (*utile*). The third argues that the good must always be chosen in preference to the merely expedient. Ambrose obviously wanted his reader to recognize that he was providing a guide on how to live just like that of Cicero. At the same time he also wished to demonstrate that he was not rejecting the Roman classic, but bringing it up to date by Christianizing it.

The most conspicuous form of Christianization is the replacing of Cicero's exempla, taken from Roman history, entirely by exempla taken from the Bible. The Christianization of exempla by itself inevitably results in important changes in the moral advice that they exemplify.⁸ So Ambrose's discussion of 'courage' and 'greatness of mind' is obviously developed from Cicero's treatment of the same subject.⁹ But while Cicero's examples are taken from Greek and Roman history those of Ambrose are taken from the Bible. This of course involves a change of emphasis and the insertion of values that are specifically Christian. So Ambrose illustrates the virtue of courage in war by citing the example of the courage in battle shown by the Maccabee brothers fighting numerically superior Syrians,¹⁰ but he also tells the story of the mother and her six sons who when faced with the choice of breaking the Jewish food laws or being put to death preferred death, and by this action prefigured the Christian martyrs.¹¹

Cicero has a long section on the related virtues of kindness and generosity (*beneficentia* and *liberalitas*). He handles the theme from the point of view of a politician seeking reputation and popularity.¹² Ambrose uses Cicero's discussion as a basis for an explanation of the

⁸ The duties advocated by Ambrose are of course Christianized over a much wider range of behaviour than can be exemplified here. Comparison of the two works shows the change of moral emphasis involved in Christianization.

⁹ Cicero on courage and greatness of mind (*fortitudo*, *magnitudo animi*), *De offic.* 1.18 (61)–24 (84) corresponds to Ambrose, *Off.* 1.35–42. His examples include the heroes of Marathon and Thermopylae, Horatius Cocles, the Decii, the Scipiones.

¹⁰ Ambrose, *Off.* 1.40–1 cites 1 Macc. 2: 35 ff.; 2 Macc. 6: 43; 1 Macc. 9: 8.

¹¹ Ambrose, *Off.* 1.41 refers to 2 Macc. 7: 1 ff.

¹² Ambrose, *Off.* 2.15 (52)–18 (64).

Christian duty to assist the poor.¹³ Ambrose cites the example of Lawrence, the deacon, who died rather than hand over the treasure of the Roman Church when ordered to do so by the emperor Diocletian, because, as he insisted, the treasures were not the Church's to hand over. The Church merely held them in trust for the poor.¹⁴ But this exemplum also once more shows the Christian duty to resist to the death commands of even the highest authorities, if they conflict with the laws of God. This readiness to undergo martyrdom over issues which Cicero would certainly not have thought worth dying for had of course been an essential element in the confrontation of Roman official and accused Christian in the age of persecutions.

It is interesting to note that in his theoretical treatment of martyrdom Ambrose is apparently very much more moderate than he later proved himself to be in practice, for he ends this section with a warning: 'We must take care, lest in being led by too great a desire for glory we should abuse the powers that be, and arouse the minds of the heathen, who are opposed to us, to desire persecution and to rouse them to anger. How many do some cause to perish, that they themselves may continue to the end, and overcome their tortures.'¹⁵ Ambrose knew the dangers of unrestrained *parrhesia*, and he was also blessed with an instinct which warned him precisely how far he could safely go in a given situation.

(II) THE APOLOGIES FOR DAVID

Ambrose explains his views about the relationship of priest and emperor in two *Apologies for David* (*De apologia prophetae David*). The earlier may be roughly contemporary with *De officiis*.¹⁶ These

¹³ Ambrose, *Off.* 2.25–9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 2.28 (136–43).

¹⁵ *Off.* 1.42 (217), trans. De Romestin. Ambrose's warning is not very different in spirit from 'Sciant quibus moris est illicita mirari... obsequium ac modestiam, si industria ac vigor adsint, eo laudis excedere quo plerique per abrupta, sed in nullum reipublicae usum ambitiosa morte inclauerunt' (Tacitus, *Agricola* 42).

¹⁶ For dating of pamphlets see H. Leppin, 'Das Alte Testament und der Erfahrungsraum der Christen: Davids Busse in den Apologien des Ambrosius', in A. Pecâr and K. Trampedach (eds.), *Die Bibel als politisches Argument: Voraussetzungen und*

pamphlets clearly are expanded sermons, in which Ambrose commented on the biblical passage where the prophet Nathan reproves David for bringing about the death of Uriah in order to be able to gain possession of Bethseba, Uriah's wife. Nathan compels the king to confess his sin, and so to obtain forgiveness by demonstrating sincere repentance. Ambrose used the biblical story like the Romans traditionally used *exempla*. He related a historical anecdote to illustrate exemplary behaviour. But the biblical story has more authority than a traditional *exemplum*. For it is inspired by God, and demonstrates a religious truth, namely that no ruler (not even an emperor) is above the law of God. Being a human, even a king (or emperor) is bound to commit sins. But, again like ordinary men, he has been given the option of confessing his sin, and provided that he faces the humiliation involved in publicly displaying repentance, he can win God's pardon for even the very gravest of sins.

The fact that the emperor is liable to sin means that his conduct falls within province of the priest. If he has sinned he must accept even a severe rebuke from a priest, for if he does, this will help him to achieve divine pardon by humble repentance. The story also carries the implication that it is the priest's duty to issue rebukes of that kind. But it is significant that in Ambrose's sermons the emphasis and focus are not on the action of the priest, but on the advice conveyed by him, namely that any sinner, whether he be king or commoner, can earn forgiveness by humble penance.

It follows that, contrary to what has sometimes been argued, the sermons on which these pamphlets are based were not intended to defend Ambrose's own confrontation of a monarch, after he had forced Theodosius to do penance for the massacre at Thessalonica. The starting point of the argument is that Ambrose is worried that members of his congregation might think that David's appalling

Folgen der biblizistischen Herrschaftslegitimation in der Vormoderne (Munich, 2007), 119–33 and id., 'Ambrosius und das Königtum', in Therese Fuhrer (ed.), *Die christlich-philosophischen Diskurse der Spätantike: Texte, Personen, Institutionen* (Stuttgart, 2008), 33–49. It seems to be agreed that the *Apologia altera* is the earlier of the two Apologies. The *Apologia prima*, the later of the two, alludes to the usurpation of Maximus and the murder of the emperor Gratian in 383, but not the defeat and death of Maximus in summer 388. The *Altera* is perhaps more or less contemporary with the *De officiis*. Both precede The massacre of Thessalonica.

behaviour towards Uriah and Bethseba disqualified him from the saintly status assigned to him in the Bible and in the teaching of the Church. Ambrose's defends the authority of the Bible and the Church by insisting that because David laid aside his royal dignity, humbled himself, and was truly repentant his sin was wiped out and his saintly status restored.

In these pamphlets Ambrose defines the role of the bishop *vis-à-vis* the emperor as pastoral. But it is, of course, also the duty of a bishop to defend the Church as an institution, and this raises the question as to where the boundaries of this duty lie. Nobody would have questioned that the bishop must uphold orthodoxy—however defined—but what else? In his letters Ambrose takes a view which resembles the later 'doctrine of the two powers'. It is the emperor's role to look after the state and the bishop's to look after the Church, and his responsibility for the Church is a duty which the bishop need not, and indeed must not, share with any secular authority. A few quotations will explain Ambrose's view: 'Who would deny that a case concerned with the faith must be heard in the church (and not in the palace).'¹⁷ 'When have you heard, most clement emperor, that in a case involving the faith laymen have sat in judgement over a bishop?'¹⁸ 'If there must be a conference about the faith then that meeting should be one of bishops... In a case involving the faith it has been usual for bishops to pass judgement on Christian emperors, not emperors on bishops.'¹⁹

'The emperor is within but not above the church.'²⁰ 'The things that are of God are not subject to the power of the emperor.'²¹ The Church controls landed estates. It holds them in trust for the poor. Nevertheless they belong to the material world and thus to the emperor's remit: 'Let them take the estates away if it pleases the emperor. I am not giving them away, but I am not withholding them either.'²² But surrendering a church is something else. When Ambrose was being pressed by a count and tribunes to hand over the *basilica Portiana* for a *Homoian* service, the officials argued that the emperor was only exercising his legal rights, since all things were subject to his authority. To this Ambrose replied that if the emperor was after what belonged

¹⁷ *Ep.* 75 (Maur. 21) 15.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 15.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 75a.36.

²¹ *Ibid.* 76.8.

²² *Ibid.* 75.33.

to Ambrose himself, his land, his money, his legal status, Ambrose would not resist—even though everything he had in reality belonged to the poor. But the things that were God's (such as church buildings) were not subject to the power of the emperor. and he was ready to resist their surrender even to the death.²³

The bishop had a powerful weapon, in that he was in a position to exclude an emperor from church services and communion, and so from salvation. This is precisely what Ambrose threatens to do in the first of his two letters on the Altar of Victory, in which he warns the young emperor Valentinian II that if he, the emperor, was to yield to the petition of the pagan senators to restore the Altar of Victory to the Senate House, 'we the bishops will not bear it with indifference, and pretend that nothing has happened. You will still be free to come to church, but when you get there you will find no bishop, or you will find one who will resist you.'²⁴ Here Ambrose set a precedent which had a great future in the West.

But again we observe that Ambrose's radicalism was kept within strictly controlled limits. Ambrose strongly upheld the doctrine that the emperor must be orthodox, which for him of course means Nicene, and he implies that as long as the emperor remains orthodox God will hear his prayers and give him victory, while the reverse will happen if the emperor departs from orthodoxy. But he does not take the view of the necessity for the emperor to be orthodox to the point of expressing the notion that an emperor who departs from orthodoxy loses his legitimacy, and may be overthrown justly.

When Valentinian II, who favoured Arianism, was threatened by the usurper Magnus Maximus, who was a strict Catholic, Ambrose continued to serve Valentinian. In fact his first embassy to Maximus may well have saved Valentinian's throne by preventing an immediate invasion of Italy at a time when the position of the boy emperor was still very weak. That Ambrose was entrusted with this extremely delicate mission was no doubt partly because Valentinian's officials were aware even then of Ambrose's extraordinarily strong personality. Ambrose's selection also shows that the officials thought that a bishop might be given a more favourable hearing than a secular magnate by a usurper who was also a convinced Christian. It was

²³ Ibid. 76.8.

²⁴ Ibid. 72.13.

nevertheless still very unusual, and long remained unusual, for the imperial government to entrust a bishop with so essentially secular a mission. Ambrose's first embassy to Maximus, like his views on the proper relations of Church and state, foreshadows conditions in the post-imperial West.

Ambrose in Action

(I) THE CONFLICT OVER THE USE OF A BASILICA

The period 385–6 was perhaps the most difficult in Ambrose's episcopate.¹ The emperor Valentinian II, his mother the empress Justina, and the court were at Milan. Both the young emperor and his formidable mother were what Ambrose and Nicenes generally called Arians. They were accompanied by units of the army including many Goths, who also adhered to the Arian (*Homoian*) sect. Valentinian and his mother favoured an active Arian bishop, a refugee from the Balkans. But it was Ambrose who was in control of all church buildings in the city, and he was determined not to allow any of them to be used by the Arians. This was bound to lead to conflict. At Easter 385 Valentinian asked Ambrose to let the Arians have the *basilica Portiana*² for a service which he himself and his mother would attend. It is not clear whether the church was to be loaned to the Arians for this one service, or permanently. At any rate, Ambrose flatly refused the imperial request, and instigated popular

¹ The chronology for the whole conflict 385–6 adopted here is that of Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches*, 124–36. The chronology of McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 158–219 is different.

² McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 176–7 suggests that the *Portiana* is possibly to be identified with San Lorenzo. There is some reason to believe that the palace may have been close to this church (see plan of north-western *suburbium* of Milan, by A. Ruggieri, in *Antiquité tardive*, 11 (2003), 384). If that was so, San Lorenzo would have been the obvious church for the emperor to want to attend. But this very remarkable building may be later than Ambrose's episcopate (M. P. Rossignani, 'I materiali architettonici di reinpiego', in G. A. Dell'Acqua (ed.), *La basilica di San Lorenzo in Milano* (Milan, 1985), 39–63). There is a tradition at S. Vittore al Corpo, in the same district, that the *Portiana* of Ambrose was a predecessor of the present church.

demonstrations in support of his stand. The court became worried. Officials asked Ambrose to calm the people, and the demand for a church was given up, at least for the time being. Ambrose had won. But that was not the end of the story.

It is clear that for the rest of the year Ambrose was under pressure. The details are obscure. Our information about these events comes from Ambrose himself, and his account is quite clearly, and no doubt intentionally, incomplete. We can only guess that he was being asked to make some concessions to the Arian group, who were after all of the same faith as the emperor, and that he continued to refuse. The result was that the court, at the instigation, according to Ambrose, of Justina, tried to banish Ambrose from the city.³ Charges were prepared. But the court party could not depose a bishop. That could only be done by a council of bishops, and the bishops of northern Italy at this time supported Ambrose.⁴ So the court tried to make life uncomfortable for Ambrose so that he would leave voluntarily. Towards the end of the year 385 Ambrose's cathedral and congregation were surrounded by troops. Ambrose stayed there with his people and kept up morale by getting them to sing hymns. That was the beginning of hymn singing in the West.⁵ The court then decided on two measures.⁶ A law was prepared giving the Arians formal permission to hold meetings in the city. Anybody who tried to stop them would be severely punished. At the same time Ambrose was summoned to appear in the palace in order to take part in a judicial inquiry into the religious situation in the city, at which both Ambrose and his Arian opponent would make their case to a jury in the presence of the emperor. Ambrose's response was to preach a sermon to his besieged congregation in which he insisted that it was quite intolerable that affairs of the Church should be discussed at a secular tribunal. Ambrose's eloquence persuaded his audience. When he saw that his congregation would support him, he refused to attend the inquiry. We are not told how the court reacted to the bishop's

³ On the campaign of harassment: Paulinus, *V. Ambr.* 12–13, also the ecclesiastical historians: Rufinus 2.15–16; Socrates 5.11; Sozomen 7.13; Theodoret 5.17.

⁴ When the eastern court deposed Chrysostom it had considerable support among the bishops.

⁵ Augustine, *Conf.* 9.1.

⁶ On the ensuing situation see Ambrose, *Ep.* 75, 75a.

impudence, but it would seem that it eventually gave in. Ambrose had won a second time.⁷

By now Easter was coming around again (the year was 386), and with it the problem of getting a church where the emperor, his mother, their Gothic soldiers, and anybody else who adhered to the *Homoian* sect of Christianity could attend for the Easter service.⁸ The demand was now no longer for the *basilica Portiana* but for the *Nova*—the new cathedral, which had been built by Auxentius, the Arian bishop, and of which today nothing is left except for a maze of foundations under the Piazza del Duomo. Ambrose continued to resist. A large popular gathering demonstrated support for their bishop. Ambrose was then visited by no less an official than the praetorian prefect, who offered a compromise, asking Ambrose to hand over at least the *basilica Portiana*. It seems that the talks ended inconclusively. There was more protest from the people, and on the next day the government acted, and sent palace officials to prepare the basilica for a service to be attended by the emperor. Thereupon a crowd occupied the church, and began a sit-in. They also attacked an Arian priest. This was not simply the spontaneous protest of concerned individual members of the public. More important groups were involved, or at least the authorities thought that they were. For the government proceeded to imprison and fine the *collegium* of traders, whose spokesman Ambrose had recently been, when some of them faced expulsion from Rome,⁹ and it ordered members of the palace departments of the *memoriales* and the *agentes in rebus* not to appear in public in case they became involved in a seditious assembly.¹⁰ Meanwhile Ambrose was in his cathedral, the *Nova*, holding services. The attitude of the government now hardened, and it again demanded the handing over of the *Nova*. Ambrose once again refused. The church belonged to God, and was not subject to the emperor. He would die rather than hand it over. He was

⁷ See my *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches*, 125–60 (translation of *Ep.* 75 (Maur. 21) and 75A (21A) with introduction and commentary). McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 158–208 has a different reconstruction of the sequence of events in 385–6.

⁸ On this stage of the conflict see Ambrose, *Ep.* 76.

⁹ *Off.* 3.7.

¹⁰ *Ep.* 76 (Maur. 20), 7.

ordered to pacify the people, but replied that this was beyond his power. The officials left without having achieved their object, but Ambrose saw that if he persisted in open resistance he would lose. So he left the new cathedral and spent the day in the old one, of which the foundations are under the present cathedral of Milan. In the letter to his sister he does not explicitly state that he retreated from his cathedral, and so passively allowed it to be occupied, but his narrative quite clearly shows that this is what he did.¹¹ On the next day the new cathedral was occupied by imperial troops without any obstruction, or protest by Ambrose. His tactics were more subtle than that. For he had somehow managed to gain the support of part of the garrison, and was confident that he could count on them. That was what happened. While troops were occupying the neighbouring *Nova*, Ambrose held a service in the old cathedral. Soon he and his congregation were joined by soldiers, who did not however come to occupy the church, but only to take part in the service. They were now on Ambrose's side. At the same time the occupied cathedral too was filling with people, not with opponents, but with supporters of Ambrose. Meanwhile Ambrose began to preach a sermon in which he justified his stand, and proclaimed his readiness to face martyrdom. Before he had finished, he received the news that preparations for holding the Arian service in the *Nova* had been abandoned. At that point Ambrose sent some priests to the building to hold a Nicene service. This was probably a mistake, for the action was taken as a direct attack on imperial authority, and Ambrose was threatened with a charge of treason. He and his congregation spent the rest of the day and the following night in the old cathedral in anxious uncertainty. But on the following day the soldiers occupying the *Nova* were withdrawn, the fine imposed on the traders' guild was cancelled, and the battle of the basilicas was over. The threat of a charge of treason remained for some time, but eventually that too disappeared.¹²

¹¹ This is argued by Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches*, 165 n. 7.

¹² On the whole episode: Ambrose, *Ep.* 76 (Maur. 20), and Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches*, 160–73; McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*; H. Leppin, *Theodosius der Grosse* (Darmstadt, 2003), 153–61.

That a Nicene bishop should refuse to obey an imperial order to make concessions to 'Arians' was nothing new. It may be that Ambrose was exceptionally uncompromising in that he refused to hand over a single church, and perhaps even only for a single service. What seems to have been unprecedented was active resistance to a command which came directly from the imperial court, the length of time, about a year, for which the resistance was maintained, and the fact that it was successful. This episode may have influenced Chrysostom when he too was asked to hand over a church for *Homoian* service to the Gothic general Gainas and his men.¹³

(II) AMBROSE AND THE MASSACRE AT THESSALONICA

In his conflict with Justina Ambrose undoubtedly showed both skill and great courage, but he also displayed a lack of tolerance which was normal then, but seems shocking today. When he confronted Theodosius over the massacre at Thessalonica Ambrose showed the same combination of skill and courage, but this time in a cause which today wins universal approval.¹⁴ What happened was this. Thessalonica was garrisoned by troops engaged in a campaign against some mutinous federates in Macedonia. There evidently was some tension between soldiers and the civil population. The troops were commanded by Butheric, a Germanic, probably Gothic, general. A popular charioteer had made sexual advances to one of Butheric's attendants. When the charioteer was imprisoned and so prevented from competing in the hippodrome, rioting ensued, in the course of which Butheric was killed.¹⁵ This was something which the emperor was bound to punish. Apparently there was lengthy discussion as to what form the punishment should take.¹⁶ But in the end it was

¹³ See below, 227–31.

¹⁴ On this episode see the excellent account in McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 317–30.

¹⁵ Sozomen, *HE* 7.25.

¹⁶ In his letter Ambrose pretends that the emperor acted in an outburst of temper, but he also mentions that he had occasion to protest several times before the order went out. Theodosius did in fact revoke the order but too late.

decided to put to death a specified number of inhabitants, possibly of named individuals. We do not know how many persons were to be killed, but the number was evidently considerable. This would have been bad enough, but the implementation of the order by the army evidently got out of hand, and very many more individuals died than had been intended. Ambrose thereupon wrote Theodosius a letter warning him that he had sinned, just as David sinned when he had Uriah killed, and that like David he must now do penance, and that until he had done penance he (Ambrose) would not be able to give him communion. The letter was effective. Theodosius publicly confessed his sins in church, and during the time allotted him for penance refrained from wearing his imperial ornaments. He had already earlier passed a law prohibiting officers entrusted with the execution of imperial mandates from carrying out a death sentence within thirty days after the date on which the mandate ordering the execution had been issued.¹⁷

This episode, as I have related it, is remarkable enough. The emperor Theodosius was not a 15-year-old boy, like Valentinian II in 385/6, but an experienced ruler who had recently been victorious over the usurper Maximus. Furthermore he was persuaded to do penance for what he had at the time evidently thought to be an appropriate response to the murder of one of his generals.¹⁸ The story is even more remarkable as told by the ecclesiastical historians, especially in the version of Theodoret.¹⁹ For these historians have Ambrose directly confronting Theodosius at the church door in Milan, and refusing him entrance. As McLynn has seen, this dramatic encounter at the church door did not take place.²⁰ The confrontation was by letter, and moreover by means of a letter phrased in highly diplomatic terms. In fact Ambrose

¹⁷ Sozomen, *HE* 7.25; *CT* 9.40.13 of August 390. On date of this law see McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 322 n. 108.

¹⁸ Cf. Chrysostom on the acceptable scope of the emperor's revenge after the Riot of the Statues below, 209–10.

¹⁹ Theodoret, *HE* 5.17; Sozomen, *HE* 7.25. See H. Leppin, *Von Constantin dem Grossen zu Theodosius II: Das christliche Kaisertum bei den Kirchenhistorikern Socrates, Sozomenus und Theodoret*, *Hypomnemata* 110 (Göttingen, 1996), 114–17. The episode is not mentioned by Socrates. Rufinus, *HE* 11.18 does not mention Ambrose at all: Theodosius' repentance is brought about by 'the bishop of Italy'.

²⁰ McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 328.

carefully avoided precisely the kind of scene dramatized by Theodoret. Even so, the episode is remarkable enough, for I think that no earlier Roman emperor had been compelled to apologize in public for an act of state. The episode could only have happened under a Christian emperor, moreover only under a Christian emperor who was deeply concerned for his own salvation, and who accepted that it was a bishop's duty to require a sinner to do penance, irrespective of his rank and power, even though the sinner was the emperor himself. Even so, nothing like Theodosius' penance for the massacre at Thessalonica happened under any later Christian Roman emperors. That Theodosius could be persuaded by Ambrose to do public penance for the massacre was in fact only made possible by the exceptional coincidence of a particular political situation, a deeply pious emperor,²¹ and a bishop who was both an extremely skilled diplomat and remarkably courageous.²²

(III) THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AFFAIRS OF THE ALTAR OF VICTORY AND THE SYNAGOGUE AT CALLINICUM

In addition to the two cases of Ambrose's successful outspokenness just discussed there are two similar episodes of comparable fame. In 384, in the reign of the boy emperor Valentinian II, Ambrose

²¹ The fact that Theodosius allowed himself to be persuaded that when attending church he must not insist on sitting among the clergy as he and his predecessors had previously done is surely an indication of deep piety (Theodoret, *HE* 5.17). Sozomen, *HE* 7.25, does not relate this concession to Theodosius' penance.

²² I would not describe the episode as a 'public relations triumph' (McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 323). This is an anachronistic concept which requires modern communications. Under the conditions of late antiquity news of the massacre would not have become sufficiently well known, nor sufficiently widely condemned, to make a demonstration of this kind necessary, or even effective. On the other hand it is safe to say that Theodosius would not have submitted to Ambrose if he had thought that by doing so he would lose face with his principal followers. The episode is evidence of a high degree of Christianization of Theodosius' court (Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and the Imperial Court*, 127-45, 197-201).

prevented the return of the Altar of Victory to the Senate House at Rome.²³ In 389 he dissuaded Theodosius from ordering the rebuilding of the destroyed synagogue at Callinicum, and from punishing the monks who had destroyed it. In both cases Ambrose claimed a scope for a bishop's *parrhesia* which was quite unprecedented. In neither case did he simply refuse to obey an order to perform an act which his Christian conscience might reasonably forbid him to perform. In both cases he intervened to stop an action commanded in the name of the emperor himself in an area which lay far outside his own ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and which, while involving religion, also had an important political dimension.

Whether or not the restoration of a pagan Altar of Victory to its traditional place in the Senate chamber was compatible with the religion of a Christian emperor was a religious dilemma which the Christian emperor's spiritual adviser might legitimately consider to fall within his remit. But the request for the restoration of the Altar was a formal resolution of the Roman Senate, which was presented to the emperor and his council by no less a figure than the prefect of the city, in his role of chairman of the Senate. This meant that the decision was highly political, for it risked seriously disturbing the relations of the emperor with some of his wealthiest and most powerful subjects. The episode of the synagogue at Callinicum too had far-reaching political implications. Ambrose successfully demanded that the monks who had destroyed a synagogue should not be punished. If this became a precedent it would mean that synagogues, and indeed places of worship of heretical Christian sects and of the traditional cults, would be deprived of the protection of the law.

Both episodes have become famous not only as examples of Ambrose's courage and outspokenness, but as symbols of a fundamental shift of power in the Roman Empire. To later generations Ambrose's success signalled the fact that Christianity, strictly Nicene Christianity, had become the religion of the Roman state. But at the time their perceived importance was certainly much less. The burning

²³ Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches*, 61–94: introduction, translation, and notes of Ambrose, *Ep.* 72, 72a, and 73; Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and the Imperial Court*, 203–11. See also R. Lizzi Testa, 'Christian Emperor, Vestal Virgins and Priestly Colleges: Reconsidering the End of Roman Paganism', *Antiquité tardive*, 15 (2007).

of the synagogue at Callinicum took place in a small fortress-city on the extreme eastern edge of the Empire. It is doubtful whether the destruction of that synagogue would have become widely known, never mind a subject of controversy at Milan, if Ambrose had not raised it with the emperor. That Ambrose did raise it quite publicly, and that he gained his point, certainly gave the episode publicity, though not enough for it to be mentioned in other historical sources. It was only because Ambrose included an account of the affair in the *Collection* of his letters that the episode became widely known, and is remembered to the present day. But if Ambrose hoped that Theodosius' response to his intervention would be seen by later emperors as an example to be imitated when they had to deal with Christians accused of desecrating a sanctuary of another religion, or sect, this did not happen. Imperial legislation discriminated against Jews,²⁴ as it did against adherents of Christian sects, and against pagans, but existing synagogues continued to be protected.²⁵

As for the affair of the Altar of Victory, there is some uncertainty as to the precise scope of the concessions to the pagan senators that Ambrose prevented. He certainly prevented the return of the Altar of Victory to the Senate chamber. The concessions requested by Symmachus, and successfully opposed by Ambrose, also included the restitution of immunity from certain public duties which had traditionally been enjoyed by Vestal Virgins,²⁶ and the return to the Vestals, and to priests and 'ministers', of revenue from estates that had been bequeathed to the Vestals and the 'ministers' long ago.²⁷ The texts do not make it clear whether the subsidies withdrawn by Gratian, and whose return was requested by Symmachus, were just a part of the public expenditure on the old civic cults of Rome, or the whole of it, whether in fact the stopping of these subsidies involved the total cessation of public support for the traditional cults and ceremonies of Rome.

It is clear that at the time Ambrose's success in the controversy was not given the importance which the reader of the texts in Ambrose's *Collection* is tempted to give it. Neither the pro-pagan *History* of

²⁴ On legislation see A. Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit, 1987).

²⁵ *CT* 16.8.12 (397); 20 (412); 21 (420); 25–6 (423).

²⁶ *Ep.* 72A (Maur. 17A).11–12; 73 (Maur. 18).11–12.

²⁷ *Ep.* 72 (Maur. 17).4; 72A (Maur. 17A).13–15; 73 (Maur. 18).13–14; *Ep. ex.* 10.2.

Zosimus (based on that of Eunapius) nor the ecclesiastical histories mention the affair. According to Zosimus the celebration of the traditional cults of the Roman state was finally ended not in 384, but in 394, and as a result of the emperor Theodosius I ordering the complete withdrawal of the public expenditure which was subsidizing these ceremonies.²⁸ In the second book of his *Contra Symmachum*, composed perhaps in 404, the Christian poet Prudentius refutes the third *Relatio* of Symmachus with its defence of the ancestral cults, which Ambrose had already refuted in 384, without however mentioning Ambrose.²⁹ He gives credit for the abolition of the civic cults of Rome not to Ambrose and Valentinian II but to Theodosius I, to whom, like Zosimus, he gives an address to the Senate of Rome in 394.³⁰ If Zosimus and Prudentius are right the Senate's petition of 384 and Ambrose's success in frustrating it involved only a part of the state subsidy for pagan cults. But irrespective of the practical importance of the controversy of 384, the fact that repeated initiatives by the great aristocrats of the Roman Senate failed to save the historic rituals of the civic cults of Rome signals a shift in the balance of power in the Empire which was very important indeed.

Whatever allowances we have to make for the fact that so much of our information about the success of Ambrose's interventions comes from Ambrose's own writings, the record of success achieved by him as a campaigning bishop remains extraordinary, and probably unparalleled in Roman antiquity. John Chrysostom certainly achieved much less. Indeed, in terms of secular politics, the career of John Chrysostom was a tragic failure. Reasons for this will be discussed later. Meanwhile the focus of this book is not on the ways in which Ambrose and Chrysostom differed from each other, but on the perhaps surprising number of features which the lives and thoughts of these in many respects so obviously very different individuals had in common.

²⁸ Zosimus 4.59; 5.38. That Theodosius did not come to Rome in 394 after the defeat of Eugenius, as reported by Zosimus, is convincingly argued by Pashoud in his *Zosime, Histoire nouvelle*, vol. ii (2nd edn. Paris, 1979), 479–73 (n. 213); cf. also F. Pashoud, *Eunape, Olympiodore, Zosime: Scripta minora* (Paris, 2006), 372.

²⁹ F. Pashoud, *Cinq études sur Zosime* (Paris, 1975), 100 ff. and T. D. Barnes and R. W. Westall, 'The Conversion of the Roman Aristocracy in Prudentius' *Contra Symmachum*, *Phoenix*, 45 (1991), 50–61.

³⁰ Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum* 1.506–23.

Part III

Chrysostom

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Asceticism in Syria and Mesopotamia

(I) THE SYRIAN TRADITION OF ASCETICISM

Though the influence of Egyptian asceticism extended to Syria and to Antioch,¹ Syria had its own version of the ascetic movement.² This had developed quite independently,³ in Mesopotamia and around Edessa and Nisibis. The cities of that region had an elite that was bilingual in Greek and Aramaic (Syriac), but Aramaic was the dominant spoken language. It was also a language of culture and literature, which it was not at that time in Syria proper (Coele Syria). Our information about a specifically Syrian form of institutionalized asceticism comes from the writings of the Syriac writers Aphraates (d. 345), and above all of the poet Ephrem (d. 373),⁴ The ascetics praised by these writers lived celibate lives of the utmost simplicity and poverty, but they also took an active part in the life of their churches and their cities, and appear to have separated themselves from neither the life of the organized Church, nor from secular affairs by moving into the desert or onto mountains in the way Antony and the Egyptian monks and their imitators elsewhere were doing.⁵

¹ Sozomen, *HE* 1.13 (end).

² Escolan, *Monachisme et église*; S. H. Griffiths, 'Asceticism in the Church of Syria,' in V. I. Wimbush and R. Valentasis (eds.), *Asceticism* (Oxford, 1995), 20–45.

³ The tradition that the Syrian monasticism represented by Ephrem is derived from Egypt is mistaken, and appears to have originated after the Arab conquest. See Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 131–2.

⁴ Especially Ephrem, *Sixth Demonstration*, ed. with Latin translation in *Pat. Syr.* 1. 239–312, English trans. in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ser 2, vol. 13b, 362–75.

⁵ Escolan, *Monachisme et église*, 34–5. Theodoret, *HR* (PG 82.1293), makes James, later bishop of Nisibis and teacher of Ephrem (d. 337/8), a nomadic open-air hermit. But this life of the earliest of Theodoret's holy men is not reliable history.

These ascetics were recognized as a group within the community as the *Ihidaye*,⁶ or as the *bnay qyama*, which can be translated 'Sons and Daughters of the Covenant'.⁷ They were men and women who led some kind of consecrated life, after having committed themselves to lifelong celibacy at their baptism.⁸ The *Ihidaye* were neither clerics nor monks, and they were free to possess property. They lived their simple life without observing a definite rule, either singly or in small communities, sometimes men and women together.⁹ Their role was to be a model for the Christian community as a whole, and it is likely that priests and bishops were drawn from their number.

Apart from the *Ihidaye/ bnay qyama*, the writings of Ephrem inform us about a much more radical form of Syrian asceticism. The men who practised this lived in the desert or on mountains, but unlike the Egyptian ascetic, they lived in the open, exposed to the elements, subsisting on roots and wild fruit. The clothing of an ascetic of this kind, if he wore any, was of straw or leaves tied together. His hair was shaggy. He was bound by none of the obligations and conventions of ordinary life, and was entirely free to converse with God.¹⁰

A feature of Mesopotamian Christianity from very early times was a very high valuation placed on sexual abstinence.¹¹ It has even been argued that well into the third century baptism was linked with a vow of sexual abstinence. It was certainly the case that individuals about to adopt a celibate ascetic life, by becoming members of the *bnay*

⁶ On the wide range of meanings of this word see S. H. Griffiths, 'Asceticism in the Church of Syria', in Wimbush and Valentasis (eds.), *Asceticism*; Escolan, *Monachisme et église*, 24.

⁷ On the *bnay qyama* see Escolan, *Monachisme et église*, 28–35.

⁸ Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 135.

⁹ On cohabiting of celibate men and women see Escolan, *Monachisme et église*, 44–5. But already in the fourth century there was a reaction against this (ibid. 46–52). Ephrem advises consecrated women not to live with consecrated men, as they are the brides of Christ (*Demonstratio* 1.260). This feature of Syrian asceticism was evidently common at Antioch, and Chrysostom's treatises (see below, 155–8) are part of the reaction against it.

¹⁰ Sozomen, *HE* 6.33; S. P. Brock, 'Early Syrian Asceticism', *Numen*, 20 (1973), 1–19, on 11–12 = *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity* (Aldershot, 1984), no. 1, 11–12. On wandering ascetics see D. Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 2002).

¹¹ *Acts of Thomas*; *Gospel of Thomas in the Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. J. Robinson (Leiden, 1988).

qyama,¹² had themselves baptized. It does not follow that baptism was restricted to individuals intending lifelong celibacy. But the celibate ascetic life remained the privileged route to salvation. It was seen as a return to the condition of Adam and Eve before the Fall, and it is often described as the 'angelic life'.¹³ The condition of a virgin (Syriac: *bthulta* or *bthula*) was treated as almost synonymous with holiness, and the term *qadishe*, which means 'the holy ones', is used to describe a married couple who have taken a vow of abstinence.¹⁴ In his poems Ephrem again and again uses variations of the image of Christ as the bridegroom. He is the bridegroom of the Church, but also of the individual soul, both male and female.¹⁵ This simile is ultimately biblical,¹⁶ and its use was not limited to Mesopotamia. But it does highlight the high status of virginity in Syrian Christianity.

Another characteristic feature of the theology of Ephrem and of later Syriac writers is the emphasis on the power of the human free will. Man is capable of overcoming his sin and living the life of an angel. There is much about man's inherent sinfulness, but relatively little about original sin.¹⁷

As for Antioch and the other cities of northern Syria (Coele Syria), Sozomen tells us that the ascetic movement arrived relatively late because the countryside was Christianized rather slowly.¹⁸ Sozomen was from southern Palestine, and the hermits he admired were Egyptian, not Mesopotamian. Antioch was essentially a Greek city; or at least that is what Libanius and the city's elite liked to think. Libanius gives no hint that he or any of his friends had anything to do with Aramaic culture. That this impression is misleading is suggested

¹² See Escolan, *Monachisme et église*, 36–7.

¹³ Ibid. 67–9.

¹⁴ Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 135. See also his 'Early Syrian Asceticism', 8–11 = *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity*, 8–11.

¹⁵ Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 115–30.

¹⁶ Matt. 25: 1–13.

¹⁷ Escolan, *Monachisme et église*, 65–6.

¹⁸ Sozomen, *HE* 6.34, confirmed by the region's inscriptions and archaeology: F. R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c.370–529*, vol. ii (Leiden, 1994), 134–204, 247–312. J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, 'Epigraphic Evidence on the Christianization of Syria', in *Akten des XI internationalen Limeskongresses* (Budapest, 1981), 485–508 = *From Diocletian to the Arab Conquest* (Aldershot, 1990), no. VIII.

by what we know about Theodoret (c.393–c.458), who was born at Antioch and whose writings are almost as Hellenic as those of Libanius, but whose mother was able to converse with the hermit Macedonius who knew no Greek,¹⁹ just as her son, when he became bishop of Cyrrhus, was able to converse with Syriac-speaking hermits and villagers, and to use the Syriac text of the Bible as well as the Greek text.

It is very unlikely that Theodoret's bilingualism was unique.²⁰ The geographical position of Antioch at the crossing of important lines of communications made it a natural meeting point and melting pot of cultures, Greek and Roman, and, what is particularly relevant for the development of asceticism, Aramaic and Egyptian. Apart from the fact that a great many countryfolk normally spoke, even if they did not write, Syriac, there was constant traffic, both civil and military, between Antioch and Mesopotamia. Members of the Mesopotamian elite sent their sons to the rhetorical school of Libanius.²¹ Leaders of Antiochene society had estates in Mesopotamia. The churches of Mesopotamia were at least formally under the patriarch of Antioch. The interconnectedness of the different regions of the Near East is illustrated by the career of Eusebius of Emesa, who was born at Edessa in Mesopotamia around 300, studied philosophy at Alexandria, spent two lengthy periods at Antioch, and finished his life as bishop of Emesa in Syria.²² He died in 359 and was buried at Antioch. All Eusebius' writings appear to have been in Greek, but his native language was Syriac and in his biblical commentaries he used both the Greek and the Syriac texts,²³ as Theodoret was to do. Eusebius was a famous preacher, and some of Chrysostom's ascetic ideas are quite similar to his. Though Eusebius tended towards

¹⁹ Theodoret, *HR* 13.7; nor (according to Theodoret, *HE* 5.19) did he know the Scriptures.

²⁰ F. Millar, 'Theodoret of Cyrrhus: A Syrian in Greek Dress?', in Amirav and ter Haar Romeny (eds.), *From Rome to Constantinople*, 105–35.

²¹ See P. Petit, *Les Étudiants de Libanius* (Paris, 1957), 114.

²² Socrates, *HE* 2.19.1–3; D. Amand de Mendieta, 'La Virginité chez Eusèbe d'Émèse', *Rev. d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 50 (1955), 777–820; works: *Discourses conservés en Latin*, 2 vols., ed. E. Buytaert (Louvain, 1953, 1957).

²³ B. ter Haar Romeny, 'A Syrian in Greek Dress: The Use of Greek, Hebrew and Syriac Biblical Texts in Eusebius of Emesa's Commentary on Genesis', *Traditio exegetica Graeca*, 6 (Leuven, 1997).

Arianism, it is likely that he exercised considerable influence on the younger Chrysostom.²⁴ Altogether it would seem that the Mesopotamian asceticism of Nisibis and Edessa had significant impact not only on the personal views of Chrysostom, but on the ascetic culture of Antioch as a whole.²⁵ Possible examples of this are Chrysostom's very high valuation of virginity, his concept of Christ as the bridegroom of the dedicated virgin,²⁶ and hence the relative frequency with which Chrysostom refers to the parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins awaiting the arrival of the bridegroom.²⁷ For Chrysostom, however, the point of the parable is not only that Christ is the bridegroom, but also that virginity, though important, is not enough unless accompanied by good deeds. This had also been the view of Ephrem.²⁸ The evident popularity among Antiochene Christians of informal ascetic, 'protomonastic' communities is perhaps comparable to the importance of the *bnay qyama* in Mesopotamia; and the extreme regimes of bodily hardship and confinement inflicted on themselves by the Syrian anchorites recall the extremes undergone by the free-living ascetics described by Ephrem.²⁹

While in the city of Antioch and its territory the ascetic ideal was already seen as the recipe for the perfect Christian life by large numbers of individuals, irrespective of social class,³⁰ the forms it

²⁴ Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 129, makes Chrysostom a follower of Eusebius of Emesa as well as of Diodorus.

²⁵ This is argued convincingly by Illert, *Johannes Chrysostomus und das antiochenische Mönchtum*, 71–83.

²⁶ Amand de Mendieta, 'La Virginité chez Eusébe de Émèse et l'ascétisme familiale dans la première moitié du ive siècle'. Chrysostom, *De virginitate* 59–60. In *Ad Theodorum lapsus* 2 (To Theodore 2.3.25) for a monk too to return to civil life and marry counts as adultery. The same idea is more paradoxically expressed by Ambrose, *De virginitate* 1.5.22.

²⁷ See list of reference in R. Brändle, *Matth 25, 31–46 im Werke des Johannes Chrysostomus* (Tübingen, 1979), 63–4.

²⁸ But Ephrem, like Chrysostom, insists that virginity is not enough without good deeds (*Letter to Publius* in *Le Muséon*, 89 (1976), 286–7).

²⁹ Of course most of these features can be found also in Egypt and elsewhere. It is perhaps their relative prominence that suggests that Christianity at Antioch was significantly influenced by (or was even part of) the Aramaic Christianity of Mesopotamia.

³⁰ Ascetics of good families: in *Historia religiosa* 3.2 (Marcianus, of 'noble' descent); 8.1 (Aphraates, a Persian); 5.1 (Publius, of curial family); 10.1 (Theodosius, distinguished Antiochene family); 12.2 (Zeno, *ex-agens in rebus*).

might take were not yet institutionalized by any set of widely accepted rules, like those of Pachomius in Egypt. There was not even a sharp distinction between asceticism in formally organized communities—monasteries as we understand them—and ‘anachor-esis’, that is the withdrawal by individuals into a solitary life of strict self-discipline. For the cells of the most famous hermits came to be surrounded by cells of imitators,³¹ and the charismatic ascete who had drawn others into his orbit might, or might not, use his charisma to persuade, or even order, them to regulate their lives by his rules. So Theodosius at Rhosos insisted that his fellow ascetics must also work.³² Publius had the small cells demolished and replaced by two large communal buildings, one for Greek speakers and the other for those who spoke Aramaic. He built one church to be used jointly by both groups with hymns sung in each language alternately.³³ Bassus at Telanissus had more than 200 disciples whom he forbade to own horses or mules, receive gifts of money, go outside the gates, or receive friends.³⁴ Marcianus made a set of rules for two monasteries founded by his disciple Agapenus at Nicerta north of Apamea,³⁵ which in 440, when Theodoret wrote his *Religious History*,³⁶ housed 400 monks. The fifth and sixth centuries saw the construction of numerous solidly built monasteries whose impressive remains can still be seen in many places on the limestone plateau east of Antioch.

But in the second half of the fourth century individuals who wished to shape their lives in accordance with this ideal were still free to choose from a wide range of austere lifestyles, and largely to determine themselves how extreme the disciplining of their body was to be. Young men who wanted to live the perfect Christian life had the choice of opting for life within the city, on the edge of the city, or on the edge of the more remote desert; they might turn their home into an ascetic institution. They might adopt a solitary life, or life with a companion, or companions. Friends might live together

³¹ Description in Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Tim.* 14 (PG 62.574.24–578.27).

³² RH 10.3 (Theodosius).

³³ HR 5.3–5.

³⁴ Ibid. 26.8.

³⁵ Ibid. 3.4.

³⁶ Date is discussed by R. M. Price, *A History of the Monks in Syria, by Theodoret of Cyrrhus* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1985), pp. xiv–xv.

informally, or in an ascetic 'commune', a protomonastery, which would not, however, be regulated by any established monastic rule. This is how Chrysostom describes an example of domestic protomonasticism:

if you saw him at home you would think he was one of those who live in the mountains. His house was arranged according to the discipline of every monastery, where there is nothing but the essentials. All his time was spent in reading holy books. Although he was quite sharp in his studies of pagan learning, he devoted the rest of his time to frequent prayers and the sacred scriptures. He spent the entire day without food—and not only one or two days but many days. His nights were spent in the same way in tears, prayers and bible-reading. He made himself a garment out of hair and slept in it at night, having found that that was a clever way to ensure that he arose quickly.³⁷

It was an intra-urban ascetic life of this kind that Basil wanted his friend Chrysostom to share with him, and which Chrysostom rejected, because he did not want to leave his widowed mother alone in her house.³⁸ Women too might opt for a domestic form of ascetic life within the city. Chrysostom relates how a young woman of good family, brought up in soft living and accustomed to wear elegant clothes, would wrap herself in coarsest horsehair, walk without shoes, sleep on a bed of leaves, and keep prayerful vigil for a large part of the night. She would wear her hair simply bound up, have her one meal a day in the evening, a meal not of herbs or of bread, but of beans and pulse and olives and figs. She would work at her spinning wheel harder than her servants had done in her former home.³⁹

The fluidity of the institution is reflected in the way Chrysostom uses the noun *monachos* and the verb *monazein*. He employs these words in a general way to describe men living a celibate ascetic life apart from others. They are occasionally used in connection with ascetics living in the city,⁴⁰ but more often with reference to ascetics

³⁷ *Adversus oppugnatores* 3.12 (PG 47.376).

³⁸ *De sacerdotio* 2. Later, presumably after his mother had died, Chrysostom opted for the full rigour of extra-urban asceticism on the mountain. See below 130–1.

³⁹ *Hom. 13 in Eph.* (PG 62.98).

⁴⁰ Ascetics living in the city are sometimes described as 'brothers'; so in *Contra eos qui subintroductas*... (Dumortier) 9.46; Chrysostom, *Ad Theodorum lapsum* (Dumortier) 2, 1. 5, 54; 1, 17.81.

living outside, whether 'on the mountain(s)' or in the desert, whether living singly, or in a community. But when he uses expressions like 'the men on the mountain(s)', or 'the dwellers in the desert',⁴¹ he is not simply using synonymous circumlocutions, but he is sharply distinguishing these 'extra-urban ascetics' from city dwellers.⁴² Chrysostom considered city and desert two separate worlds. In the *Adversus oppugnatores* he draws a very sharp distinction between life in the wicked city with its law courts and loose morals,⁴³ and life in the desert 'blossoming with the abundant fruit of philosophy... Often I have prayed that there would be no need for monasteries, and that such good order would reign in cities that no one would be forced to flee to the desert... Must everyone leave the cities, and desert them to flee to the desert and populate mountain tops?'⁴⁴ For Chrysostom, at any rate, the distinction between urban and mountain ascetics was perfectly clear.⁴⁵

Chrysostom's ascetic treatises, other than the *Adversus oppugnatores*, show that many, probably the majority, of the young upper-class idealists were not drawn to the full ascetic life on the mountain or in the desert, but were content with the more domestic, intra-urban forms of asceticism, and it was with their problems, social, moral, and not least what we would consider psychological, that Chrysostom was principally concerned.⁴⁶

⁴¹ See above Hom. in Matth, 69, 3 (PG 58.651); *Adversus oppugnatores* 1.7 (PG 47.333).

⁴² This is made clear in *Adversus oppugnatores* 1.7, 8 (PG 47.328, 329).

⁴³ He has a long section on pederasty in the city (*Adversus oppugnatores* 3.8 (PG 47.360–4)). He is silent about the danger of boys being sexually abused by monks on the mountain. But this danger was real. See Rouselle, *Porneia*, 191–2 for Egyptian evidence.

⁴⁴ *Adversus oppugnatores* 1.7, trans. D. G. Hunt. In later ascetic literature 'desert' is sometimes used figuratively, so that even an ascetic living in a city can be said to be living in the 'desert'. But I have seen no example of Chrysostom using 'desert' or 'mountain' in this figurative sense.

⁴⁵ Wendy Mayer, in her interesting 'Monasticism at Antioch and Constantinople in the Late Fourth Century: A Case of Exclusivity or Diversity?', in Pauline Allen et al. (eds.), *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church* (Brisbane, 1998), 275–88, on 285 asks: 'Were they [the laity of Antioch] able to discriminate between coenobitic and eremitic, between urban and non urban forms of asceticism?' I think the answer is 'yes', even though the different forms of asceticism merged one into the other.

⁴⁶ See below, 158–65.

(II) URBAN AND EXTRA-URBAN ASCETICISM

It is therefore certainly a mistake to assume that at the time when Chrysostom became interested in the ascetic life, domestic, or at least intra-urban, asceticism was still the only form available in Antioch, and to conclude with Illert that at this time 'the mountains' and the margin of the Syrian desert were not yet populated by numbers of monks and hermits.⁴⁷ The point is of some importance both for the history of Syrian monasticism, and even more for the reconstruction of the biography of Chrysostom. For if Illert is right, we cannot rely on Palladius' account of the early life of Chrysostom, and we lose what would otherwise seem to be by far our best source for the evolution of his religious personality.⁴⁸ But *pace* Illert, the *Dialogue* of Palladius remains by far the fullest and best source for the early—and indeed the later—life of Chrysostom, just as it is still the most convincing interpretation of Chrysostom's *Adversus oppugnatores vitae monasticae* that this treatise is precisely what it purports to be, namely a defence of extra-urban monasticism, which is intended to calm the fears of fathers who were worried and angry because their sons were keen to join the monks on the mountain.

Chrysostom frequently refers to the men on 'the mountain', that is on Mount Silpius, in the immediate vicinity of the city. Other ascetics lived on the mountain, not too far from the city. So Macedonius was regularly visited by the mother of Theodoret, and entered Antioch to plead for the city, when it was threatened with severe punishment after the Riot of the Statues.⁴⁹ According to Theodoret the mountain

⁴⁷ I don't think that there really was such a sharp distinction (as argued by Illert, *Johannes Chrysostomus und das antiochenische Mönchtum*, 77–83) between protomonasticism involving *anachoresis* in Egypt, and protomonasticism which was exclusively or at least essentially urban and domestic (*inneregemeindlich*) in Syria. There is plenty of evidence of both urban and anachoretic asceticism in Syria in the later fourth century: e.g. two Syrian monks in Chrysostom's *Ad Theodorum lapsum* 1.18, 19 were definitely anchorites. It is extremely unlikely that Chrysostom himself, when writing around 380, Egyptianized Syrian monasticism as is suggested by Illert (*Johannes Chrysostomus und das antiochenische Mönchtum*, 103). See also the evidence from Theodoret's *Historia religiosa*, n. 52 below.

⁴⁸ See below, 116–17.

⁴⁹ Theodoret, *HR* 13.

was 'decked like a meadow, for on it shone Petrus the Galatian,⁵⁰ his namesake the Egyptian, Romanus, Severus, Zeno, Moses and Malchus';⁵¹ Other monks lived further away to north and east, in the zone where cultivated land merged into the desert.⁵² Many of them lived under conditions of sensational self-inflicted hardship.⁵³ Ascetics were greatly admired and venerated by all ranks of society. It was a notable event when one of them came down into the city to make a petition on behalf of some individual or cause, and he would be listened to, even by an emperor.⁵⁴

Illert minimizes the difference between ascetic life within the city and 'on the mountain', arguing that Antioch was built on the lower slopes of the mountain, and that even if they lived outside its walls hermits still lived very close to the city and as part of its society.⁵⁵ That is an oversimplification. Some monks no doubt lived just outside the walls, like Romanus and Peter,⁵⁶ and the 'mountain' favoured by hermits did indeed begin not far from the gates of Antioch, and certainly not too far for monks to come into the city. But normally monks did not enter the city. People who needed their help left the city to visit them. The descent of many monks into the city to plead with the imperial officials after the Riot of the Statues was quite exceptional. We are told that although the monks had been

⁵⁰ Theodoret's mother visited him to be healed of an eye sickness, and he came to her house and cured her when she was very ill with puerperal fever. As a boy, Theodoret himself received his blessing every week (ibid. 9.4–9, 14).

⁵¹ Ibid. 4.25.

⁵² Evidence in *Theodoret: A History of the Monks of Syria* (=Religious History), trans. with notes R. M. Price (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1985), pp. xvi–xvii. Hermits in the region of Antioch: Eusebius (c.350, *HR* 4), Symeon the Elder on Mount Amanus where he founded two monasteries, and Palladius near Imma, 40 km from Antioch on the route to Beroea /Alepo (in the 370s, *HR* 7), Coenobite foundations *HR* 2.9 at Gindarus c.330; 4.2 at Teleda c.350; 6.13 on Mount Amanus, 380s; 18.1 near Cyrrhus, c.365; 3.4–5 at Nicerta near Apamea, c.360s. See also Sozomen, *HE* 3.14, 16; 6.34.

⁵³ *Contra eos qui subintroductas* (Dumortier), 5.28–36.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 7. Theodoret, *HE* 2.16: Julian Saba enters Antioch to condemn Arianism. Theodoret, *HR* 8.8: Aphraates rebukes the emperor Valens. *HE* 4.34: Isaak rebukes Valens. *Adversus oppugnatores* 2.7: 'For who will address the king, and censure him with greater power' surely alludes to the monks who rebuked Valens. Chrysostom, *De statu* 17.2, Theodoret, *HR* 13.7: monks petition imperial representatives after the Riot of the Statues.

⁵⁵ Illert, *Johannes Chrysostomus und das antiochenische Mönchtum*, 84–93.

⁵⁶ Theodoret, *HR* 13.9.

shut up so many years in their cells, 'at no one's entreaty... when they beheld such a cloud overhanging the city, they left their caves and huts, and flocked together in every direction, as if they had been so many angels arriving from heaven'.⁵⁷

The life of an urban ascetic, like that of Chrysostom while he lived an ascetic life in the house of his mother, was quite different from life on the mountain, which he was to experience later.⁵⁸ For life on the mountain required also non-devotional physical labour, such as planting and irrigating, and carrying water, which a young man of good family would consider shameful, and would normally have left to slaves.⁵⁹ One reason for the difference was that many, probably a majority, of the monks on 'the mountain(s)' and in the desert were of peasant origin,⁶⁰ whose normal speech was Aramaic. In other words their social status was similar to that of Antony and many of the Egyptian desert fathers.⁶¹ There is some direct evidence. Symeon of Teleda introduced Aramaic speakers as well as speakers of Greek to the monastic life.⁶² At Zeugma, Publius founded one monastery for Greek speakers, and another for speakers of Aramaic.⁶³ Macedonius pleaded for Antioch after the riot in 387 in Aramaic.⁶⁴ Abraham, later bishop of Carrhae, did not speak Greek.⁶⁵ Symeon Stylites was certainly of peasant origin, and as a boy was employed by his parents as a shepherd.⁶⁶ We are not told anything about the social background of the majority of the monks whose feats were recorded by Theodoret, but the very large number of monasteries, nearly one per village, that were constructed on the hills east of Antioch in the fifth and sixth centuries are witness to the enormous appeal of the ascetic life to villagers. The famous holy men attracted large numbers of admirers, imitators, or petitioners and exercised authority as

⁵⁷ *Hom. de statuis* 17.3, trans. E. Budge in *Library of the Fathers* (London, 1885).

⁵⁸ See below.

⁵⁹ *Adversus oppugnatores* 2.2 (PG 47.333) The hermit Macedonius' barley, his exclusive food, was supplied by Theodoret's mother HR 13.3.

⁶⁰ A. J. Festugière, *Antioche païenne et chrétienne* (Paris, 1959), 288, 291, Jerome, *V. Malchi* 2.

⁶¹ S. Brock, 'Greek and Syriac in Late Antique Syria', in A. K. Bowman and G. Wolf (eds.), *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, 1996), 149–60.

⁶² Theodoret, HR 4.13.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 5.5–6.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 13.7.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 17.9.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 26.2.

adjudicators and healers.⁶⁷ They were highly charismatic personalities. It is perhaps likely that in most cases these stars of asceticism were drawn from the wealthier level of village society, as we know that Antony was.

Some of the monks in the neighbourhood of Antioch already lived in real monasteries.⁶⁸ In his commentary on Paul's Letters to Timothy Chrysostom counsels his congregation to visit these institutions and to assist them financially.⁶⁹ In a passage cited earlier Chrysostom compares the house of an urban ascetic to a monastery (*μονατήριον*),⁷⁰ seemingly using the word in the sense in which we use it today, that is to describe a collective institution, a *coenobium*. But he never tells us how we are to visualize a typical Syrian coenobitic monastery. Was it a mere informal assemblage of huts,⁷¹ or a collection of huts under some form of common organization, and with some communal buildings, or perhaps even a compact complex with a church and a domestic block?⁷² He does however suggest that the monasteries with which he was particularly concerned in the *Adversus oppugnatores*, the institutions which attracted young men of Antioch away from their homes and rhetorical schooling, had considerable organization because he tells us that 'all things are held in common, food, housing, clothing.' There is 'one pleasure, one desire, one hope for all; indeed everything is perfectly regulated, as if by a

⁶⁷ See Peter Brown's famous article 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', in *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (London, 1982), 103–52 = *JRS* 71 (1971), 80–101.

⁶⁸ In *Hom. in Matt.* 69.3 (PG 58.652) Chrysostom compares the monks on the mountain to nomads and to encamped soldiers. The comparison is not intended to signify that none of the monks had a fixed abode. Chrysostom is concerned with the monks' state of mind, their contempt for earthly possessions. Some Syrian anchorites were wanderers who slept in the open, but we do not know how many. The impression is of a great variety of ascetic lifestyles. There were no widely accepted rules, like those of Pachomius, or later of Benedict.

⁶⁹ *Hom 14 in 1 Tim.* (PG 62.574; 574–8) is a highly laudatory description of monastic life. So also *Hom. in Matt.* 68.4–5 = PG 58.645–6; cf. also *De compunctione* 1.6 (PG 47.403).

⁷⁰ See above, 103.

⁷¹ The monks who came into the city to make proselytes evidently lived in individual huts. An angry father could say: 'I found his hut before anyone else. I was the first to lay hands on so and so monk' (*Adversus oppugnatores* 1.2, PG 47.333).

⁷² An example: J.-L. Biscop, *Deir Dêhès, monastère d'Antiochène*, Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique 148 (Beirut, 1997).

norm, a rule.⁷³ It also seems as if there was a certain amount of organization linking the various hermits and monasteries. At any rate, when Jerome was being harassed by fellow ascetics who doubted his Nicene orthodoxy he wrote to a certain priest named Marcus, asking him to be allowed 'the shelter of the desert for a few months till spring'. Evidently he thought that Marcus exercised some kind of authority over the ascetics on the margins of the Syrian desert.⁷⁴

In his writings Chrysostom is not concerned with the organizational side of monasticism. Indeed he does not yet have a vocabulary to distinguish the different forms of institutional monasticism as they were to evolve. What is important for Chrysostom is that asceticism represents the perfect Christian way of life, or, alternatively, 'the philosophic life', meaning that these dedicated men and women achieve in their lives the virtues of self-control and impassibility which the secular philosophers, especially the Stoics, had long recommended without practical effect.⁷⁵ 'For they have chosen a way of life that befits heaven, and they have attained a state in no way inferior to that of the angels.'⁷⁶ In other words the control that they achieved over themselves, and particularly over their sexuality, has cancelled the consequences of the Fall.

(III) MONKS AND EDUCATION

As we have seen, monks sometimes came down into the city to win proselytes for their way of life, and especially to persuade adolescents to adopt it. Not surprisingly this made the parents of boys who abandoned home and education to live with the monks on the mountain extremely angry, for they had quite different ambitions for their sons, and wanted them to spend the later years of their adolescence studying rhetoric with a view to a career in the imperial service. We are told that angry fathers issued threats to deter monks from entering

⁷³ *Adversus oppugnatores* 3.11 (PG 47.366).

⁷⁴ *Ep.* 17.

⁷⁵ See above 14 and below 143–4.

⁷⁶ *Adversus oppugnatores* 3.11 (PG 47.366).

Antioch to teach, and that they attacked and forcibly expelled those that they found in the city.⁷⁷ Fathers even pursued monks whom they suspected of having 'misled' their sons to their huts, had them arrested, taken to court, and imprisoned.⁷⁸ The attraction of the mountain was felt not only by Christian youths. The young 'fans' crowded around charismatic holy men on the mountain⁷⁹ included sons of pagans. The whole second book of *Adversus oppugnatores* is addressed to a wealthy father who is a pagan.⁸⁰ But throughout the third book Chrysostom counsels a Christian father.

As we have seen, it was this situation that led Chrysostom to compose the treatise *Adversus oppugnatores vitae monasticae*, which is addressed to fathers, to admonish them that they are wrong to be angry, and that the monks are in fact conferring a great benefit on their sons. Indeed he seems to be positively urging parents of their own accord to send their sons on to the mountain to be brought up by the monks.⁸¹ Chrysostom suggests that the monks offered life in their community as a kind of boarding-school education. The boys would live with the monks on the mountain, but they could be visited by their parents.⁸² They would not necessarily become monks for life. They could return home after they had finished their time with the monks, like children attending a boarding school today.⁸³ But while they were living with the monks their way of life and values would be transformed, as Chrysostom reassures an anxious father: 'If you wish, we will persuade him to come down from the mountain and go into the market place. You will see the entire city turning around and everyone pointing at him in wonder and amazement, as if some angel from heaven were now at their side.'⁸⁴

⁷⁷ *Adversus oppugnatores* 1.2 (PG 47.320).

⁷⁸ Ibid 1.2 (near end). That monks aroused hostility is confirmed by Sozomen, *HE* 6.34.

⁷⁹ e.g. around Julian Saba; 'Many who learnt of his consummate philosophy, some living in his neighbourhood, others far away, hastened along to be received into his wrestling school, and to live the rest of their lives under him as under some gymnastic master' (*HR* 2.3, trans. R. M. Price).

⁸⁰ *Adversus oppugnatores* 2.1 (PG 47.331–48).

⁸¹ On the arguments used in *Adversus oppugnatores* see also below p. 147.

⁸² *In Matt.* 68.4–5 (PG 58.645–6). *Adversus oppugnatores* 18 (PG 47.380).

⁸³ *Adversus oppugnatores* 3.18 (PG 47.380–1).

⁸⁴ Ibid. 2.6 (PG 47.340).

Once he has been trained to perfection he will be a benefactor to family, city and country. 'Then you will see the benefits of philosophy, when they (the pupils of the monks) heal people suffering from incurable diseases, when they are hailed as benefactors, patrons and saviours to all, when they live like angels among people on earth.'⁸⁵ We have no evidence to assess how common it was for boys who had joined the monks to return to the city to lead a normal life. My guess is that most of them either remained monks, like Urbanus, the son of a former provincial governor,⁸⁶ or eventually became clerics, like Chrysostom himself.⁸⁷ Of course, Chrysostom became a monk only after he had completed his rhetorical education. We lack the evidence to assemble statistics of the popularity of monasteries among adolescents or of the ultimate fate of those who spent their youth in monasteries, but it is evident that the monks won over a significant number of adolescents, especially among the gilded youth of the civic elite. However, the youths who joined the monks are likely to have also included sons of poor parents. For parents who sent one or more of their children to a monastery would save the expenses of their upbringing, and preserve their small property from being divided up at their death.⁸⁸

When Chrysostom treats the rhetorical schools and life with the monks as comparable forms of education, he quite deliberately obscures the enormous differences between them. He does not describe in detail the kind of education the monks had to offer. We have in fact no evidence that monasteries at this time had any facilities for educating children, or even that they claimed to provide anything that might be called an education for everyday life.

The early monasteries were not schools. Monastic schools only came into being centuries later. What monasteries did provide was a training for the monastic life, an education, or more accurately an apprenticeship, designed to discipline the body to enable the soul to live a life of prayer and contemplation, without being distracted by the natural emotions and passions, above all sex and anger, which

⁸⁵ 3.18 (trans. Hunter).

⁸⁶ *Ad Theodorum lapsum* 1.18.

⁸⁷ See below 127–32.

⁸⁸ However, Chrysostom does not mention any such cases.

accompany, and to a considerable extent guide, human beings through normal life. To have a chance of succeeding in this endeavour it was not enough to feel a vocation. A practical course of hard experience was needed.

What had to be learnt was the monastic routine and various techniques of physical and mental discipline. Routines, disciplines, and exercises were based on the experience of the founder of the monastery and of that of earlier celebrated monks, who had passed on their wisdom to disciples who joined their community, or had settled in its neighbourhood. As far as we know, literature recording the wise sayings of the holy fathers did not yet exist in Syria. The collective life of the community was therefore the principal instrument of instruction. This was certainly nothing like an education in the sense in which this word was (and is) used by parents eager to give their sons the best preparation for life in the 'world'.

On the other hand it is the case that in the fifth century 'Syrian', that is Mesopotamian, monasteries, in which Syriac was the language of the monks, did set up schools, which served above all to train clergy. These monastic schools were to play an essential part in the propagation and development of a Syriac literary culture.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Escolan, *Monachisme et église*, 152–4.

The Sources for the Early Life of Chrysostom

(I) CHRYSOSTOM ON HIMSELF

When we try to reconstruct Chrysostom's biography, it is unfortunate that, unlike the roughly contemporary Gregory of Nazianzus, Augustine, and Libanius, he did not write an autobiography.¹ His writings, and particularly his 'literary writings',² do however contain some fragments of autobiographical information. The most informative in this respect is the dialogue *De sacerdotio*. It has been doubted whether the autobiographical information that frames the dialogue is authentic, but I follow Kelly in concluding that it is. Unfortunately neither the incident around which the *De sacerdotio* has been constructed, nor the other autobiographical snippets, are easy to fit into a consistent chronological sequence because they are all without any unambiguous indication of the date to which they refer. It does not help that Chrysostom seems to have quite regularly rounded up numbers for rhetorical effect.³ He implies that he was 20 when he began his rhetorical studies, when according to Palladius (whose chronology is consistent) he was 18 when he ended them.⁴ Chrysostom tells us that he wrote the treatise *St Babyla, contra Iulianum et gentes* twenty years after the burning of the temple of Apollo at Daphne, that is in 382. In fact, the work is likely to date from

¹ On these autobiographies see W. Liebeschuetz, 'Libanius and Late Antique Autobiography', *Topoi Suppl.* 7 (2006), 263–76.

² See below xxx.

³ Examples: C. Baur, *ZK Th.* 152 (1928), 405 n. 5.

⁴ See *Ad viduam iuniorum* 2 (*PG* 48.601) and below xxx.

378 or 379, because it does not mention the new martyrrium of St Babylas.⁵ Chrysostom describes how he and a friend picked a manual of magic out of the river Orontes during the reign of terror, when the emperor Valens was residing at Antioch and magic trials were in full swing. That was in winter 371/2. Chrysostom will have been around 22 at the time, yet he describes himself a *μειράκιον*, a boy or lad.⁶ The distortions which may result from this idiosyncrasy can be detected, and to some extent corrected, but they nevertheless introduces a considerable element of uncertainty into any reconstruction of the chronology of Chrysostom's early life.

(II) PSEUDO-MARTYRIUS

Apart from these autobiographical snippets in his own writings, the earliest source for the life of Chrysostom is the hagiographical obituary written by the so-called 'Martyrius', which seems to have been composed in 407, very soon after John's death in exile, indeed before the fact of his death had been fully established.⁷ This work is almost entirely concerned with events at Constantinople about which the author seems to have had good information, some perhaps even gained as an eye-witness. While Pseudo-Martyrius was obviously a great admirer of Chrysostom, he does not appear to have been close to him personally. He has very little information about Chrysostom's early life at Antioch. He omits such topics as wealth, family background, and education, which are an essential part of the classical panegyric, because, as he says, such things neither enhance nor detract from the life of a Christian.⁸ But I suspect that he did not in fact know very much about the early stages of Chrysostom's career.

His chapters about Chrysostom's life at Antioch have very little factual information. The account begins with the statement that

⁵ See below, 149, J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom, Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (London, 1995), 41.

⁶ *Hom. in Act.* 38.5 (PG 60.274 ff.); Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 298.

⁷ M. Wallraff and C. Ricci, *Oratio funebris in laudem Sancti Iohannis Chrysostomi*, Epitafio attribuito a Martyrio di Antiochia (BHG 871, CPG 6517) (Spoleto, 2007).

⁸ 5.14.

Chrysostom became a monk. He does not say where he lived as a monk. He could be referring to the domestic asceticism that is described at the beginning of the *De sacerdotio*. We are not told how old he was when he made this decision, nor are we given any details of the circumstances of his monastic existence except that he now gave up his previous preoccupation with secular literature and engaged in thorough study of the Bible. It was while in retreat that Chrysostom was baptized, by a bishop who is not named,⁹ but who we are told had been exiled from his see because of the Arian 'madness'. This is said to have happened towards the end of 'the persecution'. The statement is of course highly ambiguous. The end of the persecution could refer to the accession of Julian the Apostate in 362, and his recall of the exiled Catholic bishops, but it could also refer to the end of the imperial support for Arianism after the death of the emperor Valens in 378. The latter date would however be incompatible with what we know about the early life of Chrysostom from other sources. The former is possible, even though the other sources would indicate that 362 is a little too early for Chrysostom's baptism.¹⁰ Palladius suggests that the baptism took place three years before Chrysostom became a monk, and he identifies the bishop who baptized him as Meletius. Pseudo-Martyrius too could be alluding to Meletius as the bishop who baptized Chrysostom, though at that time (AD 362) Chrysostom was living in the city and Meletius was no longer in exile, but officiating as bishop at Antioch.¹¹

Pseudo-Martyrius agrees with Palladius that Chrysostom's monastic existence came to an end with his ordination as a deacon. As usual he gives no indication as to when this occurred, but he does tell us that a considerable time elapsed between the deaconate and the priesthood, and he expresses some astonishment that so obviously talented a young man had to wait so long for his promotion. He does not give us a date for the ordination to the priesthood, but he tells us that it

⁹ It is an irritating characteristic of Ps.-Martyrius that he prefers to allude to individuals rather than give their names—a convention shared by Libanius.

¹⁰ See below, 125.

¹¹ Martyrius 8 (459a) seems to have thought (mistakenly) that Chrysostom's experience of monasticism had from the beginning been extra-urban, and that perhaps led him to conclude that if Meletius met him, he too must have still been outside the city, not yet having returned from exile.

happened at a time when there was an atmosphere of panic among the people of Antioch, following episodes of earthquake and drought. This may well be true, at least as far as the drought is concerned. For Libanius informs us about repeated protests at high food prices over a number of years between 383 and 386. Comparing the account of 'Martyrius' with the others, it is clear that many important details are missing. His narrative of these early years is so telescoped, and altogether so meagre, that it simply will not do to cite the fact that something is not mentioned by him as evidence that it did not happen.

(III) PALLADIUS

By far the fullest account of Chrysostom's life is the *Dialogue*¹² (*Dialogus de vita S. Ioannis Chrysostomi*) of Palladius (364–c.430). Palladius was a well-educated man, who had lived many years as a monk in Palestine, and then in Egypt. Around 400, Chrysostom ordained him bishop of the Bithynian city of Helenopolis. In 404, when Chrysostom was deposed and exiled, Palladius travelled to Rome to win the support of pope Innocent I and other important individuals in the West, for the condemned bishop. On returning to Constantinople in 406, he was himself arrested and exiled to the Thebaid, where he wrote his *Dialogue*.¹³ As one might expect, the work is a defence of Chrysostom and a refutation of the accusations of his enemies. The *Dialogue* is very partisan, but at the same time it obviously has been written by somebody who knew Chrysostom well, for it offers a remarkably detailed and rounded picture of his personality and actions. In fact the *Dialogue* in many ways reads more like history than hagiography. It deserves to be studied for its own sake as a piece of historiography. Here I am only concerned with the *Dialogue* as a source for the life of Chrysostom before his move to Constantinople.

The information about the early life of Chrysostom provided by Palladius, while more abundant than that offered by 'Martyrius', is

¹² In full: *Dialogue with Theodore, deacon of the Roman Church, about the life and actions of the blessed John, bishop of Constantinople*.

¹³ Ed. with French trans. by A.-M. Malingrey, SC 341 (Paris, 1988); with English trans. by P. R. Coleman-Norton (Cambridge, 1929).

still very patchy. But Palladius does at least give us some dates, and these can be used to construct a tentative chronology of Chrysostom's early life. Palladius tells us that the young Chrysostom studied rhetoric under a sophist whose name he does not give. At 18, the young man abandoned rhetoric and devoted himself to Scripture. Meletius was at that time the (Nicene) bishop of Antioch, and the young Chrysostom became his assistant for three years.¹⁴ During this time he received baptism. The reader is led to conclude that Chrysostom was baptized by Meletius, but Palladius does not state this explicitly. Next, presumably at the end of the three years—though this again is not made explicit—he decided to leave the city and retreat to Mount Silpius. There he encountered an unnamed Syrian monk, leading a sternly ascetic life, with whom he spent the next four years,¹⁵ fighting to subdue his own passionate desires. Then he spent another two years as a solitary in a cave living a life of hardship and study.¹⁶ Finally his health broke down, and he was compelled to return to 'the harbour of the Church'. After he had assisted Meletius for a further two years at the altar, he was promoted to the rank of deacon.¹⁷ Finally, in 386, when his gifts as a teacher were revealed, and 'as contact with him was sweetening the sour life of the people', he was ordained as a priest by Flavianus. Twelve years later Chrysostom was consecrated bishop of Constantinople.

(IV) SOCRATES: WAS CHRYSOSTOM FOR SOME TIME ASSOCIATED WITH EUAGRIUS, SON OF POMPEIANUS?

Socrates, the ecclesiastical historian, wrote his *Ecclesiastical History* around 440, thirty-three years after the death of Chrysostom. This was after Chrysostom had been rehabilitated by the Church of

¹⁴ Palladius, *Dial.* 5 (PG 47.18).

¹⁵ Cf. the three years Palladius spent with the hermit Innocens (*Hist. Laus.* 44.1).

¹⁶ On the historicity of this notice see below, 130.

¹⁷ Palladius, *Dial.* 5 (PG 47.19). The five years of serving the altar presumably include the three years before his retreat.

Constantinople, and his body buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles in 436. Socrates appreciated Chrysostom's qualities, but his account is much more detached than either that of 'Martyrius' or that of Palladius. Above all he is critical of the intolerance Chrysostom displayed towards Novatians, and also, paradoxically, of his readiness to pardon sinners not just once but repeatedly.¹⁸ Socrates has information which is not found elsewhere, and which would be important if it were true, but which, in part at least, it certainly is not. Socrates confirms that the sophist under whom Chrysostom studied rhetoric was Libanius. He adds that he also studied philosophy under Andragathius, about whom nothing else is known. He also tells us that the young Chrysostom originally intended to practise in the law courts, but was dissuaded by one Euagrius. Socrates tells us that Euagrius persuaded Chrysostom to adopt 'a more tranquil' form of life, which involved the studying of Scripture, and much attendance at church services. Since he gives no further detail, he must have thought that the reader would know who that Euagrius was, presumably because he would assume that the Euagrius of Antioch who influenced young Chrysostom was the same man as the Antiochene Euagrius who figures elsewhere in Socrates' History, that is Jerome's friend, Euagrius, son of Pompeianus.¹⁹ Socrates also tells us that Chrysostom subsequently frequented an *asketerion* led by Diodorus and Carterius. Diodorus later became bishop of Tarsus.²⁰ He came to be well known for his commentaries on the Bible, in which he tried to elucidate the literal meaning, and not to look for allegorical interpretations. This was of course the way Chrysostom too interpreted the Bible when he came to write his own commentaries.

Some time later, Chrysostom was appointed reader, but according to Socrates he was not appointed by Meletius, as we are told by Palladius, but by a certain bishop called Zeno, 'on the latter's return

¹⁸ Socrates, *HE* 6.21. Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 224–5, 300, confirms Chrysostom's leniency, citing Isaak's 6th charge at the Synod of the Oak, and Chrysostom, *De paenitentia* 8.1 (PG 49.337); *In Hebr. hom.* 9.2–4; 31.3 (PG 63.78–80; 215–17), which show that Chrysostom did preach that genuine repentance would always win forgiveness.

¹⁹ *PLRE* 1.285–6.

²⁰ See D. S. Wallace Hadrill, *Christian Antioch* (Cambridge, 1982), 119–22. Only a few fragments of Diodorus' writings have survived.

from Jerusalem'.²¹ Meletius enters Socrates' narrative 'not long after', when he is said to have made Chrysostom a deacon, something which, as we know from Palladius, in fact happened only around 380, perhaps nine years after John's election to the readership.²² Socrates continues the narrative to the effect that, 'afterwards upon the death of Meletius at Constantinople [in spring 381], John separated himself from the Meletians and spent three whole years in retirement'.²³ Later, he was ordained presbyter by Euagrius, Paulinus' successor, the same man who, if we believe Socrates, had earlier inspired Chrysostom to give up his secular ambitions.

Two features of Socrates' account stand out: First, there is the fact that it does not so much as hint that Chrysostom ever lived as a monk or as a hermit in the desert or on Mount Silpius. This is easily explained. Like 'Martyrius',²⁴ Socrates has telescoped the passage of time between Chrysostom's baptism and his election to the deaconate with the effect that something like ten years disappear altogether from his narrative. It follows that we need not conclude with Illert that the fact that Chrysostom's monastic experience is not mentioned by Socrates must mean that it did not happen, and that the entire monastic episode has been invented by Palladius.²⁵

The second notable feature of Socrates' account is that he associates Chrysostom with Euagrius, and the rival Catholic group of Paulinus and Euagrius. This needs further discussion. The statement that John was ordained by Euagrius, which could not have been before 388, is contradicted by Palladius, according to whom he was ordained by Flavianus. On this point Socrates is certainly wrong, and Palladius certainly right. For Chrysostom's first sermon, as well as the sermons on the Riot of the Statues of spring 387, show that Chrysostom was a priest before Euagrius became a bishop, and, what is more, that he became a priest in the community of Flavianus.

²¹ Sozomen, *HE* 8.2, is largely based on Socrates, but Sozomen omits the reference to Zeno, and neither here nor elsewhere has any reference to any connections between Chrysostom and Euagrius.

²² Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 38.

²³ Socrates, *HE* 6.3.

²⁴ Sozomen, *HE* 8.2, here simply follows Socrates.

²⁵ That Chrysostom never was a monk on Mount Silpius and that the whole episode was invented by Palladius is argued by Illert, *Johannes Chrysostomus und das antiochenische Mönchtum*, 101–5. Against this view see below, Chapter 8 n. 31.

But this does not mean that everything that Socrates says about Chrysostom's relationship with Euagrius must be wrong. The succession of Flavianus was controversial. He had, it seems, been party to an agreement that if Paulinus survived Meletius, it was Paulinus who should become Catholic bishop of Antioch.²⁶ We are told that at that time many refused communion with Flavianus.²⁷ It is likely enough that Chrysostom was one of them. If John did indeed break with the Meletians on the death of Meletius, and if he was for a time equally close to the sect led by Paulinus, and later by Euagrius, that would explain something that, as we have seen, puzzled 'Martyrius', the fact that after being ordained as a deacon Chrysostom had to wait six years before he was ordained into the priesthood. That John should have had sympathy for the Pauline group is likely enough if, as Socrates suggests, John's relationship with Euagrius was one of long standing, because Euagrius like John had been taught by Libanius and Andragathias,²⁸ and more importantly because it was Euagrius who had persuaded the young Chrysostom to live a fully Christian life.

Euagrius had been a pagan, and belonged to one of the leading Antiochene families. He was clearly older than John, and had held imperial governorships. At some time he converted to Christianity. It is often assumed that this was only after his public career had ended in scandal. But there is no explicit evidence for that. It could have been earlier.²⁹ At any rate, if he did persuade Chrysostom to give up plans for a career in law to become something like a 'full-time Christian', Socrates does not tell us when this is supposed to have happened. The likelihood is that it would have been when Chrysostom was approaching the end of his very thorough and successful rhetorical studies and beginning to think seriously about what he

²⁶ Socrates, *HE* 5.1, 9.

²⁷ Sozomen, *HE* 7.9.

²⁸ Socrates, *HE* 6.3 is the only source. Euagrius figures in Libanius' correspondence, but without any hint that he had been a pupil. Petit did not include him in his list of pupils of Libanius.

²⁹ Euagrius received a governorship from Julian, but this need not prove that he was still a pagan. His very distinguished family, and its connections (including Libanius), might have been enough to procure him the office.

should do with his life. That might plausibly have been during his late teenage.³⁰

The theory that Euagrius had played an important part in turning Chrysostom from a secular career to a life of asceticism and service of the Church would help to account for two features in his career. First, Euagrius translated the *Life of Antony* into Latin, and it so happens that the *Life of Antony* is the only text outside the Bible that Chrysostom is known to have recommended to a congregation.³¹ Secondly, if Socrates is right, and if Chrysostom had once sided with Euagrius, that would help to explain why the West rallied to his support when he was deposed from the see of Constantinople.³² For Paulinus, and later Euagrius, were recognized as the legitimate Nicene bishops of Antioch by several popes at Rome. After he left Antioch Euagrius spent many years in the West. Jerome met him at Aquileia and they became friends. Euagrius returned to Antioch about the same time as Jerome travelled to the East, and Jerome lodged with him at the beginning and end of his stay in Syria in 374 and 377 respectively.³³ Euagrius had other connections in the West. His friend Eusebius of Vercellai became one of the early promoters of the ascetic ideal in the West, requiring his clergy to live a celibate communal life. While Euagrius was in Italy, he opposed Auxentius, the Arian bishop of Milan, the predecessor of Ambrose, as well as

³⁰ According to Basil, *Ep.* 138, Euagrius left Antioch for Italy together with Eusebius of Vercellai, who (according to Jerome's *Chronicle* s.a. 362 (242.19)) had already left Antioch as early as 362, or according to Socrates in 362/3 (*HE* 3.9). But letters of Libanius show beyond doubt that Euagrius, son of Pompeianus, was at Antioch in 364/5, facing trial on a charge related to his governorship. So Basil's statement that Euagrius travelled with Eusebius cannot be right—unless Eusebius and Euagrius travelled together only for the first part of the journey, with Euagrius travelling not to Italy, but to his governorship—wherever that was. It would follow that if Euagrius did indeed influence John decisively, it could have been as late as 365.

³¹ *Hom. in Matt.* 8.7 (PG 58.88).

³² Wendy Mayer, 'Antioch and the West in Late Antiquity', *Byzantinoslavica*, 61 (2003), 5–32.

³³ It has been argued by Dumortier that Jerome in *Ep.* 22.2 of 384 criticizes Chrysostom's *Quod regulares feminae viris cohabitare non debent* (PG 47.514–52) without naming him. This would be evidence of a link between Jerome and Chrysostom which is not otherwise documented. But N. Adkin, 'The Date of St. Chrysostom's Treatise on *Subintroductae*', *Rev. bénédictine*, 102 (1992), 255–66, argues convincingly that passages which according to Dumortier refer to Chrysostom's treatise need not, and almost certainly do not, in fact do so.

other Arian bishops of the north of Italy.³⁴ He is therefore likely to have made contact with Ambrose, then consular of Liguria, the province in which Milan was situated. Euagrius renewed his contacts when he travelled to the West a second time to attend the Council of Capua in 391. Through his connections with this group Chrysostom would have had a good knowledge about the West, and a channel through which to convey his view of the situation at Constantinople to the pope and other important Western figures.

As we have seen Euagrius left Antioch for Italy in 364/5 or soon after. This would have been when John attached himself to Meletius. Eusebius of Vercelli, who according to Jerome was Euagrius' traveling companion, was not a supporter of Paulinus, and so at that stage Euagrius was probably not yet a supporter of Paulinus either.³⁵ This would explain why Chrysostom let himself be baptized, and later ordained as reader, not by Paulinus, but by Meletius. But when Euagrius returned to Antioch in 373/4 he joined the community of Paulinus—to the great disappointment of Basil³⁶—and this makes it quite likely that in the controversy following the death of Meletius in 381, Chrysostom for a time came close to the group of Paulinus, of which Euagrius was now a leading member. But if he did become a follower of Paulinus, he did not remain one for long. For, as we have seen, he was ordained as a priest in 386 by Flavianus, the successor of Meletius.

Socrates is the only source who mentions any relationship between Chrysostom and Euagrius. Sozomen, who took so much of his information from Socrates, has nothing on this, neither has Theodoret, or Palladius, or 'Martyrius'. This does not, however, mean that the story must be rejected. The followers of Paulinus came to be seen as divisive. For Chrysostom to have been linked with them, at any time, in any way, would have been discreditable. So writers who wanted to praise John would naturally keep silent about this association. That Socrates is the only one of our major sources who is somewhat critical of Chrysostom could explain why he is the only source to mention a link with Euagrius. Perhaps it is significant that Palladius, who does not mention any link between John and Euagrius, nevertheless praises the latter as 'the blessed Euagrius who

³⁴ Jerome, *Ep.* 1.5.

³⁵ Socrates, *HE* 3.9.

³⁶ Basil, *Ep.* 156.3.

fought many a fight in the course of his labours in the affairs of the Church.³⁷ Moreover there is a hint in the sermon which Chrysostom delivered after his ordination as a priest that his election had been controversial.³⁸ That is what one might expect if Chrysostom had for some time belonged to the rival Catholic group. There is another fact which may be significant. After Chrysostom had been ordained by Flavianus, he automatically became deeply involved in the conflict between the two Nicene groups in the city. The sermons show that he used his eloquence in the service of Flavianus and the Nicenes, as he was bound to do. But it is also the case that few of his sermons have explicit references to the schism.³⁹ This could be because his heart was not really in the polemic against the group which was now led by his former mentor and friend Euagrius.

If Chrysostom had long been close to Euagrius, it is puzzling that we have no evidence of any contact between him and Jerome, Euagrius' friend and client. Jerome mentions Chrysostom in his *De viris illustribus* of 392/3, but his comment is decidedly cool: 'Chrysostom is said to have composed many books, of which I have read only *On the Priesthood*.'⁴⁰ Jerome was clearly distancing himself. Could this be because Chrysostom had transferred his allegiance from Jerome's friend Euagrius to Meletius and Flavianus, whom Jerome and pope Damasus were still refusing to recognize? Or had Chrysostom offended the sensitive Jerome in some other way? In 404, when Chrysostom successfully appealed to Innocent I for help, Euagrius was dead, the pope had recognized Flavianus and the bishops who followed in his succession,⁴¹ and any ill-feeling caused by Chrysostom's desertion of Euagrius had become history. But Chrysostom's links with the Western establishment remained effective.

³⁷ Palladius, *Dial.* 6 (PG 47.22): *Εὐαγρίου τοῦ μακάριου τοῦ πολλοὺς ἀγῶνας ἀγωνισαμένου ἐν ἐκκλησιαστικοῖς πόνοις.*

³⁸ *Cum presbyter fuit ordinatus*, PG 48.693–700 = ed. A.-M. Malingrey, *S. Chr.* 272 (Paris, 1980), 388–419.

³⁹ For what seem to be a definite, if not altogether clear allusion to the Antiochene schism, see below, 183, and Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 101–3 on *Hom. 11 on Eph.*

⁴⁰ *De viris illustribus* 129.

⁴¹ Sozomen, *HE* 8.3; Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 118.

The Early Life of Chrysostom

(I) WHEN WAS CHRYSOSTOM BORN?

John Chrysostom was almost certainly born sometime between 340 and 350.¹ We are told neither the year of his birth nor his age when he died. According to Palladius he was baptized by Meletius at 18,² and for the next three years served as an assistant to him. Meletius was in Antioch briefly in 361. After scarcely thirty days³ he was exiled by Constantius. After being recalled by Julian in 362 he was in the city until 365,⁴ and again from 367 to 371.⁵ It is usually assumed that Chrysostom assisted Meletius during the third period. This would mean that John was born around 349 and died in 407 at the age of 58. However, if Meletius baptized John during his second stay at

¹ *Ad viduam jun.* 4–5 (PG 48.605–6): nine emperors, of whom five died violently. The chronology is that of Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, see appendix on early life of Chrysostom, 296–8. If you start from Chrysostom's statement that his mother had been twenty years a widow at the time when he began studying with Libanius, he will have been born around 345. If we start from Palladius' report that he was baptized at 18, which would have been when he had finished his rhetorical studies, it would follow that he was born around 350. Kelly noticed that he tends to 'round up' numerals.

² By Meletius as implied by Palladius, *Dial.* 5 (PG 47.18), confirmed by Ps.-Martyrius 8, though the latter visualizes their encounter in totally different circumstances (Meletius in exile meets Chrysostom as a monk), which are unlikely to be right. See 115 n. 11 above.

³ *Hom. in Melet.* 1 (PG 50.516).

⁴ Expelled by Constantius (Sozomen, *HE* 4.28); restored by Julian in 362 (*ibid.* 5.13); he was expelled by Valens in 365 (Socrates, *HE* 4.2; Sozomen, *HE* 6.7). He seems to have returned to Antioch not very long after, for we are told of a third exile (Gregory of Nyssa, '*Meletius*', PG 46.857D). This would have been when Valens made Antioch his residence in 371, and expelled the Nicenes (Sozomen, *HE* 6.18). He only returned from exile after the death of Valens in 378 (Socrates, *HE* 5.5; Sozomen, *HE* 7.3).

⁵ Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 17.

Antioch, it would follow that Chrysostom was born in 344, and died at the age of 63. But dating Chrysostom's birth around 349, which correlates with 371 for John's appointment to the readership, has the considerable advantage of fitting the chronology of John's ecclesiastical offices better than the earlier date of birth. This becomes clear when Chrysostom's career is reconstructed backwards from his appointment to the see of Constantinople.

Chrysostom became bishop of Constantinople in 398. He had been a priest for twelve years.⁶ His ordination to the priesthood by Flavianus must therefore have taken place in 386. He had been ordained as deacon by Meletius, 'after he had served the altar for five years'.⁷ Since we know that Chrysostom assisted Meletius as reader before Meletius' second exile for three years,⁸ the remaining two of the five years of service as reader must have been served under Meletius, during his last spell as bishop at Antioch, in the years 378–81. This would mean that Chrysostom was ordained as a deacon in 380/1. He would have given the two years of further service to the altar in the period from 378 to 380. The six years Chrysostom spent on the mountain as hermit or monk bring us back to 372. The ordination to the readership could then have taken place in 371 and three more years assisting Meletius would take us back to 368. If Chrysostom ended his rhetorical studies and became associated with Meletius at the age of 18, as Palladius says, that would imply a birth around 350, or 349, and not the mid-340s. This gives us an almost continuous account of Chrysostom's life. A chronology constructed to meet the earlier birth date would leave us with a number of empty years. However, the nature of our sources is such that our information about the early life of Chrysostom may well have important gaps. The earlier date cannot be ruled out altogether.

An earlier date is implied by Chrysostom himself, when he relates that his professor, 'the most superstitious of men', presumably Libanius, questioned bystanders about his pupil's origins, and was told that he was a son of a widow whose husband had died twenty years previously.⁹ Libanius can only have asked that question when Chrysostom was a new pupil. This would mean that John was at least 20

⁶ Palladius, *Dial.* 5 (PG 47.19).

⁷ Ibid. (PG 47.18).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *Ad viduam jun.* 2 (PG 48.601).

when he started his rhetorical education, and that he was 23 or 24 when he completed it. It would follow that he was born around 344 or even earlier.

To begin rhetorical studies at 20 would have been exceptionally late. Fourteen was normal. If John did indeed start his rhetoric studies so late, that would raise the question as to what he had been doing in his mid- and late teens. Now we are told by 'Martyrius' that Chrysostom spoke fluent Latin,¹⁰ and Libanius often complained that young men were deserting Greek rhetoric for Latin and Roman law. If the early date is right it would allow for Chrysostom to have spent several years learning Latin, in the hope of entering the imperial service. This would seem an attractive theory, but it is incompatible with Palladius' explicit statement that Chrysostom had given up rhetorical studies, and begun to assist Meletius at the age of 18. Whom should we believe—Palladius or Chrysostom himself? When somebody makes a statement about the length of his own mother's widowhood at a particular stage of his life one would normally believe him, or at least prefer his evidence to that of a third party. But we know that Chrysostom sometimes rounded up figures for rhetorical effect.¹¹ So it is possible that he rounded up fourteen or fifteen to twenty, for the greater glory of his mother, and of Christian widows in general. Scholars have therefore as a rule believed Palladius rather than Chrysostom. But again, some uncertainty remains.

(II) EDUCATION AND CONVERSION TO ASCETIC LIFE

Chrysostom's father is said to have been a member of the *officium* of the *magister militum per Orientem*. He was called Secundus, a Latin name, and he had a sister called Sabiniana,¹² which again is Latin. All this suggests that Chrysostom was derived from a family of imperial officials, of Western origin.¹³ We know nothing about the character

¹⁰ Ps. Martyrius 50(485B).

¹¹ See above, 113.

¹² Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 91.

¹³ But the correspondence of Libanius shows that Latin names were quite common in Syria at the time.

and interests of his father, who in any case died young while John was still an infant, and (again like Ambrose) he was brought up his mother. She had the Greek name of Anthousa, was a Christian, and, though widowed early, refused to remarry. A late anecdote makes Chrysostom a star pupil, whose desertion to the Christians Libanius regretted deeply.¹⁴ The style and language of his writings and sermons shows that he fully absorbed Libanius' teaching. He wrote the artificial atticizing Greek which Libanius used, and trained his students to use.

John's writings, as far as I can tell, give no indication that he had ever studied Roman law, but he does tell us that as a youth he was in the habit of attending the law courts.¹⁵ This suggests, as indeed Socrates and Sozomen affirm, that young Chrysostom was destined for an imperial career, just like young Ambrose. With an outstanding education in Greek, and just possibly in Latin rhetoric, he was set to become an advocate, then an assessor to a governor, and finally, if all went well, and if he had an effective patron, to become a governor himself. But things turned out otherwise, for Chrysostom was captured by the ascetic ideal.¹⁶

Young Chrysostom certainly became an enthusiastic believer in the high value of asceticism.¹⁷ Whether this was under the influence of Euagrius, as Socrates tells us, or of Meletius, or yet somebody or something else, Chrysostom gave up the plan of a secular career and devoted himself to a Christian life. He persuaded two friends of similar background to adopt the same lifestyle, and the three of them attended classes at an ascetic school (*asketerion*) led by

¹⁴ Sozomen, *HE* 8.2.

¹⁵ Palladius, *Dial.* 5 (PG 47.18), tells us that his purpose in studying Greek rhetoric was ἐπὶ διακονίαν τῶν θεῶν λογίων, which Kelly argues to mean service of the imperial constitutions commonly described as *sacra oracula* or simply as *sacra*, rather than the service of the Scriptures. Kelly may well be right that hope of a career in the imperial service was why Chrysostom studied Greek rhetoric, but that is nevertheless probably not what Palladius meant. A more obvious interpretation of *θεῖα λόγια* (holy oracles) is that the words refer to the Bible, as in *Ad Theodorum lapsum* 2.1.51 and 1.21.62.

¹⁶ We cannot really follow the psychology of his 'conversion' to asceticism. One might perhaps generalize that for him achievement of the perfect Christian life, *imitatio Christi*, was more important than striving for a vision of the divine.

¹⁷ See above, 118.

Diodorus and Carterius.¹⁸ Diodorus was one of the founders of the Antiochene school of biblical exegesis,¹⁹ which stressed the importance of explaining the literal meaning of the text. Chrysostom became the most important practitioner of this method. The *asketerion* was not a monastery in that its students did not live a communal life. Chrysostom was still living at home with his mother, though at one point he came close to moving away to live with his friend Basil in a joint household which would have been 'run in accordance with the discipline of a monastery'.²⁰ His mother induced him to give up this plan, but he now wore a monk's robe and spent much time reading the Bible, or attending church services. He was member of a group of young men who had dedicated themselves to a totally Christian life, which excluded marriage and worldly occupations and ambitions, required simplest dress and food, and involved hours of prayer and study of the Bible.²¹ They regarded each other as brothers²² and felt themselves contracted to the service of Christ for life.²³ When Theodore renounced this life, with the intention of marrying and returning to the manner of living and occupations of his class, Chrysostom described this decision as adultery.²⁴ The life of the 'brothers' was indeed a masculine version of that of the dedicated virgins.

¹⁸ Socrates, *HE* 6.3; Sozomen, *HE* 8.2. Was this the same brotherhood of ascetically living, celibate young men which Theodore had abandoned in order to get married, as related in *Letter to Fallen Theodore* 2.4, or was it a parallel society? Later, as bishop of Constantinople, Chrysostom encourage the formation of Christian societies and brotherhoods (R. Brändle, 'Johannes Chrysostomus', *RAC* 18 (1997), 426–503).

¹⁹ Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 119, cf. 91.

²⁰ The retirement they planned might perhaps be compared to the retirement of Augustine to Cassiacum, though the retreat of Augustine, his mother, and friends to a villa in the neighbourhood of Como was certainly more comfortable than what Chrysostom and Basil intended. On Augustine at Cassiacum see P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (London, 1967), 110–27.

²¹ *Ad Theodorum lapsum* 2.2.46–55.

²² *Ibid.* 2.1.5; 4.1–8.

²³ It is possible that entry into the group was formalized by baptism combined with a vow of dedication. See Illert, *Johannes Chrysostomus und das antiochenische Mönchtum*, 99, with reference to R. Murray, 'The Exhortation to Candidates for Ascetical Vows at Baptism in the Ancient Syriac Church', *NTS* (1974), 48 ff. and Aphraates, *Demonstratio* 7.20 col. 345.

²⁴ Aphraates, *Demonstratio* 3.25–35.

It was perhaps at this stage that Chrysostom began to use his literary gifts and rhetorical training in the service of the Church to produce the earliest of his 'literary' works, the *Comparison of a King and a Monk*, which still reads very much like a Stoic treatise. In this pamphlet Chrysostom argues that in respect of everything that matters in a life, its power, its justice, and the benefits enjoyed by the individual living it, a monk is superior to a king. The *Comparison* has relatively few citations from the Bible, but six passages are modelled on paragraphs of Libanius.²⁵ These features suggest, even if they do not prove, that the *Comparison* is an early work, written soon after his rhetorical studies, and before he had acquired his later extraordinarily detailed knowledge of the Bible. I would date it before Chrysostom's 'on the mountain' period, to around 369/70.²⁶ It is significant that the passages adapted from writings of Libanius are sentences in praise of the austerity of Socrates the philosopher, and of Julian the Apostate, which Chrysostom applied with little change to Christian monks, illustrating the fact that the ascetic ideal was to a considerable extent shared by Christians and non-Christians alike. The *Second Letter to Theodore* too was probably written during Chrysostom's period of domestic asceticism.²⁷

As we have seen earlier,²⁸ Chrysostom eventually gave up domestic asceticism, and presumably also his duties as a reader, to move on to Mount Silpius for the monastic experience which he had so far missed. We have no precise date for this move. Scholars generally have assumed that it happened some time after the Arian emperor Valens had taken up residence at Antioch in 371, and compelled Meletius, the leader of the principal Nicene faction, to leave the city for a third time.²⁹ Chrysostom's withdrawal into monastic life must

²⁵ *Apologia Socratis*, Or. 12; Or. 13; Or. 64. See C. Fabricius, 'Vier Libaniusstellen by Johannes Chrysostomos', *Symbolae Osloenses*, 33 (1967), 135–6; *Zu den Jugendchriften des Johannes Chrysostomos: Untersuchungen zum Klassizismus des vierten Jahrhunderts* (Lund, 1962), 118–21.

²⁶ Hunter, *John Chrysostom, A Comparison between a King and a Monk*, 36–9, notes the features which suggest a very early date, but decides for 'not long after 379'. His reason is that he thinks that the pamphlet refutes Libanius, Or. 24, *Upon avenging Julian*, of c.379. That speech claims that Julian was murdered by a Christian soldier. There is no refutation of this essential point in the *Comparison*. The pamphlet has nothing to do with Or. 24.

²⁷ See below 138 n. 20.

²⁸ See above 127–8.

²⁹ See 124 n. 4 above.

have happened some time after John had rebuffed an attempt to ordain him, the episode which many years later he made the starting point of his *De sacerdotio*. For what he says in that dialogue about his reluctance to leave his widowed mother on her own makes it likely that he withdrew into monastic life only after his mother had died.

Next, John spent four years on Mount Silpius in a monastery, or rather in what was in effect a multiple hermitage.³⁰ He shared a hut with an aged hermit, described as a Syrian. It was a hard life: 'I could not stop fussing, and trying to discover where I would get my supply of necessary items, whether I would be able to eat fresh bread each day, whether I would be obliged to use the same oil for my lamp and my food, whether I'd have a wretched diet of lentils forced on to me, and be assigned some backbreaking task—being ordered, for example to dig, or carry logs, or water or perform all sorts of services of that kind. In a word, my great worry was about the time that would be allowed me for spiritual recreation (ἀνάπαυσις).'³¹ After four years the enforced chores of communal living became too much for him and he decided to live in a cave as a solitary hermit.³² He spent two years in the cave, most of the time day and night—according to Palladius—on his feet,³³ scarcely sleeping, learning by heart the Old

³⁰ *Dial.* 5 (PG 47.18).

³¹ *De compunctione ad Demetrium* 1.6 (PG 47.403). This passage seems to refute the thesis of Illert, *Johannes Chrysostomus und das antiochenisch-syrische Mönchtum*, 101–5, according to whom Chrysostom's life as a monk in the hills was invented by Palladius, who, so Illert argues, modelled his account of Chrysostom's ascetic experience on Egyptian, and not on Syrian, monasticism. Illert's disqualification of the evidence of Palladius is unconvincing. The argument in which the passage stands requires Chrysostom's account of the distractions of monastic life to be based on personal experience. *De sacerdotio* 6.6 is a similar account of the distractions of life in the desert, perhaps also based on the same experience. 'Martyrius' too seems to assume that Chrysostom did spend some time as a monk away from Antioch (6–9, most explicitly 9: ἐν ἐρημίᾳ κρυπτόμενον). The ordination sermon PG 48.693–700; ed. A.-M. Malingrey, SC 272 (Paris, 1980), 367–419, relevant c. 4: ὅτε καὶ ἑαυτοῦς ἐξώωμεν, also implies a period of solitary life.

³² That the would-be anchorite should start his monastic experience by living in a community, and only then progress to live alone, is advised by Euagrius Ponticus (*Eulogios* 32).

³³ This description of Chrysostom's extreme asceticism probably exaggerates. In *De Sancto Babyla* 45 Chrysostom criticizes men—not necessarily Christian hermits—who swallow nails or eat the soles of their sandals.

and the New Testaments. Finally his health gave way and he had to return to Antioch.³⁴ Whether bad health was the main reason why Chrysostom gave up the life of an anchorite may be debated.³⁵ There certainly is evidence that in subsequent years his health was not good.³⁶ On the other hand, he may well have been dissatisfied with the life itself, because it was entirely self-centred. Around ten years later, in the *De sacerdotio*, Chrysostom explained why he valued the life of the cleric more highly than that of a monk: 'for the recluse has but himself to care for, or should he be forced to have the care of others, they are easily counted, and if they be many they are less than those in our churches, and they give him who is set over them much lighter anxiety about them³⁷ ... It would therefore be in no wise surprising to us, that the recluse, living as he does by himself, is undisturbed, and does not commit many and great sins, for he does not meet with things which irritate and excite his mind.... But anyone who has devoted himself to whole multitudes, and has been compelled to bear the sins of many and has remained steadfast and firm ... he is the man who deserves to be applauded.'³⁸ It is likely enough that thoughts like these contributed to his decision to give up the life of a monk. It is, however, easy to imagine that Chrysostom was at this stage still torn by the opposing claims of the active and the contemplative life.³⁹ On the generally accepted chronology, Chrysostom took this decisive step in 378.⁴⁰

By now the Arian emperor Valens was dead, the Nicene Theodosius was emperor, and the Nicene bishop Meletius was again in charge of the churches of Antioch. Chrysostom returned to become one of

³⁴ Palladius, *Dial.* 5 (PG 47.18).

³⁵ Wendy Mayer, 'What does it Mean to Say that Chrysostom was a Monk?', *Studia patristica*, 41 (2006), 451–5.

³⁶ Chrysostom unable to preach because of illness: *Epul. SS Martyr.* PG 49.187–8 (April 387) also *De paenitentia* 1.1–6 (PG 49.277); illness recurs *ibid.* 8.1 (sermons delivered 386/7?). In *De sacerdotio* 6.5 (PG 48.682) he argues that the ascete needs good health, and must give up austerities if the body is not strong. Is this a reference to his own experience?

³⁷ *De sacerdotio* 6.3 (PG 48.579–70).

³⁸ *Ibid.* 6.7 (PG 48.683–4).

³⁹ A real problem for idealistic Christian youths at this time. Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, and Augustine, and Jerome's letter to Heliodorus, *Ep.* 14.8–9.

⁴⁰ See above.

his principal assistants, and was ordained a deacon by him in 380/1. Chrysostom was ordained to the priesthood only in 386.⁴¹ I have argued earlier that a sometime association of Chrysostom with the Nicene group of Paulinus and Euagrius might well explain the delay in Chrysostom's ordination to the priesthood.⁴²

⁴¹ Analysis of his first sermon (ed. A.-M. Malingrey, *S. Chr.* 272, 388–419) see M. Lochbrunner, *Über das Priestertum: Historische und systematische Untersuchungen zum Priesterbild des Iohannes Chrysostomus*, *Hereditas* 3.I (Bonn, 1993), 288–302.

⁴² See above, 120.

Early Writings

(I) LITERARY WORKS AND SERMONS: TWO GENRES

The writings of Chrysostom are of two kinds: sermons, and what might be called 'literary works', treatises which Illert in a stimulating chapter describes as 'classicizing'. The difference between them is that the former were actually delivered during a church service, and usually start with commentary on a passage from the Bible, while the latter were not written for delivery to a congregation. They are clearly intended to reach a wider readership in the same way as writings of secular authors like Libanius, who sent copies to friends and others whom he wanted to interest in his theme, in the hope that the recipients would make further copies for still wider distribution. In the case of Chrysostom, I envisage that the recipients were clergy, or laymen interested in problems of religion, that is the same kind of people as received longish letters on theological or moral problems from other Fathers of the Church. The public addressed in the 'literary' pieces was therefore considerably narrower, both numerically and socially, than that addressed in the sermons. To some extent the higher social level of the anticipated audience is reflected in the substance of these writings. As a rule, the treatises contain more references and stylistic allusions to classical authors than the sermons.¹ However, stylistically and in

¹ See for instance the footnotes in Dumortier's *Les Cohabitations suspectes* and *Comment observer la virginité*; and H. Musurillo and B. Grillet, Jean Chrysostom, *La Virginité*, 31 nn. 1–2. But of course Chrysostom's references are overwhelmingly to the Bible. C. Fabricius, *Zu den Jugendschriften des Johannes Chrysostomos: Untersuchungen zum Klassizismus des vierten Jahrhunderts* (Lund, 1962).

the elaboration of their argument, the treatises are essentially not more difficult than the sermons. It won't therefore do to exaggerate the differences between the two kinds of writing. The generalization that these writings are designed to persuade Antiochene imperial aristocrats and *curiales*, and their sons, to consider a clerical career rather than one in civil or military administration² is surely a total misreading of these texts.³

The treatises are almost all about some aspect of asceticism, and above all about problems of individuals who have dedicated themselves to a life of celibacy. Illert has pointed out that Chrysostom's ascetic treatises are only concerned with ascetics living within the city.⁴ That is correct, in so far as Chrysostom does not give advice related specifically to problems encountered by monks living in the desert or on the mountain. It is true that parts of the treatise *Ad Theodorum lapsum* 1 and the *Adversus oppugnatores* are concerned with ascetics living on the mountain. However, although Chrysostom praises the men on the mountain, and upholds their way of life as exemplary, he invariably does so in generalities.⁵ He never addresses these extra-urban holy men directly, nor does he concern himself with the specific problems of ascetic life on the mountain in the way he advises urban ascetes on problems of ascetic life in the city.

But the reason for his silence on themes of interest to extra-urban ascetes is not—as Illert argues—that these did not exist, but the fact that Chrysostom was an urban preacher addressing an urban audience. There has been considerable discussion about the social composition of Chrysostom's congregations.⁶ Were they perhaps made up entirely, or at least predominately, of members of the elite? A careful reading of the sermons has shown that Chrysostom addressed a very mixed audience, drawn from the whole social

² Illert, *Johannes Chrysostomus und das antiochenische Mönchtum*, 34.

³ In my opinion Illert has been misled by considering isolated phrases, and given insufficient attention to the tendency of the work as a whole.

⁴ The *Second* and the *First Letter* (or *Treatise*) to *Theodore* (*Ad Theodorum lapsum*), the three books *Ad Stagirium a daemone vexatum*, the treatise *Contra eos qui subintroductas habent virgines*, the *Quod regulare viris cohabitare non debeant*, and the two treatises *De compunctione*.

⁵ *Hom. in Matt.* 68.4–5 (PG 58.644–6); 69.3–4 (PG 58.652–6).

⁶ J. L. Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2006).

range of the population—rich, poor, craftsmen, traders, slaves, women, and children—and that he tried to cater for very diverse theological interests, boredom levels, and moral problems of his congregation.⁷ Besides, we know that Chrysostom was so popular that in 397 the imperial authorities feared that the people of Antioch would try to prevent him from leaving their city to become bishop of Constantinople, and so had him smuggled out of Antioch by night.⁸ At Constantinople, too, Chrysostom gained an enormous popular following.⁹ The very solid personal support Chrysostom managed to win from so many people is clear evidence that his sermons successfully catered for a wide cross-section of the urban population.

As we have seen, extra-urban monks were a very different class of people from the urban ascetics whose problems Chrysostom addresses in his writings, and from the urban congregations whom he addressed in his sermons. They were mostly countryfolk, speaking not Greek, but Aramaic.¹⁰ The wide gap perceived between country folk and city dwellers is brought out very sharply in the words with which Chrysostom introduced to his congregation a large number of countryfolk who had come to Antioch for the festival of the martyrs whose precise status is unclear. They seem to have been mainly rural priests, or perhaps only informal lay preachers, for this is how Chrysostom describes them: 'For I think the present day to be a great festival indeed on account of our brethren, who by their presence beautify the city, and adorn the Church, a people *foreign to us in language*, but of one voice with us as to faith... Among them there are no horse-races, no women who are harlots, nor any riots... and the reason is that their life is a laborious one, they have in the culture of the soil a school of virtue... at one time they guide the plough, at another

⁷ See the sensitive discussion of Maxwell, *ibid.* 64–87, also Wendy Mayer, 'Who Came to Hear John Chrysostom Preach?', *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses*, 76 (2000), 73–87. There is no simple answer to the question of the social range of Chrysostom's audiences. But evidence cited by Mayer (*ibid.* 86) suggests that not only landowners but also artisans and tradespeople listened to him, as did soldiers, and almost certainly women. See also Mayer, 'Female Participation and the Late Fourth Century Preacher's Audience', *Augustianum*, 39 (1999), 139–47; R. Taft, 'Women at Church in Byzantium', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 52 (1998), 27–87.

⁸ Palladius, *Dial.* 5 (PG 47.19).

⁹ See below, 247.

¹⁰ See above 107.

they ascend the sacred pulpit... These are our *philosophers and theirs is the best philosophy*. These men know how to philosophize concerning God, even as God has determined. Let us then not despise them because of their outward appearance, but let us admire their minds.¹¹ Chrysostom was obviously afraid that his congregation would treat these rural visitors with contempt, and therefore drew a grotesquely idealized picture of them. In fact these rural 'clerics' who live a simple life out of economic necessity are here idealized in much the same way as those who have deliberately chosen the harsh life on the mountain as a form of self-discipline were idealized in the *Adversus oppugnatores*.¹²

So the literary writings of the young Chrysostom are not concerned with the specific problems of the typical 'man on the mountain' just as his sermons are not concerned with the specific problems of the villagers from among whom many of the monks of mountain and desert fringe were drawn. Their ideal of the perfect Christian life, their form of ascetic living, was not shared by members of his congregation, nor indeed by himself, an urban priest. Unlike Eua-grius Ponticus, or Palladius, or Theodoret, or Sozomen, Chrysostom has not given us detailed and admiring descriptions of the austerities of the holy men in the desert, nor does he report their wise sayings. Having experienced that life himself, he seems to have become somewhat disillusioned with it—as was Jerome, who lived as a hermit in the Syrian desert at about the same time.¹³

¹¹ From *De statuis* 19.1 (PG 49.187–90), also *Huit catéchèses baptismales*, ed. A. Wenger, *S. Chr.* 50 (Paris, 1970), no. 8, 1–6, pp. 247–51 and *Epul. ss. martyr* PG 49 187–90.

¹² It is this which makes it so difficult to establish the exact status of these people. Were they monks or priests, or perhaps ordained monks? Lay preachers? Pious laymen? Or a medley of all of these? See the full discussion in Frans van de Paverd, *St John Chrysostom, the Homilies on the Statues* (Rome, 1991), 260–93. In *De Anna* (PG 54.633) Chrysostom refers to 'all the farmers' who have entered town for a festival of the martyrs, and to whom he wants to give 'provisions' (*ἐφ'όδια*), in the shape of an exhortation not to use oaths, before they depart. Van de Paverd (237–40) plausibly but not conclusively argues that these farmers are not the same as the 'rural priests' of *De statuis* 19.

¹³ Jerome, *Ep.* 17: 'It is preferable, they say, to live among wild beasts rather than with Christians such as these.' Jerome too remained strongly committed to ascetic ideals. But Jerome, unlike Chrysostom, went on to write hagiographic lives of the ascetes Malchus and Hilarion, and eventually founded a monastery at Bethlehem, not however in the desert.

In an abstract way Chrysostom continued to uphold the ideals of the peasant ascetes in both his writings and sermons, calling on readers and congregations to live a life of poverty and charity, dedicated to the defeat of the passions and to contemplation, prayer, and repentance; and in this way striving to come as close as possible to the life of the angels. But from time to time he expressed strong doubt whether the ascetic life on the mountain or in the desert, in its isolation from society, was in fact the best way to achieve the perfect Christian life: it was too self-centred and did not have enough scope for service to one's fellow men.¹⁴ Once he had become a regular cleric he will also have been troubled by the fact that the extra-urban ascetics were remarkably independent of the organized Church. When he was bishop of Constantinople the local monks were among his most bitter opponents. Acacius, bishop of the Syrian city of Beroea (Aleppo), and a strong champion of monasticism,¹⁵ was prominent among his opponents, although one would have expected a man of his background to have been a strong supporter. This may suggest that Chrysostom had already had some serious trouble with Syrian monks before he became bishop of Constantinople. However that may be, the end result was that, though Chrysostom remained profoundly committed to ascetic values, he did not in later life consider it his duty to recommend life in the desert as the best field for their exercise.

As far as the literary writings are concerned, Chrysostom does not always tell us about the circumstances that induced him to compose a particular treatise, but their contents allow plausible conjecture. Some treatises are addressed to a friend or acquaintance, whom Chrysostom advises how to deal with some personal dilemma. In at least two cases Chrysostom seems to have followed up a letter addressed to a friend with a longer version on the same or a related theme, addressed to a wider audience.¹⁶ The two books of *Ad Stagir-*

¹⁴ *De sacerdotio* 6.5–7 (PG 48.682–4), cf. below, 173.

¹⁵ Theodoret, *HR* 2 (PG 82.1313B/C). Theodoret, *HE* 5.23, records that Acacius was sent by Flavianus to Rome in 398 on a successful mission to persuade the pope, who was still recognizing Paulinus and his successor, the now deceased Euagrius, as rightful bishops of Antioch, to change his mind and to recognize Flavianus.

¹⁶ On the two *Letters to Theodore* and the three treatises on celibacy, see below 161–4.

ium could well be a greatly expanded version of a letter of personal advice.¹⁷ The majority of the literary writings are concerned with topics which figure prominently also in the sermons, and which were much discussed at the time, themes such as the nature and value of the ascetic life, the high value of virginity, advice to widows not to remarry, the power of penitence, the duties of a priest. Two of Chrysostom's writings defend the Christian religion against criticism made by its rivals: *St Babylas and the Refutation of Julian and the Pagans*, and *Christ's Divinity Proved against Jews and Pagans*.¹⁸ Interestingly none of the treatises is concerned with heresy, and none takes explicit sides in the schism dividing the Nicenes at Antioch. Like religious books today, the treatises deal with themes that are also prominent in the sermons, but they are elaborated and argued more fully. It is therefore not the case that Chrysostom has one discourse for the *honestiores*, the socially elevated and legally privileged part of the Christian community, and another for the *humiliores*, their social inferiors, the underprivileged Antiochenes. His basic message is the same for all.

With a few exceptions, among them *De liberis educandis*,¹⁹ the literary pieces are earlier than the sermons. Traditionally these writings have been treated as *Jugendschriften*, as products of Chrysostom's immature youth. It is however worth noting that of these writings, probably only the second *Letter to Theodore* goes back to the late 360s, the time when Chrysostom could be described as a young man.²⁰ The majority of these pieces he wrote between c. 378 and 386, that is between roughly the ages of around 29 and 37, when he was not yet entitled to preach, because he was not yet a priest. The first sermon he delivered as a priest was, as he tells us, also his first sermon ever.²¹ His earlier literary activity was therefore necessarily restricted to the writing of pamphlets and treatises. In my opinion

¹⁷ PG 47.423–94.

¹⁸ *De sancto Babyla contra Iulianum et gentiles* (PG 50.533–72), also the edition of M. Schatkin, SC 362 (Paris, 1990); *Adversus Iulianum et gentiles demonstratio quod Christus sit deus* (PG 48.813–38).

¹⁹ *De inani gloria et de educandis liberis*, ed. A. M. Maligrey, S. Chr. 188 (Paris, 1972).

²⁰ 368.? So J. Dumortier in preface to the edition S. Chr. 117 (1966), 1 n. 2. Kelly, *Golden Mouth* 22–3.

²¹ PG 48.693; Maligrey, S. Chr. 272.367.

Chrysostom wrote his defence of monasticism, the three books *Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life*, before he had actually returned from the mountain to the city—unlikely as it may seem.²² It was only following his return to Antioch that his writings became really abundant, but after his ordination in 386 his output consisted overwhelmingly of sermons.²³ A few literary treatises can however be dated either to the early years of his priesthood, or to the period of exile, shortly before his death.²⁴

There is, however, one respect in which the majority of the writings composed before his ordination to the priesthood are indeed ‘youthful’, that is in the extreme and naively idealized promotion of ascetic values. At this stage of his life Chrysostom wrote like a student radical might write—or rant—today. In this respect the year in which Chrysostom was ordained into the priesthood was a turning point. His views on marriage and widowhood became much more nuanced. As his pastoral work made him familiar with the complexities of life and of human psychology, his writings gained in understanding and sensitivity. The Chrysostom we meet in the sermons and later writings has two contradictory aspects. He remains an extreme idealist, possessed to the point of fanaticism by the doctrines and values he considered true. But he was also an empathetic human being with unusual insight into human nature. This mature Chrysostom is revealed in the treatise on the education of children, written around 390, and in the sermons on Paul’s Epistles to the Ephesians and to Timothy.²⁵

It is a measure of the importance of the domestic asceticism at Antioch that nine of Chrysostom’s treatises are wholly or in part

²² *Adversus oppugnatores vitae monasticae*, PG 47.319–86; English translation in Hunter, *A Comparison between a King and a Monk*. The translations are cited from Hunter.

²³ I am assuming that the commentaries on the Gospel According to Matthew and on the Epistles of Paul are collections of sermons, but see C. Crépey, ‘Jean Chrysostome, bouche d’or, prononçait-il vraiment ses homélies? Le cas des homélies sur la Genèse’, *REG* forthcoming.

²⁴ *Quod nemo laeditur nisi a se ipso* (No man can be harmed except by himself), PG 52.459–80; and ed. A.-M. Malingrey, *S. Chr.* 103 (Paris, 1964); *Ad eos qui scandalizati sunt ob adversitate*, PG 52.479–528, edited as *Sur le providence de dieu* (On God’s Providence) by A.-M. Malingrey, *S. Chr.* 79 (Paris, 1961).

²⁵ See below 177–80.

concerned with problems of young men and women practising domestic, or at least intramural, asceticism. The individuals concerned lived singly or in groups, in their homes, or away from home, within the city, and not in a monastery in the later sense of the word, that is an abbot-governed, rule-regulated institution.²⁶

The fact that his works fall into the two categories of sermons and of literary writings is not peculiar to Chrysostom. The same division can be observed in the works of the two Gregories, of Jerome, of Ambrose, of Augustine, and indeed of all the highly educated Fathers of the Church. It is also the case that they all wrote about the same themes, and that they influenced each other. The same ascetic topics and arguments occur again and again. Like the old secular classical authors they did not strive to shine through the originality of their ideas: 'True wit is nature to advantage dressed, What oft was thought but ne'er so we'll expressed.'²⁷ What was individual was the language and style. Actual dependency is difficult to prove, because as a rule they did not feel under any moral obligation to cite sources. One may suggest that they assumed that what they paraphrased was simply the true interpretation, and that there was no need to acknowledge authorial property rights over the truth. But leaving aside questions of literary etiquette, there is no doubt that asceticism, and particularly virginity, were themes of extreme interest to this generation, probably quite as interesting as the dogmatic disputes which dominate the histories. There was certainly much wider agreement over the value of asceticism than over points of dogma, even if opinions differed about the degree of asceticism that could be asked of ordinary people, leading an ordinary life in the city. As far as the originality of the ideas of Chrysostom is concerned, there is also the difficulty that he belongs to the second generation of ascetic moralists. But while we know that earlier writers, notably Eusebius of Emesa and Diodorus, later bishop of Tarsus, influenced Chrysostom, only a few of the writings of Eusebius and practically none of those of Diodorus have survived.

²⁶ They are discussed below, 152–65.

²⁷ Pope, *Essay of Criticism*, 97.

(II) *ADVERSUS OPPUGNATORES
VITAE MONASTICAE*

It would seem unlikely that Chrysostom would have been able to compose a major treatise if his life as a hermit was indeed as austere as Palladius reports. We must, however, remember what Jerome tells us about his own life as a hermit in the Syrian desert. Jerome certainly practised austerities,²⁸ but he was also able to acquire a library, and he spent much time reading. He wrote long letters and he learnt Hebrew. If he lived in a cave, the cave had facilities for study. Perhaps these were provided by Euagrius, his patron.²⁹ Chrysostom may have had similar facilities. It is worth remembering that the cells of Egyptian monks which have been unearthed by archaeologists are by no means as uncomfortable as the dwellings of hermits described in the *Religious History* of Theodoret.³⁰

That Chrysostom did indeed write the treatise *Adversus oppugnatores* while still a monk or hermit, or at least at a time when he was not living in the city, is suggested by what he tells us about the circumstances which caused him to write it. He relates that a certain individual, whose name he does not mention, came to him and begged him to compose a defence of the monks.³¹ This man told him that the success of monks in winning young men to take up their way of life, and to join them on the mountain, had so angered a number of Christian fathers in good positions that they had organized attacks on monks they found in the city, and had also taken

²⁸ Jerome, *Ep.* 22.7.

²⁹ S. Rebenich, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis: Eine prosopographische und sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Stuttgart, 1992), 87–96, discusses the whereabouts of Jerome's retreat. He thinks that it was near Euagrius' estate at Maroneia, which in turn he would locate in the neighbourhood of the road from Antioch to Chalcis, 30 to 40 km from Antioch.

³⁰ R. S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, 1993), 297.

³¹ There is not the slightest evidence that this was Flavianus, or that the treatise was written on behalf of the Nicene group of Meletius and Flavianus, as is argued by Illert, *Johannes Chrysostomus und das antiochenische Mönchtum*, 47–51. The divisions among the Christians of Antioch are not mentioned at all. There is every indication that the treatise is precisely what its title proclaims it to be: a defence of monasticism against its detractors.

monks to court, and had them imprisoned.³² Chrysostom was to write a piece condemning this behaviour. After a show of modesty, Chrysostom agreed to write the pamphlet, which is addressed in the first place to educated and well-off fathers of teenage sons.

The relevance of these details to the date of the treatise is that apparently Chrysostom had not heard of these attacks on the monks before the unnamed individual told him about them. The news came as a shocking surprise. He must therefore have been away from the city for some time, otherwise he would surely have known what was happening there. But to our knowledge, the only time during which the young Chrysostom was away from the city for any length of time was the three years he lived as a monk, and the two he lived as a hermit. This suggests that he wrote the treatise before he returned to Antioch, perhaps in 377/8.

Chrysostom's purpose in writing this pamphlet obviously was to defend the monks. It is an apology for the monks on the mountain. His argument is that the motives of the fathers who have been attacking the monks in various ways are totally misguided. The monks who persuade young men to join them, far from harming the youths, are conferring a very great benefit on them. It is the fathers who prevent their sons from living with the monks who are gravely damaging their offspring. The fathers involved in action against the monks included pagans as well as Christians, and Chrysostom addresses each group in turn using somewhat different arguments. He urges parents to allow their sons to adopt the monastic life if they want to, and even to send their sons to the monasteries on the mountain instead of to the secular schooling of grammarian and sophist. He argues—not without a great deal of rhetorical one-sidedness—that life with monks is a better education than the one the boys would receive while living in the city. The acquisition of truly Christian values directed ultimately at achieving immortality is more important than the pursuit of the traditional values of the city, which only lead to success among men, above all to positions of authority, which are only vainglory, and may be paid for in hell.

³² PG 47.322. Cf. Augustine who wrote *De opere monachorum* after the establishment of the first monasteries at Carthage had caused violent conflicts (*tumultuosa certamina*): *Retract.* 2.21.

As other Christian writers had done before him, Chrysostom describes the ascetic way of life of the monks as a philosophy, and the monk as a philosopher. The values acquired by the ascetic life are of course Christian values, but Chrysostom's account of the character built up by the ascetic life is very similar to that of the Stoic sage, in that the discipline of the ascetic life makes the young man invulnerable to the misfortunes of this world. 'For even if someone should do countless terrible things to him—beat him, throw him into chains—his body would be injured because it is part of nature but his soul would remain unharmed because of his philosophy.'³³ This is extremely close to Stoicism. The reader is reminded for instance of Horace's famous image of the well-trained young Roman who would not be frightened even if the heavens were to shatter and its fragments crash down on him.³⁴ The echoing of Romano-Stoic discourse is, of course, deliberate. Chrysostom is insisting that for youths to live with the monks is precisely the best way to imprint the sense of values, and to build the kind of character, that the wise men of both Greece and Rome had always advocated.

Chrysostom's argument might be thought nothing more than a rhetorical strategy. But ideas ultimately derived from Stoicism were certainly important for Chrysostom personally. Chrysostom's last treatise, which he sent to his friend Olympias from exile not long before his death, bears the very Stoic title 'That none can harm him who does not injure himself', and its message too is equally Stoic.³⁵ The ultimate objective—that is control of the body and its passions, and the search for a divine vision, or at least some form of communication with the ultimate reality, whether defined as 'the good' by Platonists, or as God by the Christians—was the same whether pursued by Christians or late antique philosophers. This fact will certainly have helped to popularize asceticism among the educated. If Christian asceticism and philosophy had the same goal, the route via

³³ *Adversus oppugnatores* 2.7 (PG 47.341–2). But Chrysostom does not as far as I have noticed use the term *ἀπάθεια* which is the aim of ascetic discipline in the writings of Euagrius Ponticus, the theorist of Christian asceticism, and in Stoicism.

³⁴ *Odes* 3.3.7: *Si fractus illabatur orbis | impavidum ferient ruinae*.

³⁵ PG 52.459–80, critical edition with French translation by A.-M. Malingrey in *S. Chr.* 103 (Paris, 1964). So too; *Ad eas qui scandalizati sunt* | on the providence of God.

asceticism was much more concrete and clearly signposted, and therefore also accessible to a wider range of individuals.

But Chrysostom is nevertheless being disingenuous. Men like Horace, Seneca, Epictetus, or Marcus Aurelius who had advocated a Stoic morality had done so on the assumption that the individuals they were addressing had received a traditional education and were, and would remain, fully embedded in the social and economic order of the classical city. They provided a guide how to live in this world, they did not offer an alternative to it, which is what the monks did.

Chrysostom's address to the Christian fathers is more elaborate. While it has some Stoic echoes, it is basically a compact lecture on Christian education. He points out that it is enormously important that parents devote the utmost care to the bringing up of their children. For 'God will not easily tolerate those who neglect the ones who are so dear to him.'³⁶ To neglect the upbringing of children—and for Chrysostom the proper upbringing of children entails giving them a proper Christian moral education—is even worse than to kill them. For killing only separates the soul from the body, but failure to bring up children properly 'seizes the soul together with the body and throws them both into the fire of Gehenna'.³⁷ What is absolutely essential is that the child is brought up to habitual observance of the teachings of Jesus, for the reward is eternal life, while the punishment for not observing them will be terrible.

The habits formed by life in the city are quite the opposite. In the city a boy will be exposed to countless vices such as swearing, slander, adultery, judging one's neighbour, love of money which is the root of all evils, litigation, the pursuit of vainglory, and, last but not least, pederasty.³⁸ He claims that in the city vice is praised with the vocabulary of virtue, while goodness is given discreditable epithets. Regular attendance at the racetrack and in the theatre is called 'urbanity' (ἀστειότης), to be wealthy is described as 'freedom'

³⁶ *Adversus oppugnatores* 3.4 (PG 47.354–5).

³⁷ *Ibid.* 356.

³⁸ *Adversus oppugnatores* 3.8 (PG 47.360–3). On the very real and acknowledged danger of sexual abuse in the course of the normal education see A. J. Festugière, *Antioche païenne et chrétienne* (Paris, 1959), 195–210. Of course Chrysostom says nothing about this danger among male celibates on the mountain.

(ἐλευθρία), ambition (τὸ δόξης ἐρᾶν) as ‘greatness of mind’ (μεγαλοψυχία), madness (ἀπονοία) as ‘outspokenness’ (παρρησία), prodigality (ἀσωτία) as ‘philanthropy’ (φιλανθρωπία), and injustice (ἀδικία) as ‘courage’ (ἀνδρεία). On the other hand self-control and moderation (σωφροσύνη) are deprecated as ‘boorishness’ (ἀγροικία), fairness (ἐπέικεια) as ‘cowardice’ (δειλία), justice (δικαιοσύνη) as ‘unmanliness’ (ἀνανδρία), humility (τὸ ἄτυφον) as servility, and patient endurance (ἀνεξικακία) as weakness (ἀσθένεια).³⁹ The evils of the city reflect on the education of its citizens. For the rhetorical education, far from making men more moral, leads to violence and crime. That is why society needs law courts and judges. They are not needed in the society of a monastery.⁴⁰

Chrysostom points out that even Socrates disparaged rhetoric, because he did not think it very important. For, as Chrysostom insists, rhetoric is not appropriate for philosophers.⁴¹ The truth of this is proved by the first Christians. These men had not only not been trained in rhetoric but were even illiterate.⁴² Yet these ignorant and unlettered men had shown themselves more persuasive than the most skilled orators, For ‘They have overturned the world’ by persuading it to adopt the Christian religion. Chrysostom denies that he wants children to go without the traditional education, but he insists that it is less important than the religious and moral education. This should therefore come first, just as a house has to be built before it can be painted.

To show that the ascetic life, as lived by the monks, is not incompatible with secular learning Chrysostom cites the example of a young man who was entrusted by his mother to a pedagogue who had been a monk in the mountains. The two evidently continued to live in the city, but not at the family home with the youth’s parents. He attended the classes of the sophist, and he continued to give a little time to reading the classical authors. Nevertheless his entire lifestyle was that of a monk.⁴³ And yet when he appeared in public he

³⁹ *Adversus oppugnatores* 3.7 (PG 47.359–60). This seems to echo *Thu.* 3.82.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 3.10–11 (PG 47.364–6).

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 3.11 (PG 47.367–8) on Plato, *Apology* 17bc.

⁴² *Ibid.* 11–12 (PG 47.368).

⁴³ See above, 103.

seemed no different from the crowd.⁴⁴ 'For he had no wild and rough demeanour, nor did he wear an unusual cloak, but he was like the rest in clothing, expression, voice and all other respects. For that reason he was able to capture many of his comrades within his nets, since on the inside he concealed much philosophy.'⁴⁵

Chrysostom counters the argument that life with the monks might fail to achieve its objective by pointing out that while the objective of a training in rhetoric is to prepare young men for success in public life, especially in the imperial service, it too often fails to do so. Such failure arises from a variety of reasons, such as lack of ability of the pupil, ignorance of the teacher, an inability of the parents to continue to pay the fees, or the hostility of fellow students. Furthermore even if a student completes his rhetorical education successfully, his career is quite likely to fail for reasons that have nothing to do with his own merits, for instance the ill will of the rulers, or the difficulty of the times, or poverty, or even an untimely death. The monastic education is not subject to any of these extraneous hazards, and above all its ultimate goal is higher, not worldly success, but salvation.⁴⁶ Provided the youth concerned really wants to reach 'the summit of virtue', nothing can stop him.⁴⁷

It is significant that Chrysostom does not claim that the rigours of monastic life are good for their own sake. The value of the monastic life is that it is the best training for a truly Christian way of life. The life of a monk is not itself superior to a life in the city: 'The requirements for a person living in the world and a monk are the same. The essential difference between a monk and an individual leading a normal life is only that the one is married and the other not. In all other respects they will have to render the same account. But because he has removed himself from all sources of temptation, the monk has the easier task, for 'the love of money and the desire for luxury, power and all the other goods are conquered more easily by monks than by people living in the world'.⁴⁸ So a monk, or an individual living like a monk, is more likely to be saved than

⁴⁴ *Adversus oppugnatores* 3.12 (PG 47.370).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 3.18, trans. Hunter (PG 47.380).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 3.13 (PG 47.372).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* (PG 47.371).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 3.15 (PG 47.375), so also *Hom. in Matt.* 7 (PG 57.80–1).

someone living in the world. On the other hand a monk who fails in these areas of morality is likely to be punished more severely than an individual living in society would be, seeing that the latter must find it much more difficult to resist temptations which surround him on all sides. But for sexual sins it is the individual living in the world who risks the more severe punishment, because 'carnal desire affects monks more violently, since they do not have intercourse with women'.⁴⁹

So Chrysostom recommends life with monks not as a vocation for life, but as an alternative and superior education. He assumes that life in the monastery will embed the values and habits of truly Christian living so deeply in the souls of the young men⁵⁰ that they will continue to be guided by them for the rest of their lives. Consequently he advises parents: 'Let us not take away our sons from their sojourn in the desert before it is time; let us allow the teachings to penetrate them and the roots be firmly planted. Even if they must be raised in the monastery for ten years or even twenty years we should not be upset or grieved. The longer he exercises in the gymnasium the stronger he will be.'⁵¹

One wonders whether Chrysostom really expected many fathers to be persuaded that it would be better for their sons to spend years living with the monks on the mountain than to receive a regular education. Like Chrysostom himself, his readers were rhetorically educated. They would recognize a rhetorical masterpiece, but they would also almost instinctively make allowance for the exaggeration and one-sidedness inherent in rhetorical presentation. Read as a whole the work is not so much a treatise about the best education for boys as an apology, a very skilful though also very one-sided apology, for the ascetic life, whether lived by boys or by adults.

In fact one might doubt whether Chrysostom himself was as totally convinced of the educational advantages of the monastic life

⁴⁹ Ibid 3.15.

⁵⁰ 3.11 (PG 47.366): 'Even if a storm should arise they alone live in a harbour... observing the shipwrecks of others, as if from heaven... For they have attained a state in no way inferior to that of the angels.' Incidentally this is strangely close to the Epicurean ideal of Lucretius 2.1–61, which is of course based on a totally different view of death, and of the relationship between the gods and humans.

⁵¹ *Adversus oppugnatores* 3.18 (PG 47.380).

as he professes himself to be in the *Adversus oppugnatores*. He was a very idealistic and radical young man when he opted for the ascetic life rather than a career in the imperial service. But when he wrote this treatise he was probably already quite close to giving up the ascetic life, even if he had not given it up already. A few years later, in 386, after he had become licensed to preach, he did not urge members of his congregation to abandon the city, and to go into the desert to live the life of angels.⁵² Later still, perhaps in the early 390s, he wrote a treatise outlining a Christian education for children. He no longer proposes that a boy's education ought to be completed by monks on the mountain.⁵³ It is the parents who are responsible for the education of their children, and while the education is to be austere and puritan, and the values to be inculcated are the values of the ascetic movement, they are to be practised in society, not in the desert or on the mountain.⁵⁴

(III) *DE SANCTO BABYLA, CONTRA IULIANUM ET GENTILES*⁵⁵

When Chrysostom was asked to write a pamphlet in defence of the monks, he at first refused, claiming: 'I am now being forced to display our sins to all the pagans, both those who live today and those who shall come, the very ones that I am always ridiculing for their teaching no less than the laxness of their way of life.'⁵⁶ This implies that at the time he had been attacking the pagans, perhaps only in conversation, but quite probably, in view of his obvious skill as an author, also in writing. Now the treatise *De sancto Babyla* is Chrysostom's fullest statement of the Christian case against the pagans.

⁵² Angelic life of ascete: *De virginitate* 11; *Adversus oppugnatores* 3.11 (PG 47.366); cf. Theodoret, *HR prol.* 2, 3.15, 4.9, 21.3, 26.23.

⁵³ Cf. *On Vainglory and the Right Way to Bring up Children*, trans. Laistner, 19: 'I do not mean send him to the desert regions and prepare him to assume the monastic life. It is not this that I mean. I wish for this, and used to pray that all might embrace it, but as it seems to be too heavy a burden I do not insist upon it.'

⁵⁴ See below 198–203.

⁵⁵ PG 50.533–72, crit. ed. M. Schatkin, SC 362 (Paris, 1990).

⁵⁶ *Adversus oppugnatores* 1.2 (PG 47.322).

Could this have been written about the same time as, or even earlier than, the *Adversus oppugnatores*? The treatise includes several lengthy quotations from Libanius' monody on the destruction of the temple of Apollo at Daphne, which Chrysostom mocks on the ground that the gods invoked by Libanius were unable to save their own temple. In his later writings and sermons Chrysostom simply ignores Libanius, as he does practically all writings other than the Christian Scriptures. It may also be significant that the treatise contains some highly rhetorical descriptions (*ἐκφράσεις*). All this suggests that it is an early work, composed when Chrysostom was still very much under the influence of Libanius. The *De sancto Babyla* does not mention the new church of St Babylas which Meletius caused to be built around 380, and which is prominent in the later sermon on St Babylas of 388 (or 393?).⁵⁷ This makes it likely that the *De sancto Babyla* was written before 380. So early a date would seem to be contradicted by the explicit statement that the treatise was being given to the public⁵⁸ twenty years after the burning of the temple of Apollo,⁵⁹ which would date the treatise to 383. But is that certain? We must remember that Chrysostom has a habit of rounding up dates, conceivably by as much as five years.⁶⁰ An earlier date therefore remains possible, say between 378 and 380.

Like the *Adversus oppugnatores* the *De sancto Babyla* brings out the closeness of Christianity to the Stoa. Chrysostom attributes to Jesus the paradoxical saying that the only real slavery is that of the sinner.⁶¹ He praises the courageous outspokenness (*παρρησία*) of Babylas, but he also emphasizes that the martyr preserved moderation (*συμμετρία*) and rationality (*λογισμός*), avoided anger, and preserved calm,⁶² in contrast to the irrationality and extravagance Chrysostom ascribes to Hellenic philosophers like Diogenes and the Cynics. It

⁵⁷ PG 50.527–34; critical edition and French translation S. Chr. 362 (Paris, 1990), 279–313.

⁵⁸ *De sancto Babyla* 47 (PG 50.539–41). Chrysostom describes (with full rhetorical horror) the murder of the boy hostage by a wicked emperor, as well as the indignation expressed by his hearers.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 117.

⁶⁰ See, 113–14 and 126 above.

⁶¹ *De S. Babyla* 31. Cf. Cicero, *Paradoxa Stoicorum* 33 ὅ ὅτι μόνος ὁ σοφὸς ἐλεύθερος καὶ πᾶς ἄφρων δοῦλος.

⁶² *De S. Babyla* 36–7, 45–6.

could be that the emphasis on the moderation and rationality of Babylas reflects a certain reaction against some of the extremes of self-torture and quarrelsomeness which Chrysostom (like Jerome) may have observed and disliked among the Syrian monks.

The *De sancto Babyla* is rather discursive, but it falls essentially into two halves: in the first Chrysostom tells the legendary story of how Babylas prevented a wicked emperor from entering a church and the saint's subsequent martyrdom. The second half is about power demonstrated by the martyr's relics during Julian the Apostate's attempt to revive paganism at Antioch. The first half is remarkable for the extraordinarily blunt assertion of the priest's right and duty to reprimand an emperor—the right to expel him from his church as a shepherd would a diseased sheep, a dog, or a foolish slave.⁶³ The passage is an ideological anticipation of the way Ambrose compelled the emperor Theodosius to do penance after the massacre at Thessalonica, though the language is much more radical than that used by Ambrose. The story was no doubt an essential part of the tradition about Babylas, and its point that a priest must rebuke even the emperor if he has committed a serious sin is relevant to a treatise which culminates in an account of the conflict of the Church with Julian the Apostate. One wonders, nevertheless, why Chrysostom has made so much of the story of a conflict between a bishop and a ruler, which was apocryphal—as he was probably aware⁶⁴—and concerned a dispute not with a pagan, but with a supposedly Christian emperor. I would suggest that when he wrote this passage he had in mind not only the position of the Church under the pagan Julian, but also under Valens, who was a Christian, but an Arian.⁶⁵

⁶³ Ibid. 30; 47.

⁶⁴ Chrysostom does not name the emperor. Eusebius, *HE* 6.34, identifies the emperor as Philip, but leaves the bishop anonymous. Eusebius does not say what Philip's many sins were, and in his version Philip, far from killing the bishop, agrees to do penance. The *passio* of Artemius calls the emperor Numerianus. According to *Chron. Pasch.* s.a. 253 the emperor was Philip, but his offence was the killing of the young Gordian III. There evidently was no agreed version of this story.

⁶⁵ He may also have thought that the murder of the boy hostage by the anonymous emperor of the third century resembled in wickedness the murder of the young king Pa of Armenia by officers of Valens (Ammianus 30.1.1–23). On Roman attitudes to assassination as an instrument in diplomacy see A. D. Lee, 'Abduction and Assassination; The Clandestine Face of Roman Diplomacy in Late Antiquity', *International Historical Review*, 31/1 (2009), 1–23.

The second half of the work describes how the relics of Babylas defeated Julian the Apostate. The Caesar Gallus had transferred the relics to a new martyrium at Daphne. According to Chrysostom, their presence immediately raised moral standards in this previously notoriously easygoing and licentious place; even more impressively, the relics silenced the oracle of Apollo. When Julian came to Antioch, one of his initiatives to revive the pagan cults was to have the relics of Babylas returned to their previous resting place in a cemetery outside Antioch. Soon after this, the temple of Apollo caught fire. The flames destroyed the timber roof of the temple, and with it the famous cult statue of the god. In his monody Libanius had mourned the fact that the pagan gods, especially Apollo and Zeus, had done nothing to save the temple. Chrysostom gleefully points out that this proved the hopeless weakness of the supposed gods in the face of an act of God, and at the same time made manifest the foolishness of the Hellenes who had allowed themselves to be so deceived by demons. The event should have taught Julian a lesson. God gave him an opportunity to repent, but Julian continued his campaign against Christianity and paid the penalty: he was killed and his huge army destroyed.

Chrysostom wrote a second apology, *Christ's Divinity Proved against Jews and Pagans*.⁶⁶ Its argument is that the expansion and triumph of Christianity demonstrates the truth of its teaching, and above all the divinity of Christ. This, like *De S. Babyla*, is a response to Julian's pagan revival. It cannot be dated with certainty,⁶⁷ but it bears a definite resemblance to the *De S. Babyla*, and was therefore probably written about the same time. The title is misleading in that the pamphlet, as we have it, has no separate section directed against the Jews. So the treatise is probably incomplete. Chrysostom certainly continued to think that the Jews were a problem. Soon after he became a priest, he felt impelled to deliver a series of sermons aimed above all at Christians who took part in Jewish services, who, in other words, were trying to reap the benefit of both religions.⁶⁸ Of course

⁶⁶ *Adversus Iudaeos et gentiles, demonstratio quod Christus est deus* (PG 48.813–80).

⁶⁷ With a numerical carelessness remarkable even for himself, Chrysostom tells us that he was writing 400 years after the fall of Jerusalem (ibid. 17 (PG 48.838)), which would date the pamphlet to 470!

⁶⁸ R. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1983). Johannes Hahn, 'Die Übernahme der

his sermons also contain passages directed against heretics, and against superstitious practices and public spectacles derived from pagan religion, but he only occasionally preached against pagans and paganism as such.⁶⁹ Paganism had become a matter of private cult. Chrysostom had noticed that paganism as a public religion needed the state, that is imperial support. This it had briefly regained under Julian, but was helpless without it.⁷⁰

(IV) ASCETIC WRITINGS ADDRESSED TO WOMEN: ON WIDOWS AND VIRGINS

Though he had given up the monastic life, Chrysostom never ceases to promote the monastic ideal of sexual abstinence. In a letter which can be firmly dated to between January 379 and October 382⁷¹ Chrysostom consoles the recently widowed wife of a promising young officer living at Antioch. The letter has some personal warmth, but it is essentially made up of extravagant praise of the state of widowhood, and of exhortations not to remarry. The underlying idea is of course the extremely high merit of abstaining from sex. In terms of worth, to refrain from remarriage is second only to never having married at all, so that the merit of the life of a widow who does not remarry is second only to that of the dedicated virgin. Chrysostom rehearses the very earthly problems and difficulties of married life and compares them with the high reward given in heaven to earthly celibacy.

Grabstätte der makkabäischen Märtyrer durch die Kirche', in *Gewalt und religiöser Konflikt*, Klio Beiheft NF 8 (Berlin, 2004), 180–5 (argues that the graves were *near*, but not *in*, the synagogue, and that the building over the graves was a Christian construction).

⁶⁹ e.g. in *Hom. in Eph.* 12.2 (PG 62.90) Chrysostom argues that neither the sun nor water are gods, and that pagans fear divine punishment for getting into situations that are in no way sinful, such as filthiness of the body, pollution as a result of attending a funeral, failure to observe taboos attached to certain days, but take no account of real sins such as unnatural lust, adultery, fornication.

⁷⁰ *De S. Babylla c. Iulianum*, 41–2 (PG 50.544–5).

⁷¹ *Ad viduam iun.* 4 (S. Chr. 138, 138–40) seems to refer to Gratian and Theodosius as emperors; the latter is campaigning against invading Goths. The peace of October 382 has not yet been agreed.

When evaluating the respective merits of celibacy and marriage Chrysostom is not altogether consistent. The extremely high valuation of celibacy and the repeated insistence that it will earn a higher reward in heaven does imply a two-tiered Christian community, and a graduated scale of rewards in the afterlife. This is certainly not consistent with other passages where Chrysostom praises marriage, emphasizes the oneness of the Christian community as the undivided body of Christ, and insists that the way to salvation is the same for everyone.⁷² Some reconciliation of the two points of view can perhaps be found in the suggestion that it is a function of monks to provide models which laypeople should strive to imitate.⁷³ Chrysostom certainly encouraged members of his community to visit the monks. 'Come and learn something useful from them!'⁷⁴ 'Visiting monks is better than theatre. It makes husbands milder and frees them from lust. Its influence is the opposite of that of the theatre. Unlike what people see and hear in the theatre, the singing of monks is enjoyable and edifying as well.'⁷⁵

Any inconsistency in Chrysostom's views on marriage and celibacy is magnified by his classical rhetoric, which invariably exaggerates, whether it is employed to praise or to condemn.⁷⁶ But inconsistency is nevertheless there, and is indeed found to some degree in all the ascetic writers, who are enthusiastic for the ascetic life, but must also emphasize that they do not adhere to the dualism of the Manichaeans. One can imagine that if challenged Chrysostom would have insisted that no matter how highly he praises virginity and other aspects of asceticism, they are for him only a means to an end, in that they contribute to the way of life which will inculcate the moral virtues which bring salvation. It is the moral qualities that are

⁷² *Hom. in Gen.* 43.1 (PG 54.396).

⁷³ Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity*, 107–8, 129–33.

⁷⁴ *Hom. in Matt.* 74.2 (PG 58.672), *Hom. in 1 Tim.* 14.3 (PG 62.574).

⁷⁵ *Hom. in Matt.* 68.4–5 (PG 58.645–6).

⁷⁶ See Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1991), 171–88, on 'the discourse of virginity and the rhetoric of paradox'. The high valuation of virginity in both discourse and practice was to lead to the cult and theology of Mary the virgin, but the veneration of virginity came first. Subsequently the cult of the Virgin Mary further fortified the high esteem of celibacy and virginity.

ultimately decisive. All forms of asceticism are worthless, he says elsewhere, unless they are accompanied by charitable giving.⁷⁷

But not everybody was satisfied that arguments of this kind could remove the inconsistency. The high valuation of virginity and the ascetic life triumphed, but not without opposition. In the West, first Helvidius, and a little later Jovinianus, denied the religious value of ascetic living, and the privileged status of virginity, and the higher merit of celibacy compared with marriage.⁷⁸ In 390 Jovinian published a treatise arguing that faith and baptism were what secured salvation, and that there was no hierarchy of worth among the baptized. Ambrose, pope Siricius, and Augustine, in their different ways,⁷⁹ all combated these views and upheld the high value of asceticism, and they were ultimately successful.⁸⁰ I do not know of comparable opponents of asceticism in the East, but that does not necessarily mean that they were found only in the West.

Not much later Chrysostom wrote two treatises generalizing the message of the *Letter to the Young Widow*. These are *De virginitate*, which is the longer and the earlier of the two works, and *De non iterando coniugio*.⁸¹ The *De virginitate* is in the form of a classical encomium which extols the merit of the virgin state for both men and women, but especially for women. The virgin achieves on earth the life of an angel. Celibacy smoothes the way to the sky. The celibate state enabled Elijah, Elisha, and John the Baptist to live on earth as if they had no bodies, and as if they were already in heaven. Chrysostom insists that he is not condemning marriage itself: 'When talking about virginity we are not dishonouring marriage, when we treat of widowhood we do not class second marriage as forbidden.'⁸²

⁷⁷ *Hom. in Tit.* 6 (PG 62.698). *Hom. in Heliam et viduam* 1 (PG 51.338); *Hom. de poenitentia* 3.2 (PG 49.293).

⁷⁸ For a full account see Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy and Heresy*.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 208–19, 230–42, 277–84.

⁸⁰ See my *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches*, 292–4, 336–7.

⁸¹ As in the case of the two *Letters to Theodore*, Chrysostom would seem to have followed up a personal letter with a treatise addressed to a wider audience on a closely related theme. Grillet, the editor (pp. 20–5), would date the *De virginitate* to before the priesthood, that is before 386, because it shows the same unworldly idealism as the ascetic treatises. Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 45, dates *De virginitate* to around 381/2.

⁸² *De non iterando coniugio* 1 (PG 48.611); ch. 1 refers to *De virginitate*, of which it might seem a slightly later supplement (Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 47).

Much of the *De virginitate* is a commentary on chapter 7 of Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, and Chrysostom necessarily keeps within the advice of Paul as he interprets it. But it is notable that Chrysostom sometimes seems to assign an even lower valuation to the married state than Paul, who had given the advice: 'Do not deny one another except when you agree on temporary abstinence in order to devote yourself to prayer.' Chrysostom interprets this as tactful advice for a married couple to agree to pray instead of indulging in sex. The command be 'fruitful and multiply'⁸³ is said to be intended to apply only to the childhood of mankind, the period following the Fall when men and women were not yet ready to adopt a life of celibacy, it was not meant to apply today. The argument that without marriage mankind will die out in due course is disqualified with a reminder that the end of the world (or at any rate death) is certain. It is therefore much more important for men and women to prepare for the judgement and the world to come than for the perpetuation of their species.⁸⁴ The *De non iterando coniugio* repeats the theme of the *Letter to the Young Widow* at greater length. It is significant that the celibate life of the unmarried widow is recommended for its own sake, and not for the good actions that freedom from the chores and expenses of marriage would enable a widow to do. It was only later when he was a priest with regular pastoral duties that Chrysostom began to stress the need for widows to engage in charitable work.⁸⁵ Both these treatises still display the naive, unworldly idealism of an inexperienced young man, and of a monk living outside the world.

About the same time, that is around 382/3,⁸⁶ Chrysostom wrote another pair of treatises on an ascetic theme. The first attacks the

⁸³ Genesis 1: 28; 9: 1.

⁸⁴ The coming of the end of the world as an argument against marriage for the sake of bearing children and continuing the human race was already used by Tertullian, *To his Wife* 5; *On Monogamy* 16.

⁸⁵ See *Vidua eligatur* 5 (PG 51.326; 332–6), and *Hom. in 1 Tim.* 14.2 (PG 572–4).

⁸⁶ Adkin has shown that Jerome, *Ep.* 22, of spring 384, almost certainly does not allude to the second of these treatises, and is therefore irrelevant to the question of their date. According to Palladius, the treatises were composed at Constantinople during John's episcopate (*Dial.* 5 (PG 47.20), *S. Chr.* 341, p. 118). Socrates, *HE* 6.3, puts the treatise with others into the deaconate, which would correspond to a date around 380, but Socrates' account has many errors. Sozomen has no date for these treatises. The question remains open.

practice of a man dedicated to a celibate life sharing his house with a consecrated virgin, the second that of a dedicated virgin sharing a house with a dedicated celibate man.⁸⁷ This kind of cohabitation was of long standing in the Church. It enabled a woman who did not have private resources to live the life of a dedicated virgin.⁸⁸ Opinions about this practice varied. The ability of a man and a woman to live a celibate life under the same roof was sometimes and in some areas seen as a demonstration of the complete success of ascetic discipline—of gender transcended, and of the angelic life realized. This positive view of the shared but celibate life of a man and a woman seems to have been a feature particularly of ‘Syrian’, i.e. Mesopotamian, Christianity.⁸⁹ That may be one reason why the practice was common at Antioch, as Chrysostom evidently thought it to be.⁹⁰ The custom was criticized by a succession of ecclesiastical writers, and banned by several church councils, but it continued to be widely tolerated.⁹¹ However, as the ascetic movement gained strength in the second half of the fourth century, the demand for the complete segregation of male and female ascetics became stronger, and Chrysostom’s two treatises are part of this reaction. In these two very carefully written pieces of classical rhetoric, Chrysostom insists that the practice must be ended. He does not claim that such cohabitation must, or even that it more often than not does, lead to sex. In fact he gives the cohabiting couple the benefit of the doubt, admitting that as a rule celibacy is maintained. But he insists that though each partner maintained his or her celibacy, their close proximity was bound to create an atmosphere permanently charged with eroticism, an eroticism which would actually be stronger than that aroused in the course of married life, because the sexual desire remained unsatisfied.

⁸⁷ ‘Against men who cohabit with virgins’ and ‘That women under rule should not cohabit’. The two treatises are edited by J. Dumortier, *Jean Chrysostome les cohabitations suspectes* (Paris, 1955); PG 47.492–538. B. Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives: John Chrysostom’s Attack on Spiritual Marriages* (Berkeley, 2001) has useful information about theatricals at Antioch. I found the interpretation of Chrysostom’s treatises less than convincing.

⁸⁸ Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 368–9.

⁸⁹ See above, 98.

⁹⁰ Jerome, *Ep.* 22.14 of 389 shows that the practice existed at Rome too.

⁹¹ Clark, ‘John Chrysostom and the *Subintroductae*’, 171–85 = *Ascetic Piety and Women’s Faith*, 265–90.

Such feelings not only nullify the vows taken by the man and the woman, but worse than that, they are actually adulterous, seeing that the dedicated virgin has entered into a spiritual marriage with Christ. This being so, the couple face the punishment awaiting adulterers.

The main case is supported by subsidiary arguments. Such cohabitations are an offence to weaker brethren, causing them to engage in unmarried sex. In any case, even if the cohabiting couples did in fact maintain celibate lives, this would not be easily verifiable,⁹² and the very fact of their living together was bound to damage the reputation of the Church. Moreover, the fact that the male partner would be drawn to help his partner in the chores of everyday life would put him in a subservient position, which contravened the natural and divinely ordained relationship of men and women.

The treatises constitute a violent and, from our point of view, rather heartless and fanatical assault on what many evidently thought a harmless, even praiseworthy institution. But they incidentally also show that this institution had considerable practical advantages, which Chrysostom lists, if only to reject them. The man who shared his house with a woman had somebody who might perform some of the domestic chores that would normally be performed for him by slaves, or at any rate servants, and which had to be performed even in an ascetic household, such as to manage the household chest, look after the ascetic's clothing and table, make his bed, light his fire, cook his food, and wash his feet.⁹³ Chrysostom agrees that these tasks require female skills, but insists that celibate men must acquire them. That domestic chores have to be performed does not justify an ascetic sharing his house with a dedicated virgin. The male partner might defend this practice by arguing that the virgin needed a protector and guardian, somebody who could go shopping for her, who might assist her financially if she was poor, or look after her finances if she was rich. There is of course something in these arguments, but Chrysostom rejects them with scorn. They do however show once more that at least one of the partners, and sometimes both, belonged to the propertied classes. The man was accustomed to have servants to do his domestic chores and to manage his property; and, judging

⁹² Cyprian, *Ep.* 4.3.1; Ambrose, *Ep.* 56.5–6; midwives sent to investigate a virgin.

⁹³ Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 99–101.

by the way a consecrated virgin as envisaged by Chrysostom might boss her celibate partner, she too was likely to be propertied and accustomed to the service of slaves. However, in many cases the partner of the opposite sex will have been of lower social standing, that is someone who would not feel humiliated by doing manual work. Indeed, descriptions of domestic monasticism elsewhere show that a great lady might share her ascetic household with family and slaves.⁹⁴ Olympias converted her house at Constantinople into a convent where she lived and ruled over a household of 250 celibate women.⁹⁵ The mansion was next to the cathedral and the residence of the bishop. This arrangement was to enable Chrysostom and Olympias to enjoy the advantages of a male and female celibate living together without actual cohabitation. For Olympias cooked Chrysostom's meals and washed his clothes and put up his visitors, while Chrysostom was something like a chaplain to her establishment.⁹⁶

(V) CHRYSOSTOM'S ADVICE TO MALE ASCETICS

Probably about the same time as he wrote the other ascetic treatises Chrysostom wrote a letter of advice in three books addressed to his friend Stagirus.⁹⁷ Stagirus had been brought up on Scripture from childhood.⁹⁸ When he reached adolescence he took up the ascetic life, but soon after he had become a monk he began to experience what seem to have been epileptic fits.⁹⁹ He fell into a deep and lasting depression, which never left him free from thoughts of suicide. What was particularly troubling was that Stagirus observed that a number of contemporaries who had not opted for asceticism had like him fallen into depression, but, unlike him, had soon recovered, and had

⁹⁴ See Kelly, *Jerome*, 91–103 on the great Roman ladies Marcella, Paula, and Eustochium.

⁹⁵ *V. Olymp.* 6.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 8, 13–14.

⁹⁷ *Ad Stagirium a daemone vexatum*, lib.1–3, PG 47.423–94. See the interesting paper of Ulrich Volpe, 'That Unclean Spirit has Assaulted you from the Very Beginning,' *Patristic Studies* 47 (2010) forthcoming.

⁹⁸ *Ad Stagirium a daemone vexatum* 1.2 (PG 47.427).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 1.1 (PG. 47.425–6).

gone on to marry, and to live normal lives, while his depression had proved permanent, in spite of the extreme austerities or his way of life and the abundance of his prayers. Chrysostom's treatise advises Stagirus how to cope with his problem. But Chrysostom certainly also intended this long pamphlet to be more widely useful.

It is likely enough that the adoption of a strict ascetic lifestyle significantly increased the risk of depression,¹⁰⁰ even of suicidal depression.¹⁰¹ Needless to say this is not a diagnosis Chrysostom is prepared to consider. Chrysostom's advice is essentially that Stagirus must fight the depression as he would an external enemy, and that if he does so, he will receive his reward in heaven. But Chrysostom's strategy as a counsellor is interestingly modern in that his advice is non-judgemental. Chrysostom is careful to avoid describing Stagirus' state as *ἀκηδία*, the standard term used to describe the condition of hopeless listlessness and despair which sometimes afflicted monks, and would induce them to abandon the ascetic life.¹⁰² The condition of *ἀκηδία* was regarded as the sufferer's own fault, the product of a feebleness of character. *ἀκηδία* is a vice, and it came to be reckoned among the deadly sins. Chrysostom uses the term elsewhere, and always in a context of condemnation, but not in his letter to Stagirus, whose symptoms would have seemed to call for it. Instead he describes Stagirus' trouble as *ἀθυμία*, faint-heartedness, despondency, depression, almost a synonym for *ἀκηδία*, but morally neutral. Chrysostom explains: God did not put '*athymia* into our nature . . . to drive us to suicide, but so that unpleasant condition might help us to gain the highest rewards'.¹⁰³ It may be a warning. The individual who suffers from it must ask himself whether his depression is justified, as it would only be if it was the result of a bad conscience. If the sufferer finds that his depressed state has been brought on by awareness of his own sinfulness, he must repent and change his life. But if the depression is not a response to sin, as it evidently was not in the case of Stagirus, whose life was already a continuous act of contri-

¹⁰⁰ On *ἀκηδία*, as a danger to monks see Euagrius Ponticus, *On Vices as Opposed to Virtues* 6; *Eight Thoughts* 6.1–18.

¹⁰¹ Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 33.9 (a nun); Cassian, *Conlationes* 5: no mass for suicidal nun or monk.

¹⁰² Euagrius Ponticus, *Praktikos* 12 (description), 27–9 (remedy); cf. *Eulogia* 6.8–9.

¹⁰³ *Ad Stagirium* 3.14 (PG 47.491).

tion, then *ἀθυμία* is a challenge which has been sent to test a man in the way that Job was tested.¹⁰⁴ Far from carrying blame, such *ἀθυμία* is in fact something to be proud of, because God only inflicts it on individuals whom he thinks strong enough to overcome it and, in the case of Stagirus, only after he had already shown his mettle by adopting the ascetic life. Stagirus is reminded of a number of biblical figures who prevailed over sufferings worse than his: men like Job, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, and Daniel. Like them, Stagirus will receive heavenly reward, provided he overcomes his despondency by ignoring it, and continuing undeterred to live as a monk. Chrysostom also invites him to visit a hospital or a prison, and so to recognize that the sufferings of many of the inmates are far worse than his own.¹⁰⁵ As for the urge to commit suicide, that has been implanted in Stagirus' mind by a demon, who has spotted Stagirus' *ἀθυμία*, and taken it to be a sign of moral weakness which he is now exploiting to drive Stagirus to the sin of self-slaughter. What Stagirus must do is face and overcome his *ἀθυμία*. When he has conquered it, the demon will give up, the suicidal tendency will disappear, and Stagirus will eventually receive his reward in heaven.¹⁰⁶ We may question whether Chrysostom's counselling would significantly help a patient suffering from a deep depression, but there can be no doubt that Chrysostom was moved by real sympathy with the sufferer. But it is also worth noting that for all the biblical grounding of Chrysostom's advice, his strategy is ultimately derived from Stoic philosophy: The patient must realize that *athymia* is justified only when we have done evil, and not when we are suffering it.¹⁰⁷ By reminding himself of this ultimately Stoic principle the patient should be able fortify his will-power to the point that he will be able to banish *ἀθυμία*.

Stagirus' asceticism involved much prayer, reading of the Bible, tearful repentance, watches at night, and a scanty diet of bread and water. Stagirus shared this life with other young men described as 'brothers', who early in his ascetic life had some difficulty in waking him for the nightly vigils.¹⁰⁸ He did not live at home, for his father

¹⁰⁴ *Ad Stagirium* 3.14 (PG 47.492–3).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 3.13 (PG 47.491).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 3.11 (PG 47.491–3).

¹⁰⁷ *καὶ ὅς δ' ἀθυμίας οὐχ ὅταν πάσχωμεν κακῶς, ἀλλ' ὅταν δρώμεν κακῶς* 3.11, (PG 47.491).

¹⁰⁸ 1.10 (PG 47.447), cf. 1.1 (426 top).

did not know about his condition, and Stagirus is afraid that he might take retaliatory action against monks if he found out.¹⁰⁹ The young men lived in some kind of collective institution.¹¹⁰ It had a garden, for it appears that in the early days of his ascetic existence Stagirus spent more time working in the garden than reading the Bible; and he was scolded by his comrades for what they considered upper-class arrogance.¹¹¹ Later, in the despair brought about by his afflictions, he prayed at the martyria that surrounded the city, and he also consulted holy men.¹¹² There is no suggestion that Stagirus was subject to any external discipline or rule. Did he and his 'brothers' live in the city, or just outside the city, or on the mountain? We are not told. His case represents an example of the fluidity and flexibility of 'protomonasticism'.

Like most exhortations to virginity of the intellectual bishops of late antiquity, the ascetic writings of Chrysostom put great stress on the need for will-power and self-discipline. But the writings recording the lives and sayings of the desert fathers in Egypt, as well as the findings of modern science, show unambiguously that the most effective way to kill off the sexual urge was, and is, a starvation diet.¹¹³

(VI) PENITENCE AND CONTRITION

When Chrysostom gave up monastic life on the mountain he committed the sin of which he had pointed out the seriousness in the letter transmitted as the *Second Letter to Theodore* (though in fact it was the earlier of the two letters).¹¹⁴ We know some of the circumstances of Chrysostom's change of course. According to Palladius, Chrysostom gave up life as a hermit because his health broke down, and indeed never fully recovered. A passage from the *First Treatise on*

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 426 top. Like the fathers rebuked in *Adversus oppugnatores*.

¹¹⁰ His life is contrasted with that of a solitary anchorite 2.1 (PG 47.450).

¹¹¹ 2.10 (PG 47.447).

¹¹² Ibid. 448; cf. 425 (bottom).

¹¹³ Rouselle, *Porneia*, 219–25, although at first deprivation may have the opposite effect, ibid. 225–6.

¹¹⁴ See below.

Contrition (*Ad Demetrium de compunctione*) suggests that Chrysostom felt that the coenobial life had too many distractions, and did not offer the calm he needed for contemplation and prayer.¹¹⁵ But there are also quite number of passages in his early writings to suggest that he had reached the conclusion that ascetic discipline, though important and even essential, was not enough on its own. To live the perfect Christian life he would also have to be active, doing good for others. That being so it was only natural that he would decide that the life of a monk, whether in a coenobium or as an anchorite, was not right for him. But he seems not to have been totally at ease with himself over that decision. This is suggested by the fact that in treatises he wrote in these years he was very much concerned with the power of penitence to wipe away the punishment which is otherwise the necessary consequence of sin.¹¹⁶ One of these is the so-called *First Letter to Theodore* (described as *The Treatise* in the *S. Chr. Ed.*).¹¹⁷ The emphasis of the *First Letter* is quite different from that of the *Second*. For the argument is no longer about a particular individual, who is about to abandon an ascetic brotherhood in the city to marry and return to the full secular life of his class. Instead the *First* is concerned more generally with the power of penitence to undo the consequences of sin. But Chrysostom supports his argument with two examples, each involving individuals who have given up, at least in one case only temporarily, the life of an ascetic on the mountain, but the focus is no longer on their sin of abandoning the monastic life, nor on their absolute duty to return to it. Of the two sinners, one atones by returning to the mountain to an even stricter, and now solitary and walled-in life. But he is then prevailed upon to interrupt his isolation in order help his city of Antioch by praying for the end of a drought and associated famine. His prayer is answered, and the drought ended, and this, Chrysostom argues, was proof that the man's deep repentance had wiped out the sin of his lapse from the

¹¹⁵ See above, 130.

¹¹⁶ Of course a permanent sense of personal sinfulness, calling for a never-ending effort to seek forgiveness through mental repentance, prayer, fasting, and tears, was an important part of ascetic discipline.

¹¹⁷ *Ad Theodorum lapsum* 1 (treatise), 2 (letter). The name Theodore actually does not occur in this text of the *First Letter*, but it is clearly a later development and expansion of the *Second Letter*, in which Theodore is addressed explicitly.

ascetic life. The other sinner, a son of a certain Urbanus, a young man who was, like Chrysostom himself and like bishop Flavianus the offspring of a distinguished and wealthy family, also seems to have returned to the mountain, at least for a time, and he did do further penance by selling his property, but it is not at all clear that he remained on the mountain. We are told that he is now well known, and is leading a life which will take him to heaven. The exact nature of that life is not explained. It is possible that he was now dedicating himself to the service of the Church and had become a priest. These two examples tell the story of the successful repentance of monks who had abandoned their calling, but the message is more comprehensive. It is that God will totally forgive even grave sinners provided that they show true repentance. However, sinners who remain obdurate will suffer eternal punishment and, what is worse, they will know that they have deprived themselves of the blessings of heaven.¹¹⁸

The date of the *First Letter* is uncertain. Antioch was passing through a series of food crises between 382 and 386. The treatise might therefore date from this period, but there is a passage which possibly alludes to the Riot of the Statues of 387.¹¹⁹ It is perhaps more significant that throughout the treatise Chrysostom gives advice as a friend, and not as a priest. So I would date it before 386. Reading between the lines one might conclude that Chrysostom did feel guilty—and in need of forgiveness—for abandoning the ascetic life, but at the same time he also had decided that he would do more good for himself and for others as a cleric in the city, rather than on the mountain as a monk.

The importance of penitence, and the second chance it offers to sinners, is also at the centre of two pamphlets *On Contrition* (*De compunctione*). These are long letters of moral counsel, written at the request of addressees, who are evidently personal friends of Chrysostom, and at least one of whom, Demetrius, seems to be living an ascetic life within the city.¹²⁰ Chrysostom goes through the commandments of the Gospels one by one and points out how Christians, and not least clergy and monks, regularly fail to observe them

¹¹⁸ *Ad Theodorum* 1.10–12 (PG 47.291–2).

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* 1.13 (PG 47.294).

¹²⁰ At least he appears to have repeatedly visited Chrysostom to urge him to write this treatise: 1.1 (PG 47.393–4).

or, at best, observe them only superficially. In the circumstances the only strategy to avoid the terrible punishment that awaits every sinner is continuous and lifelong self-examination, the seeking out and recognition of one's sins, accompanied by humble contrition and penitence with tears and lamentation.¹²¹ Like David, sinners (and no one is without sin) should humble themselves in tears, and throw themselves on the mercy of God.¹²²

Kelly has noted 'the uncompromising and almost fanatical note which runs through these writings'. They reflect the course of self-discipline which ascetics were imposing upon themselves to kill the passions, anger, pride, envy, lust, boredom, and avarice. These treatises are written in the same spirit as the ascetic writings of Euagrius Ponticus. Chrysostom's writings are of course far less systematic. They make no pretence to be a handbook of ascetic discipline. They do however reflect the same experience of the kind of training required to make the ascetic life not only bearable, but also satisfying.¹²³ Both Chrysostom and Euagrius draw on an older ascetic tradition, based on the experience and sayings of earlier ascetics, a tradition of which Euagrius became the systematizer.¹²⁴ But there is an important difference. For Chrysostom the aim and purpose of abstinence and strict discipline of the body is not a vision of God (*γνώσις*), but strict adherence to the rules laid down by Christ. Its reward is in heaven.¹²⁵ At the same his ascetic writings, and especially

¹²¹ 1.10 (PG 47.400). Abundant tears are a mark of sincere repentance: *Homily 12 on Colossians*, cf. Euagrius Ponticus, *Prayer 6* (R. E. Sinkewicz, *Evagrius Ponticus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* (Oxford, 2003), 193): 'Make use of tears to obtain the fulfilment of your every request, for the Lord rejoices greatly over you when he receives prayer accompanied by tears.' Ambrose too stresses the importance of penitential tears: *De virginibus* 3.5.21.; *De viduis* 6.32. Ambrose used to weep while taking confessions of sin in order to make the confessee too repent with tears: Paulinus, *V. Ambr.* 39.

¹²² *De compunctione* 2.2–3 (PG 47.413–15). Cf. also 9 homilies *De paenitentia* (PG 49.271–350), perhaps of 386/7.

¹²³ Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus*. Dagron has pointed out that the views of Chrysostom, Euagrius Ponticus, Palladius, and Theodoret on monasticism have much in common, and are quite distinct from those of the urban monks of Constantinople, who were among the most bitter enemies of both Chrysostom and Gregory of Nazianzus (G. Dagron, 'Les Moines et la ville: le monachisme à Constantinople jusqu'au concile de Chalcédoine (451)', *Travaux et mémoires*, 4 (1970), 258–61).

¹²⁴ Cassiday, *Tradition and Theology in John Cassian*, 148–58.

¹²⁵ For Chrysostom the condition of the monk remains very 'earthy'. Asceticism is a discipline rather than a road to a vision of god, never mind a godlike state. The

the two books addressed to Stagirus, give us an idea of the passion which had once driven the young Chrysostom to give up studies, and the hope of a distinguished secular career, in favour of the life of a monk and hermit.¹²⁶

In fact Chrysostom appears to have written these two treatises when he was already a priest, that is after 386. For he cites the commandment 'do not throw your pearls to swine' and goes to say that 'we' break this commandment, when 'we' admit unworthy men to communion in order to seek favour or to win promotion.¹²⁷ The fact that Chrysostom is now a priest is reflected in an important development in his attitude to monasticism. Chrysostom remains a wholehearted upholder of the ascetic ideal, but he has decisively turned his back on the monastic life. It is not for him, as he explains near the beginning of the first treatise *De compunctione*, where he lists the distractions of life in a monastery which make it impossible for a monk to live a life of contemplation.¹²⁸ At the beginning of the second book he praises Paul who lived in the world of cities, and yet was 'crucified to the world', and carried on his huge pastoral mission. Chrysostom compares Paul favourably with those men who live on mountain tops, in ravines, or valleys, or in inaccessible solitudes.¹²⁹ He goes on to argue that the life of King David was superior to the life lived by monks, seeing that he lived in Jerusalem and governed a kingdom and yet conceived a love of God that was greater than that of monks in their solitude. Chrysostom concludes that it is the use of solitude to govern the will (*προαίρεσις*), not mere solitude of location, which leads to the love of God. As a priest Chrysostom saw monasticism from a new angle.¹³⁰ The new perspective emerges very clearly from his pamphlet on the priesthood, the *De sacerdotio*.

'angelic life' is strictly a metaphor. Cf. N. Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford, 2004), 237.

¹²⁶ But there is also, at least in the introduction and final paragraph, something of the polite modesty of a literary letter.

¹²⁷ *De compunctione ad Demetrium*, 1.6 (PG 47.412).

¹²⁸ Ibid 1.6 (PG 47.403).

¹²⁹ Ibid. 2.1 (PG 47.413).

¹³⁰ Cf. *Hom. in 2 Thess.* 5 (PG 62.494) where Chrysostom insists that alms are only to be given to those who work. Teaching is work, but praying and fasting are not.

From Monk to Priest¹*The De sacerdotio*

(I) THEMES

Chrysostom's treatise on the priesthood has elements of personal apology. It is composed in the form of a dialogue between Chrysostom and his friend Basil, both young men living ascetic lives within the city, who are confronted with the demand that they should take on a pastoral role, as priests or even as bishops. The treatise is, on the face of it, a defence of Chrysostom's tricking his friend Basil into letting himself be ordained. What had happened is that Chrysostom promised Basil that when he entered the priesthood he, John, would do so too. When the time came Basil let himself be made a priest, but John did not. The pamphlet is a dialogue between John and Basil in which John explains to Basil that what he had done was for the good of both of them. He explains how great the responsibilities of a priest are and how difficult to fulfil, insisting that they require an exceptionally gifted man. He is sure that he himself was not capable of such high office, and equally sure that his friend was. So he has benefited both his friend and the Church by persuading Basil to become a priest, and he has additionally benefited the Church by refusing to receive a responsibility which was beyond him.

There has been considerable discussion whether the incident which is the subject of the dialogue between Chrysostom and Basil

¹ It is surely right that the office that Basil accepted and John evaded in 370/1 was the priesthood (cf. Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 25–8), but in the *De sacerdotio* John is certainly as much, or even more, concerned with election to the episcopate.

is historical or fiction. Lochbrunner has recently restated the arguments for rejecting its autobiographical historicity.² I have however taken the view that the story framing the dialogue is genuinely autobiographical. The theme of the young Chrysostom's tricking his friend Basil in order to reject ecclesiastical office is simply too much part of the argument of the treatise for it to be merely an invented scene-setting story for a literary dialogue.³

In the *De sacerdotio* Chrysostom emphasizes the enormous burden of responsibility born by clerics, whether priests or bishops,⁴ in that they are accountable for the salvation of souls, and he stresses the punishment which a priest can expect if he takes on the job, and does not perform it properly.⁵ Chrysostom proceeds to explain the difficulties and the temptations of the priestly office, and the criticism and slander that a priest has to put up with. The dialogue has several subtexts. One theme which runs throughout is the accusation that men are being ordained into the priesthood/episcopate for the wrong reasons; they are being selected for their wealth, birth, and connections instead of for their character and qualifications for the office.⁶ Chrysostom also points out that candidates themselves are too often driven by the wrong motivation, above all by ambition. When describing the difficulties of the priesthood/episcopate Chrysostom focuses on the Church's social work, notably the care for widows and virgins, and the provision of hospitality. His account can be read as a criticism of the actual charitable work of the Antiochene clergy. It is written with peculiar detachment, at times coming near to satire. Another conspicuous feature of the treatise is Chrysostom's repeated insistence that a priest must be eloquent. He points out that a priest must be able to dispute successfully with 'Hellenes' (pagans), Jews,

² Lochbrunner, *Über das Priestertum*, 32–8.

³ Convincingly argued by Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 26–8.

⁴ The argument of the treatise relates to either office. Chrysostom assumes a bishop is essentially a priest, even if he has wider authority than a priest who is not a bishop. Cf. Ch. 11 n. 18 below. Gregory of Nazianzus in his *De fuga* took the same view, which probably was canonical. Innocent I (402–17) defined the relationship: *Nam presbyteri licet sint secundi sacerdotes pontificatus apicem non habent* (Ep. 25.3 Ad Demetrium, PL 20.554). See J. Gaudemet, *L'Église dans l'empire romain (iv–v siècles)* (Paris, 1958), 100–1.

⁵ *De sac.* 3.1 (PG 48.640–4).

⁶ *Ibid.* 3.11.

and heretics. Moreover, when he sees that some of his charges are doing wrong, it is essential that a priest has sufficient skill with words to persuade them that they have indeed sinned. Chrysostom insists that, even if his speech lacked the weight of Demosthenes, the dignity of Thucydides, and the sublimity of Plato, St Paul was nevertheless an extremely skilled orator, and that while he had not received formal rhetorical training he had nevertheless given a great deal of attention to rhetorical technique.⁷ Everything that Chrysostom writes about the priesthood reads very much as if it was based on personal experience, but perhaps—as will be argued—the experience of a deacon, or even of a reader, rather than that of a priest.

(II) PROVENANCE AND DATE OF *DE SACERDOTIO*

It is not at all obvious when and why Chrysostom produced this very carefully thought out and crafted work. It was obviously written at Antioch. Its starting point is an incident which happened at Antioch, and would only have been of interest to Antiochenes. Its date is, however, uncertain. Socrates tells us that the *De sacerdotio* was written in Chrysostom's deaconate.⁸ This would put it between 381 and 386. Malingrey,⁹ however, points out that in a sermon on Isaiah 1: 6,¹⁰ which must have been delivered soon after Chrysostom's ordination to the priesthood in 386,¹¹ Chrysostom announced that he intended to write a treatise on the duties of the priesthood. Since the *De sacerdotio* is the only surviving work of Chrysostom that deals

⁷ *De sacerdotio* 4.3–8 (PG 48.668–70).

⁸ *HE* 6.3.

⁹ *Sur le sacerdoce*, ed. Malingrey, 12.

¹⁰ *In illud: vidi Dominum* 5.1 (PG 56.131).

¹¹ J. Dumortier, *Homélies sur Ozias*, *S. Chr.* 277 (Paris, 1981), 10–13 (*Hom* 2.1). Chrysostom compares himself to a mother who has not enough milk for her baby. He apologizes for being a beginner (cf. also 3.5, 56–9), obviously soon after he began to preach in 386. *Hom.* 3.1 refers to martyrs 'of our own time'. These are not Diocletianic martyrs (as suggested by Dumortier, 105 n. 1), but evidently Juveninus and Maximinus martyred under Julian, and buried in a collective martyrion (PG 50.571–8, Malalas 13.327, E. Soler, *Le Sacré et le salut à Antioche au ive siècle apr. J.-C.* (Beirut, 2006), 201–2).

with the priesthood as such, Malingrey inferred that the *De sacerdotio* is what Chrysostom anticipated writing. It would follow that *De sacerdotio* was written late in 386 or soon after. It had certainly been written by 393 when Jerome, then living at Bethlehem, noted that he had read it.¹²

One particular theme has been used to date the treatise more closely. This is the complaint that too many men offer themselves to the priesthood or the episcopate with the wrong motivation, and are elected for the wrong reasons.¹³ A citation sums up the message: 'Whence do you think such great troubles are created in the Church? I believe the only source of them to be the inconsiderate and random ways in which priests are appointed.'¹⁴ This theme, which was topical at the supposed time of the dialogue, around 370, was again highly relevant around 388/9 when Paulinus, the head of the rival Nicene group, was a very old man whose death could be expected any time, and whose followers seemed set to continue the division in the Church of Antioch by electing Euagrius to succeed him. Illert has suggested that *Homily 11 on Ephesians* alludes to precisely this situation, and drawn attention to a certain resemblance between a passage in *De sacerdotio* which attacks the pernicious influence of women on the election of bishops and priests¹⁵ and a passage in *Homily 11 on Ephesians* which, he argues, has the same theme.¹⁶ He

¹² Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 129; Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 83.

¹³ Wrong reasons for election, wealth, birth, education, instead of work in the service of the Church: *De sacerdotio* 2.7–8 (PG 48.638–9).

¹⁴ *De sacerdotio* 3.10 (PG 48.646–7). In fact at the time of the dialogue the 'troubles' were due to the emperor Valens' support of the 'Arians'.

¹⁵ *De sacerdotio* 3.9 (PG 48.646). If there were such influential women at Antioch, who were they? It is just possible that the elder Melania was one of them. At the time she was in her monastery on the Mount of Olives at Jerusalem. It is not known that she ever visited Antioch, but Jerome met Hylas, a freedman of hers, at the house of Euagrius (Jerome, *Ep.* 3). So she did have some interests at Antioch. The prestige and charity of rich Roman aristocratic ladies made itself felt in ecclesiastical affairs of the Near East (E. D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimages in the Late Roman Empire AD 312–460* (Oxford, 1982), 168–71). It is likely enough that Melania gave her prestigious support and some financial assistance to the Nicene faction, which was after all recognized by the pope at Rome. The younger Melania was to give 10,000 solidi to the church of Antioch (*Hist. Laus.* 60.4).

¹⁶ *Hom. in Eph.* 11. 5 (PG 62.86). But in *Homily 11* the women have not been involved in the election of a bishop. They have moved from one congregation to another.

concludes that that homily, which he thus dated to 388 or 389, can be used to date *De sacerdotio* to the same years. He suggests that Chrysostom wrote the *De sacerdotio* as a pamphlet in support of Flavianus against the claims of Euagrius in 388 or 389.¹⁷ But in fact the date of *Homily 11 on Ephesians* is still very uncertain,¹⁸ and therefore that of *De sacerdotio* remains uncertain too.¹⁹

Certainly anybody writing about the priesthood at Antioch in the 380s and early 390s must have had thoughts about the Antiochene schism, and Chrysostom's criticism that the wrong people are offering themselves and being elected to ecclesiastical office must surely have some reference to the situation at Antioch. But looking at the treatise as a whole, that theme is marginal, and what is more, the sentences criticizing the way clergy, including bishops, are being elected are not focused specifically on episodes of the Antiochene schism. Throughout the treatise the focus is on Chrysostom himself, and his own unworthiness to undertake the awe-inspiring responsibilities of the priesthood. This is indeed a strong argument against dating the *De sacerdotio* to 386, or to any subsequent year after Chrysostom's ordination. For it would be extraordinary that a man just starting on the priesthood, or at least on the point of being ordained, should write a pamphlet arguing his unfitness to be a priest. It would be even more extraordinary if, perhaps as many as three or four years after he been ordained, Chrysostom wrote a pamphlet arguing that he was unfit for the office, when he had already proved himself to be a very good priest indeed. Moreover, it surely calls for some explanation why a man who had been preaching with great success for up to three or four years, and who in any case must have known ever since his days at the school of Libanius that he was quite exceptionally gifted as an orator, should make the difficulties of preaching a principal reason why he had been right to consider himself unsuited for the priestly office.²⁰ This makes it likely

¹⁷ Illert, *Johannes Chrysostomus und das antiochenische Mönchtum*, 18–21.

¹⁸ See below, 181–4.

¹⁹ It has been pointed out that the passage need not be interpreted to mean that Chrysostom intended to make the priesthood the subject of a treatise. It could equally well mean that he intended to deal with this theme in a sermon: A. Nägele, 'Zeit und Veranlassung der Abfassung des Chrysostomus Dialogs *De sacerdotio*', *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 37 (1916), 1–48.

²⁰ *De sacerdotio* 4.3–5.8 (PG 48.665–77).

that Chrysostom wrote the *De sacerdotio* some time before he became a priest, and before he had regularly demonstrated his eloquence to congregations of his church. Lochbrunner therefore argues that the treatise was most likely composed between 378 and 382, some time after Chrysostom's return from the mountain, and possibly even before his appointment to the deaconate.²¹ In view of the fact that the treatise does not have any specific allusions to the obviously very difficult situation created by the death of Meletius in 381, Lochbrunner may be right, but the treatise could still have been produced two or three years later.

(III) CHRYSOSTOM BACKS INTO THE PRIESTHOOD: *NOLO EPISCOPARI*

A plausible motive for the composition of *De sacerdotio* has been proposed by Aidneen Hartney,²² who points out that it was extremely common that a man appointed to the priesthood, or the episcopate, would show himself reluctant to accept the office, in order to convince the public that if he finally were to accept the office, he would do so moved not by ambition but by a sincere sense of religious duty. Ambrose struggled, or at least professed to struggle, against the demand that he should become bishop of Milan.²³ Augustine wept during his ordination.²⁴ Gregory of Nazianzus fled when his father pressurized him to become a bishop.²⁵ Hartney therefore suggests that when he was faced with the prospect of ordination, Chrysostom was anxious to show that he was not seeking after 'vainglory', and that he then wrote the *De sacerdotio*, recalling how he had rejected an opportunity to let himself be ordained many years earlier, in order to prove his lack of ambition.

²¹ Lochbrunner, *Über das Priestertum*, 110–18.

²² Aidneen M. Hartney, *John Chrysostom and the Transformation of the City* (London, 2004), 26–7 in the chapter entitled: *nolo episcopari*.

²³ McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 44–7.

²⁴ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (London, 1967), 138–9.

²⁵ See Gregory's *De fuga*, PG 35.408–13 and Lochbrunner's sensitive analysis: *Über das Priestertum*, 44–52.

The *De sacerdotio* certainly is a very sophisticated piece of writing, combining different layers of meaning. The principal theme of the work is a demonstration of the dignity and duties of the priesthood. But there is a great deal about the dangers and temptations of the office and, by implication, the suggestion that many clerics give in to them. Thus the treatise has elements of a critical survey of the working of the clergy of Antioch, which occasionally approaches satire. In addition there is some genuine introspective autobiography; for the faults of which Chrysostom accuses himself here, that is above all an excessively passionate nature, and one too easily roused to anger, are faults that were really his, and that eventually contributed to the downfall of his episcopate.²⁶

Classical authors did not strive for originality in the way expected of modern writers. Their normal practice was to express what they wanted to say within the conventions of a traditional genre. When composing *De sacerdotio* Chrysostom remained within this tradition. His treatise is noticeably modelled on the *De fuga* of Gregory of Nazianzus.²⁷ It may well be that Chrysostom chose the underlying situation for his dialogue on the priesthood because he had read and been impressed by the sermon of Gregory, and its combination of personal apology and exaltation of the priestly office, with some criticism of its present condition. There is another point. Chrysostom places great emphasis on the exacting demands the priesthood makes on the character and not least rhetorical ability of the priest, and implies that he himself lacks both the required strength of character and rhetorical ability. To somebody who knew Chrysostom this cannot have been at all convincing, quite the reverse. According to the *De sacerdotio*, Basil was so impressed by the power of his friend's argument that he began to doubt his own fitness for the priesthood. Chrysostom could only smile!²⁸ This might suggest that he did not take his reasoning altogether seriously, that the treatise has elements of tongue-in-cheek humour.²⁹ While Chrysostom's *De*

²⁶ *De sacerdotio* 6.12 (PG 48.687).

²⁷ PG 35.408–513 of AD 362. On Gregory's *De fuga* see Lochbrunner, *Über das Priestertum*, 39–66.

²⁸ *De sacerdotio* 6.13 (PG.48.692).

²⁹ So there may well be humour in the passage where Chrysostom implies that he lacks the fantastic eloquence that is absolutely essential for a priest.

sacerdotio treats of serious and important issues, it does so in a relaxed and urbane style, as is appropriate for the classical genre of dialogue.³⁰

(IV) MONASTICISM IN *DE SACERDOTIO* AND LATER

The *De sacerdotio* is a paradoxical document. On the one hand it purports to explain why Chrysostom many years earlier had refused ordination, on the other it provides arguments which justify a decision, whether taken by Chrysostom or anybody else, to give up the monastic life in favour of the priesthood.³¹ For in this treatise Chrysostom asserts quite explicitly that the life of a priest is both harder and more constructive than that of a monk, and that the discipline of the ascetic life is necessary, but only as a preparation for teaching. He would seem to have moved a long way from the position he argued in *Adversus oppugnatores*. In the latter he is overwhelmingly laudatory, but in the *De sacerdotio* he is quite strongly critical of the monastic life. In fact, the inconsistency is less than it appears. Even in the *Adversus oppugnatores* Chrysostom had not argued that the life of the monk was to be adopted because it was morally superior, but because it was easier, because it was less difficult for a monk to achieve salvation. The moral demands on the ascete and a person living in the world are the same. But nearly all actions that are unpleasing to God are easier for a monk to avoid.³² The one exception is sexual passion. Chrysostom therefore suggests

³⁰ But unusual in patristic writings. See S. Zinzione, ‘“Voi ridete, a me invece viene da piangere”: teoria e prassi del riso in Giovanni Crisostomo’, in C. Mazzucco (ed.), *Riso e comicità nel cristianismo antico: Atti del Convegno di Torino 2005* (Alessandria, 2007), 249–59; G. Visonà, ‘Classico e cristiano: Ambrogio di Milano e il comico’, *ibid.* 261–90.

³¹ Comparison of *Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life* and *On Vainglory and how Parents should Bring up Children* shows how Chrysostom progressively distanced himself not from the ascetic ideal, but from actual monks.

³² Married people will have to expend a greater effort if they want to be saved. Will they therefore receive a greater reward? No, because, when they were free to choose, they chose the more difficult route (*Adversus oppugnatores* 3.15 (PG 47.376)).

that for lust and fornication a person living in the world would receive a more severe punishment than a monk. Otherwise it is easier for a monk to live a Christian life. That is why a Christian father should not object to his son becoming a monk.³³ In the *De sacerdotio* Chrysostom is no longer concerned to defend the vocation of the monk. His purpose is to point out the high responsibility of the priest. So he insists that this is the harder role and the greater challenge.

Illert concluded that the favourable and the critical views of monasticism are nothing more than convenient rhetorical 'topoi'. Chrysostom puts forward the monastic life as a model to be imitated when he wants to criticize the actual behaviour of his congregation or readers, and he is critical of it when he wants to emphasize the high status and responsibility of the priesthood. Illert concludes that it is impossible for us to discern what Chrysostom actually thought about monks and monasticism.³⁴ That is too pessimistic a view. Looking at the whole range of Chrysostom's comments on monasticism it seems, to the present writer at least, that the contradictions with regard to the value of the monastic life in Chrysostom's writings reflect a real ambivalence in himself, a conflict between the rival attractions of the contemplative life of the monk and the active life of a priest. Other highly educated and intelligent young men who became famous Fathers of the Church, Gregory of Nazianzus, Jerome, and even Augustine, experienced the same, or at least comparable, inner struggles.³⁵

As for Chrysostom, there is abundant evidence that he always remained an enthusiastic upholder of the ascetic ideal. He tried to live in accordance with it all his life, even as a bishop when it might have been wiser to make some concessions to the world. He also consistently preached the ideal to his congregation. One might say that he did his utmost to make his hearers live like monks, to turn Antioch, and later Constantinople, into a monastery, though he was

³³ *Adversus oppugnatores* 3.14 (PG 47.375).

³⁴ Illert, *Johannes Chrysostomus und das antiochenische Mönchtum*, 44: 'Was Chrysostom persönlich über das Mönchtum gedacht, können wir seinen Schriften nicht entnehmen.'

³⁵ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 138 on Augustine, *Serm.* 355.2; Jerome, *Against John of Jerusalem* 41; Gregory of Nazianzus, *De vita sua* 28–336.

of course aware that he could not possibly come anywhere near to achieving that goal.

At the same time, he had a very strong sense that ascetism was not enough, that it was only an instrument to a goal. The ascete should not live only for his own salvation, but he must also strive to win salvation for others. In Chrysostom's case this meant opting for the priesthood. In the case of laypeople it meant adopting a totally Christian lifestyle, which was in fact a modification of the ascetic life of hermits and coenobites. So Chrysostom presents monks as models for laypeople to imitate.³⁶ Chrysostom encouraged members of his community to watch and listen to the monks, and to learn from them.³⁷ To visit the monks is better than going to the theatre. The experience will make the husband milder and free from lust, while a visit to the theatre will have quite the opposite effect. The singing of monks is both enjoyable and edifying, unlike that of the performers in the theatre.³⁸

As priest and later as bishop Chrysostom continued to uphold the ascetic ideal. But he could not but be aware that there was plenty of scope for friction between clergy and monks. Both in Syria and at Constantinople the monks were very independent. They were laymen, and as a rule had no wish to be ordained. Probably the majority were villagers and Aramaic speaking.³⁹ The prestige and authority of the monks, praised in the *Adversus oppugnatores*, were in competition with those of bishop and clergy. Bishops might employ the violence of monks against pagan temples, but monks were quite capable of creating disorder in their own interest, or in that of one or the other party in an ecclesiastical dispute. When he was a monk himself, Chrysostom learnt that the monastic life involved many distractions from the study of the Bible and contemplation of God. As a cleric and even more as a bishop, he will often have felt that monks were a nuisance and worse, because they would not allow themselves to be disciplined by the bishop. The monks of Constantinople were prominent among the enemies who brought about his

³⁶ Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity*, 107–8, 129–33.

³⁷ *In Matt.* 74.2 (PG 58.672); *In 1 Tim.* 14.3 (PG 62.574).

³⁸ *In Matt.* 68.4–5 (PG 58.645–6).

³⁹ See above 100, 135.

fall, and bishop Acacius of Beroea, a principal promoter of monasticism in Syria, became one of his chief enemies. So the ambivalence on the subject of monasticism found in the writings of Chrysostom corresponds to his general ambivalence concerning the role of monks in his world. A serious attempt to bring the monks under the control of bishops was made at the Council of Chalcedon in 451,⁴⁰ but a certain amount of tension remained.

⁴⁰ Canons, 4, 8, 18, 23.

Chrysostom: Preacher on Women and Marriage

(I) ON WOMEN AND MARRIAGE

As a priest, Chrysostom had to preach, and he certainly preached a lot. Most of the lengthy commentaries on books of the Old and the New Testament which fill so many volumes of the *Patrologia Graeca* seem to have originated as sermons, delivered mainly at Antioch, between 386 and 397.¹ I have suggested that his pastoral experience led Chrysostom to modify some of his ascetic views.² The evolution of his thought is reflected in some of the sermons. So *Homily* 20 on Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians shows that Chrysostom had acquired a much more profound and sympathetic view of marriage after he had come into close contact with the institution in the course of his pastoral duties.³ Some quotations from *Homily* 20 will make the point. 'A certain wise man,⁴ when enumerating which blessings are most important, included "a wife and husband who live in harmony"... There is

¹ Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 58–60, 89–94, 101–2. Mayer, *The Homilies of St John Chrysostom*, 5, shows that it must not be taken for granted that sermons included in the same Commentary were preached successively, or even in the same place. Assembly into a single commentary need not go back to Chrysostom.

² One might compare Augustine's *De bono coniugali*, and *De sancta virginitate*, which he wrote to distance himself from both the extreme ascetic views of Jerome and the anti-ascetic views of Jovinian. See Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy and Heresy*, 277–84.

³ C. P. Roth and D. Anderson, *St John Chrysostom on Marriage and Family Life* (New York, 2003), has translations from *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 19; *Hom. in Eph.* 20; *Hom. in Eph.* 21; *Hom. in Col.* 12; *Quales ducendae sunt uxores* (PG 51.208).

⁴ Ecclesiasticus (Jesus Sirach) 25: 1, cf. Homer, *Od.* 6.180–4.

no relationship between human beings so close as that between husband and wife.... The love of Husband and wife is the force that welds society together.... If marriage was something to be condemned Paul would never have called Christ a bridegroom and the Church a bride.... Show your wife that you esteem her company, and that you prefer being at home to being out. Esteem your wife in the presence of your friends and children. Pray together at home and go to church; when you come back home let each ask the other the meaning of the readings and the prayers. If you are overtaken by poverty, remember Peter and Paul, who were more honoured than kings or rich men, though they spent their lives in hunger and thirst. Remind one another that nothing in life is to be feared other than offending God. If your marriage is like this, you will be little inferior to the monks, and though married you will be little below the unmarried.⁵

But while Chrysostom the priest had acquired a much deeper understanding of the advantages of marriage, and of the behaviour on the part of both partners required to make it a success, Chrysostom the theologian never abandoned the Pauline views which he had explained in his ascetic treatises, namely that marriage had been instituted to prevent fornication.⁶ So in his *Homily 12 on Colossians*, probably composed at Antioch in the early 390s, he writes: 'There are two purposes for which marriage was instituted, to make us chaste and to make us parents. Of these two the reason of chastity takes precedence, especially now that the whole world is filled with our kind. At the beginning child-bearing was desirable, but now that resurrection is at our gate... desire for posterity is superfluous.'⁷

⁵ Quotations are from *Hom. in Eph. 20* on verses 22–31, translated by Roth and Anderson (PG 62.135–49). See also *In Genes. 38.7* (PG 53.359–60), *In Joh. 61.3* (PG 59.340), *In illud vidi Dominum, Hom. 4.2* (PG 56.122).

⁶ But so also the pagan Ps.-Plutarch, *Ed. of Childr.* 13F ('The Education of Children', in *Plutarch's Moralia*, ed. F. C. Bebbitt, Loeb Series (London, 1986), i. 64–5): 'An effort should be made to yoke in marriage those who cannot resist their desires, and who are deaf to admonition.'

⁷ PG 62.388, a covert allusion to Plato's *Symposion*. On this passage see Brown, *The Body and Society*, 414–15, who contrasts its positive view of human sexual intercourse with the negative view of Augustine, and suggests that Chrysostom's more relaxed attitude is characteristic of the East. But as we have already seen (above, 153), Chrysostom is not necessarily strictly consistent, not even within the same sermon.

But even in this sermon he is very far from condemning marriage. It has been part of God's design for the world from the beginning: 'God in the beginning divided one flesh into two, but he wanted to show that it remained one even after its division. So he made it impossible for one half to procreate.⁸ Husband and wife are not two but one; if he is the head and she the body how can they be two? ... How do they become one flesh? ... As if she was receiving the purest of gold, the woman receives the man's seed with richest of pleasure ... The child is the bridge connecting mother to father, so the three become one flesh. But suppose there is no child, do they then remain two and not one? No, their intercourse effects the joining of their bodies, and they are made one, just as when perfume is mixed with ointment.'⁹

Husband and wife are one flesh, but the husband is the head. Chrysostom never ceased to insist that it was the wife's duty to obey her husband.¹⁰ The wife should not demand equality, for she is subject to the head. Chrysostom's instructions remain altogether Pauline. Husbands should love their wives as they love their own bodies, but wives must also obey their husbands. He insists that the role of the wife is strictly distinct from that of the husband, for God assigned the management of the household to women, but to men he assigned all the affairs of the city, all the business of the market place, law courts, council chamber, armies, and so on. 'A woman cannot throw a spear ... but she can take up the distaff, weave cloth, and manage everything else that concerns the household. She cannot give opinion in council, but whatever the husband knows of household matters, she generally knows better ... She can raise children well ... She can discover the misbehaviour of maids. She can free her husband from all cares and worries for the house, the store-rooms, the wool-working, the preparation of meals, the maintenance of clothing.' Chrysostom does not even claim that the respective spheres of duty assigned by God to men and women are equal in status. 'God

⁸ Cf. Plato, *Symposium* 189d–190.

⁹ *Hom. in Col.* 12.5 (PG 62.387–8). The translation is from Roth and Anderson, *St John Chrysostom on Marriage and Family Life*.

¹⁰ *Hom. in Eph.* 20.7–8 (PG 62.144–6). Chrysostom assumes that at the time of marriage the wife is very young and inexperienced, so that the husband can mould her character, and is indeed under a moral obligation to do so.

gave the more necessary and important part to man but the lesser and inferior part to woman. In this way he arranged that we should admire the man more because we need his services more.¹¹ Chrysostom's view of the relationship of the sexes therefore remained extremely patriarchal, and very conservative. Views like his can be traced back from Paul to Xenophon in the fourth century BC and beyond.¹² But Chrysostom still held them very strongly and inflexibly.

Chrysostom's remaining suspicion of women comes out very strongly in an otherwise puzzling passage in *Homily* 11, commenting on Ephesians 4: 1–7. In this passage Chrysostom claims that some people are causing a serious division in the Church. They are 'tearing the body of the Lord apart'.¹³ What has been happening? There is division within the Nicene community: certain men, motivated, as Chrysostom claims, by ambition, are dividing the Church. Canonical ordination is an issue. 'Is the ordination of clergy past and done away with? What is the advantage of other things if this (ordination) be not strictly observed?' Some outside bishop has been involved for Chrysostom can ask: 'wherefore does the ruler of one Church invade another?'¹⁴ But the precise situation which has aroused Chrysostom's criticism is not the ordination of a rival Nicene bishop, but the fact that some members of Chrysostom's congregation have been joining the rival group. The reason for the desertion is that they are dissatisfied with Chrysostom himself. He seems to assume that the majority of the deserters are women. He addresses what could possibly be taken to be a particular woman,¹⁵ and admonishes her that if she has a grievance against himself she ought to avenge herself on him, not on the Church: 'Buffet me woman, spit upon me when you meet me in the public way, aim blows at me, Why do you avenge yourself on Christ instead of me?' It is clear that there have been desertions from the congregation of Chrysostom, and that as far as Chrysostom is concerned women are principally to blame.

¹¹ *How to Choose a Wife*, PG 51.225–42, esp. 232–4.

¹² Xenophon, *Economicus* 4.7.4–43.

¹³ *Hom. in Eph.* 11.5 (PG 62.85).

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 11.5 (PG 62.86).

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 11.6 (PG 62.87). But I do not think that Chrysostom necessarily has any particular woman in mind. He could be using the figure of speech apostrophe.

(II) THE DATE AND PROVENANCE OF *HOMILY 11*
AND SOME OTHER HOMILIES ON EPHESIANS

Where, and when, did this desertion happen, and how precisely was Chrysostom supposed to have offended the women? The fact that the desertion is said to have been caused by hostility to Chrysostom personally, and that women generally (*γυναικῶν τοῦτο τὸ ἐλάττωμα*), or perhaps only one particular woman (the woman addressed in the passage cited earlier), are held to have been chiefly responsible,¹⁶ have led Constanza to argue that the sermons on Ephesians (or at least *Homily 11*) were delivered at Constantinople, that the troubles alluded to are those that eventually caused Chrysostom to be deposed from the episcopate of Constantinople, and that the woman addressed by Chrysostom in that disrespectful apostrophe must therefore be the empress Eudoxia, who sometimes did indeed patronize visiting bishops whom Chrysostom rightly or wrongly felt to be his rivals or enemies.¹⁷ This argument is quite plausible. It is perhaps supported by the fact that the validity of Chrysostom's own ordination seems to have been an issue. For he declares himself ready to resign his office (*ἀρχή*), by which he plausibly, but not necessarily, might mean his episcopate.¹⁸ Alternatively others who have been unlawfully consecrated should give up their episcopal office (*θρόνος*).¹⁹ This scenario is also favoured by the fact that the conflict at Constantinople was indeed very violent, so that it would have been altogether appropriate for Chrysostom to talk of the Church being

¹⁶ Ibid. 11.7. PG 62.87.

¹⁷ M. Costanza, 'Waar predikte sint Chrysostomus', *Studia Catholica*, 27 (1952), 145–54.

¹⁸ *Hom.* 11.6 (PG 62.88); The use of *ἀρχή* is not conclusive evidence that Chrysostom was a bishop. In the homily he delivered at his ordination, *S. Chr.* 272, p. 388 (PG 48.693), Chrysostom uses *ἀρχή* to describe his priesthood. *ἀρχηγὴ* and *ἀρχεῖν* are words Chrysostom liked to use to describe the role of any priest, not only of the bishop. See Lochbrunner, *Über das Priestertum*, 173–4. The implication of this sentence is that the people who have left Chrysostom's congregation have done so because he has not been lawfully ordained, because they who have ordained him were not the lawful bishops.

¹⁹ 'If I have been lawfully made and consecrated, entreat those who have contrary to the law mounted the episcopal throne to resign it' (*Hom. in Eph.* 11.6 in PG 62.88).

(metaphorically) on fire, as he does in *Homily* 10.²⁰ In fact the exiling of Chrysostom from Constantinople was immediately followed by the total destruction by fire of the cathedral of St Sophia.²¹

But strong doubts remain. The question whether the sermon is concerned with events at Antioch or at Constantinople would be easily answered if *Homily* 11 (or indeed the other sermons on the Epistle to the Ephesians) could be precisely dated. But unfortunately they seem to have no unambiguous dating evidence. Kelly has pointed out that *Homily* 6 mentions a destructive war at the present time, with barbarians destroying whole cities and peoples, and taking myriads into captivity.²² This, he suggests, most likely refers to an invasion of Huns which broke into the Empire in 395, and for some time even threatened Antioch.²³ This is possible, but it was an age of many barbarian invasions. The date of this and the other sermons therefore remains uncertain.

There are, however, good reasons to suppose that at least some of the sermons on Ephesians were spoken at Antioch. *Homily* 9 refers to the martyr Babylas, and *Homily* 21 to the holy man Julianus, both venerated at Antioch.²⁴ This does not prove that all the remaining sermons on Ephesians must have been spoken at Antioch, but it does make it more likely. In the case of *Homily* 11 Chrysostom says that 'our city' has a reputation for 'being easygoing' (ἐυκολία). It was Antioch rather than Constantinople that was notorious for its easy-going ways. Another point: on the theory that the sermon was

²⁰ *Hom. in Eph.* 10.2 (PG 62.77–8). The fire is said to have destroyed 'pillars' (i.e. leaders, the metaphor of Galatians 2: 9) of the Church. The cause is the 'tyranny of vainglory' (κενοδοξία). Later we are told: 'many days are already past, since the Church throughout the world has been overthrown, and levelled to the ground' (ibid. 10.3 (PG 62.80)). This seems to refer to a dispute that affected far more cities and involved more violence than the Antiochene schism. The metaphor is more appropriate to the troubles that followed the deposition of Chrysostom from the see of Constantinople. But *Homily* 10 could quite possibly have been delivered at a quite different time from *Homily* 11, see n. 30 below.

²¹ Palladius, *Dial.* 10 (PG 45.35–6); Socrates, *HE* 6.18; Zosimus, 5.24.

²² Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 92 on *Hom. in Eph.* 6.4 (PG 62.48). *Hom.* 6 also mentions the monks living on mountains (PG 62.48), and was therefore probably delivered at Antioch, as was *Hom. in Eph.* 13 which also mentions the monks (PG 62.97).

²³ Jerome, *Ep.* 60.16; 78.8.

²⁴ Babylas: *Hom. in Eph.* 9 (PG 62.71), also see above, 149. Julianus: *Hom. in Eph.* 21.3 (PG 62.15); also see *Hom. in S. julianum* (PG 50.665–76).

spoken at Constantinople, the lady whom Chrysostom addressed so roughly was the empress Eudoxia. But it seems unlikely that in a sermon delivered at Constantinople before his exile had been decided Chrysostom should have addressed the empress Eudoxia, even figuratively, as bluntly as he does in the passage cited earlier.²⁵ So the lady is unlikely to be the empress, and the sermon is therefore more likely to have been delivered at Antioch.²⁶

Many details of the description of the ecclesiastical division in *Homily* 11 do indeed fit what we know about the Antiochene schism. It was a division between two Nicene groups. The question which of two rival bishops had been elected canonically was at the centre of the controversy.²⁷ Outside bishops did become involved, for the bishop of Alexandria and the pope of Rome recognized Paulinus and after him Euagrius, while rejecting Flavianus. Chrysostom's own status could have become an issue. For Chrysostom's ordination would only have been canonical if bishop Flavianus, who had ordained him, was the properly ordained bishop of Antioch. If he was not, neither had Chrysostom been canonically ordained. But if Flavianus was the rightful bishop, Paulinus or Euagrius (depending on the date of the episode) and any priest ordained by them, would have to resign.

None of the texts which is unquestionably related to the Antiochene schism mentions an episode which involved certain individuals deserting the Nicene congregation of Flavianus because they objected to Chrysostom personally, which is what Chrysostom tells us in *Homily* 11. Unfortunately, none of the other sermons on Ephesians throws any light on the episode.²⁸ In fact, with the doubtful exception

²⁵ See above, 180.

²⁶ W. Mayer and P. Allen, *John Chrysostom* (London, 2000), 60–1 argue for Constantinople, on the ground that the 'schism' in the local Church has been caused by members of his audience transferring their allegiance to a rival, whose activities had the appearance of legality. They suggest the visiting bishop Severian of Gabala or the Novatian bishop Sisinnius.

²⁷ *Hom. in Eph.* 11.6 (PG 62.86). The followers of Flavianus certainly claimed that Euagrius had been uncanonically elected. As no rival bishop had been elected, whether canonically or uncanonically, at Constantinople while Chrysostom was still there and preaching, this passage cannot allude to Chrysostom's troubles in that city.

²⁸ The troubles mentioned in *Homily* 10 are not the same as those of *Homily* 11. They do not concern Chrysostom personally, nor are they limited to Antioch: 'many days are past since the Church throughout all the world has been over thrown and levelled with the ground' (PG 62.80).

of *Homily* 10, the remaining homilies on Ephesians have no information at all that can certainly be related to the Antiochene schism. So we can only speculate what the trouble described in *Homily* 11 was about. I would suggest that this episode was indeed connected with the Antiochene schism, and that it involved the desertion to the rival Nicene group of a significant part of Chrysostom's congregation, led by one of the great ladies of Antioch and her friends. This would certainly have greatly upset Chrysostom, but it could have happened at any time between 386 and 396. We cannot fix the date more precisely. This means that *Homily* 11 cannot help us to date *De sacerdotio*. But though the divisions referred to in *Homily* 11 were probably of only passing importance, they did foreshadow events to come at Constantinople. Chrysostom's suspicion of women in power was a serious handicap for a man in his position. When he had to deal with the great ladies of Constantinople, and above all the empress Eudoxia, he mismanaged the relationship, disastrously for himself, and perhaps for them too.²⁹

As for the problem of the provenance of the *Homilies on Ephesians*,³⁰ it would seem that *Homilies* 11, 9, and 21, and the closely related 20, were probably delivered at Antioch. *Homily* 10 is perhaps more likely to have been delivered at Constantinople—or even from exile. The origin of the others remains uncertain.

²⁹ See below, 237–8.

³⁰ Wendy Mayer has shown that the different homilies transmitted in a single series have not necessarily been either delivered successively, or in the same place. See especially her *The Homilies of St John Chrysostom*.

Chrysostom Priest and Teacher: Asceticism for All

(I) CHRYSOSTOM AS A PREACHER

As a priest, Chrysostom preached at least once a week, and normally more frequently. The sermon was a feature of Christianity which had no parallel in the paganism. Its basic function was to explain the Word of God, as recorded in the Bible.¹ Readings from the Bible, then as now, were a central part of Christian service. The pagans had no sacred books and therefore no readings and no sermons to explain the readings.² Preachers did not feel altogether free to interpret the Bible as they pleased. Their freedom of exegesis was to some extent limited by the general acceptance of standard interpretations of particular biblical episodes. While there were significant differences between the interpretations offered by different schools of biblical exegesis, notably between the historical school of Antioch³ and the allegorical school of Alexandria, there also was a great deal of common ground.⁴

¹ For a sociological examination of the effects of preaching and the idea of a 'textual community' (albeit at a later date) see B. Stock, *Listening to the Text: On the Use of the Past* (Baltimore, 1990). The relevance of this book to Chrysostom is discussed by I. Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity: Greeks, Jews and Christians in Antioch* (Cambridge, 2007), 185–98.

² L. V. Rutgers, P. V. van der Horst, H. W. Havelaar, and L. Teugels (eds.), *The Use of Sacred Books in the Ancient World* (Leuven, 1998).

³ On Eusebius of Emesa, a possible influence on Chrysostom's biblical commentaries, see R. B. ter Haar Romeny, *A Syrian in Greek Dress: The Use of Greek, Hebrew and Syriac Biblical Texts in Eusebius of Emesa's Commentary on Genesis*, *Traditio exegetica Graeca* 6 (Leuven, 1970).

⁴ F. M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge, 1997); H. Amirav, *Rhetoric and Tradition: John Chrysostom on Noah and the Flood*, *Traditio exegetica Graeca* 12 (Leuven, 2003). Wallace Hadrill, *Christian Antioch*, 27–51.

Among the inhabitants of Antioch Christians of one kind or another almost certainly made up the majority,⁵ but it is also clear that many inhabitants of the city, including some leading citizens, remained loyal to their traditional cults, and that many Christians retained faith in the efficacy of numerous time-honoured rituals and practices.⁶ There also was a large Jewish community.⁷ So the preacher had not only to teach his Christian congregation, but also to counter objections raised by pagans or Jews, and to dissuade members of his congregation from being persuaded by them. As far as Jews were concerned, Chrysostom was particularly anxious to convince his hearers that Judaism and Christianity were distinct and incompatible religions, and that it would therefore not at all do for a Christian to attend synagogue services, to swear oaths in the synagogue, or to believe that amulets containing sentences from the Bible, modelled on the phylacteries worn by Jews, would protect him from evil spirits. It was obviously difficult for individuals who were not particularly well informed about theology to realize that Judaism and Christianity were distinct, seeing that Jesus had been a Jew, and that both religions considered the Old Testament to be the authoritative medium of God's message to man. So efforts to show that Christianity is distinct from Judaism, is superior to Judaism, and indeed supersedes Judaism go back a long way. But Christian preachers seem to have felt the problem of Judaizing particularly strongly in the age of Chrysostom and Ambrose, and none more strongly than Chrysostom himself.

⁵ Soler, *Le Sacré et le salut*, 139–64 surveys the variety of religious groups at Antioch, but in my opinion underestimates the strength Christianity had achieved by the mid-fourth century, as I argue in W. Liebeschuetz, 'Libanius to Malalas via John Chrysostom: Christians, Jews and Pagans at Antioch from the Fourth to the Sixth Century', in R. Lizzi Testa (ed.), *Tra conflitto e dialogo: la cristianizzazione dell'impero romano*, Cristianesimo nella storia 31 (2009), 441–70.

⁶ e.g. *Hom. in Eph.* 6 (PG 62.48). There surely was a large number of individuals who were not exclusively committed to any one religion or sect, and like the 'Judaizers' saw their best hope in worshipping with more than one. On these 'incerti' see M. Kahlos, *Debate and Dialogue: Christians and Pagan Culture* (Aldershot, 2007). We have of course no idea of their numerical importance. At Antioch they might well have been in a majority.

⁷ Soler, *Le Sacré et le salut*, 93–139. But the assessment 'au temps de Jean Chrysostome Antioche était décidément une métropole juive autant que chrétienne' (140) is surely highly exaggerated.

However, when we look at the whole body of his sermons we see that in practice Chrysostom was far more concerned to teach his Christians, than to polemicize against Jews and pagans, although, as we have seen, he did that too. But it was the Christians who gave him most trouble. One reason for this was, of course, that the Christians of Antioch were divided on dogmatic lines between those who accepted the creed of Nicaea and those who did not, and that furthermore the former were split between the followers of Meletius and Paulinus, and the latter were divided into *Homoians* and *Anomoians*.⁸ Under Valens the *Homoians* had been in control of all the churches at Antioch. From the start of the reign of Theodosius in 379 the Nicene group led by Meletius, and after his death by Flavianus, had the support of the emperor, and regained control of all the church buildings,⁹ though the *Homoians* and the *Anomoians*, the anti-Nicene groups, still had numerous adherents in the city. At the same time the Nicenes remained divided: Paulinus and Euagrius continued to have followers; and Paulinus and after him Euagrius were even recognized as the rightful bishops of Antioch by the bishop of Alexandria and the pope at Rome. Since he had been ordained by Flavianus, Chrysostom was certainly expected to do his utmost to uphold and further the Nicene cause against the *Homoians*, and that of Flavianus' group of Nicenes against that of Paulinus and Euagrius.¹⁰ We are told that he was very successful, and that his preaching soon won many Arians to the Catholic cause. This is surely right. Unless he had been successful at Antioch, the imperial authorities would not have been so eager to make him bishop of Constantinople.

The strategy by which he achieved success and popularity is interesting. Chrysostom occasionally employed exceedingly aggressive and demagogic rhetoric.¹¹ The series directed against the Jews, or, strictly speaking, against Judaizing Christians, is evidence of that. There are also some sermons, and, as we have seen, two treatises

⁸ On the *Anomoians*, see Soler, *Le Sacré et le salut*, 152–6. This group of extreme Arians had been founded at Antioch by the deacon Aetius, and flourished in the reigns of the moderately Arian emperors Constantius and Valens.

⁹ Theodoret, *HE* 5.2–3; Sozomen, *HE* 7.2–3.

¹⁰ For a sermon against the rival Nicenes see above, 180–4. In *De non anathematismendis* (PG 48.946) he forbids his congregation to curse the followers of Paulinus.

¹¹ Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*.

refuting paganism,¹² and five sermons arguing against the *Anomoians*,¹³ in which the argument is dogmatic and doctrinal. But the great majority of his sermons were concerned with doctrine only in passing, or not at all.¹⁴ In this way his approach was very different from Ambrose. In fact, in his sermons against the *Anomoians* he attacks this group for trying to achieve an understanding of God by rational enquiry. In this life man is incapable of gaining any more than a very faint conception of the nature of God.¹⁵ For Chrysostom God is beyond comprehension. He can best be defined by negatives.¹⁶ What is needed is faith. This Chrysostom has in abundance. He is, or at least he presents himself in his sermons, as a man who is absolutely certain that he represents the truth, and that those who do not belong to the Nicene group are dangerous, lying, wicked, or deceived by the devil. One imagines that Chrysostom impressed not only by the skill of his rhetoric but also by the power of his conviction.

Dogmatic polemics do not figure very prominently in his sermons. How people live is in a sense more important than what they believe,

¹² *Demonstratio contra gentiles, quod Christus sit deus*, PG 48.813–38, English translation by B. Harkins in *John Chrysostom Apologist*, Fathers of the Church 73 (Washington, 1985).

¹³ Chrysostom, *De l'incompréhensibilité de Dieu* (On the Incomprehensibility of the Divine Nature, *Homilies 1–5 against the Anomoians*), text, French translation, introduction, and notes, ed. A.-M. Malingrey, R. Danielou, and R. Flacilière, *S. Chr.* 28 (Paris, 1970). Analysis of Book 5 in Lochbrunner, *Über das Priestertum*, 133–42. Chrysostom was influenced by the anti-Eunomian writings of Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa.

¹⁴ The Commentary on John's Gospel has many passages arguing against doctrines of the Arians, who are not however named, e.g. PG 63.512–16, trans. Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen, *John Chrysostom* (London, 2000), 146–7.

¹⁵ Argued in the five homilies of *De l'incompréhensibilité de Dieu* and in *Sur l'égalité du Père et du Fils, contre les anoméens*, ed. A.-M. Malingrey, *Hom.* 11, 54–8 (*S. Chr.* 396, 292), 126–7 (*S. Chr.* 396, 328) and *Hom.* 12.259 ff. (*S. Chr.* 396, 338). Chrysostom's view is concisely expressed in *Hom. in Eph.* 24.2 (PG 62.170–1): 'Faith is a shield which protects those who simply believe, but if there is sophistry, rationalisation and inquisition, instead of being a shield faith becomes an impediment. ... Fearful mankind look for security in reasoning, but it does not make them feel secure'. His attitude is summed up in the phrase 'Do not ask how' (*Τὸ δε ὅπως μὴ ζητεῖ* (*Hom. in Joh.* 11.2), see Lochbrunner, *Über das Priestertum*, 200–6.

¹⁶ J. Daniélou, introduction to *De l'incompréhensibilité de Dieu*, 14–29. Chrysostom was not alone in this. Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa debated how God could be described at all: Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 156–7. M. Mortley, *From Words to Silence*, i: *The Rise and Fall of the Logos*; ii: *The Way of Negation*, Theophaneia 31–2 (Bonn, 1986).

or rather an evil way of life will predispose people to adopt heretical beliefs. Moreover a man who lives an exemplary life will draw people to his belief, and even heresies win followers who condemn the heretical doctrines, but revere the way of life of the men and women who hold them.¹⁷ In most of his sermons he seems principally concerned to persuade his congregation that many features of the way of life pioneered by Christian ascetics could be, and indeed must be, adopted by laypeople, because this was how they could realize the morality of the New Testament in its totality. Of course, the ordinary Christians of Antioch were still very far from achieving this ideal. Their customs had been shaped by many centuries of urban life, and adherence to Christianity, and even baptism, could not shake their instinctive sense of what was right and proper, and what was not. They thought nothing wrong with attending chariot races or the theatre, or with women wearing attractive dresses and make-up. They saw no reason why they should not take oaths, and did not understand that this meant taking the name of God in vain. They continued to daub mud on the foreheads of children to guard them from the evil eye,¹⁸ and to name their children in the customary manner, by giving names to burning candles, and giving their child the name of the candle that burned longest. They took delight in the traditional licence and merrymaking at wedding ceremonies,¹⁹ and the fun and games that welcomed in the New Year,²⁰ not to mention the simple enjoyment of dancing.²¹ The mass of the Christians of Antioch simply did not see any incompatibility between such ancestral customs and habits and calling themselves Christians. But from the point of view of Chrysostom, inspired as he was by the idealism of the ascetic movement, this state of affairs was intolerable.²² Chrysostom accepted the established custom of the funeral banquets, but he disapproved of subsequent mourning, because this

¹⁷ *Hom. in Act.* 47 (PG 60.331–2).

¹⁸ *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 12.7 (PG 61.106), instead mark them with the sign of the cross.

¹⁹ *Hom. in Col.* 12 (PG 386–9); *In 1 Cor.* 12.5 (PG 61.103).

²⁰ *Hom. in Kalend.* (PG 48.953–62).

²¹ *Hom. in Matt.* 48.3 (PG 58.491): 'Where there is dancing the devil is also there... For God did not give us feet for that purpose, but to walk with discipline... not for us to leap like camels.'

²² Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity*, 148–61; L. Brottier, *L'appel des demi-chrétiens à la vie angélique: Chrysostome entre l'idéal monastique et réalité mondaine*, Paris 2005.

implied a denial of the Christian teaching of an afterlife. It is appropriate to mourn for one's sins, but somebody's death is not a proper occasion for mourning.²³ As has been very well described by J. I. Maxwell, Chrysostom's immediate objective in preaching was not so much the eradication of heresy, or even of particular sins, as the inculcation of Christian habits: 'Chrysostom's goal was not social change, but to encourage a life conducive to collective salvation. Everyone would have a Christian response to any situation. The Christian ethos had to become all embracing, to become common sense, to become habit, and so to be taken for granted. Only if he or she achieved this, could a Christian be sure of salvation.'²⁴ But by persuading members of his congregation, at least in principle, of the validity of his view of the Christian life, Chrysostom probably also won many of them over to his side in the religious divisions that were splitting the city, that is to the Nicene community of Flavianus.

(II) CREATION OF AN IDENTITY WAS THE RESULT, NOT THE PURPOSE, OF PREACHING

Chrysostom's preaching was in the service of the Catholic faction of Meletius (later of Flavianus), and he certainly wanted to win followers for this group. But it is unhelpful to describe his efforts as directed at the creation of a particular religious identity which would create a sharp differentiation from the other Christian groups, as Sandwell argues: 'Chrysostom stood at the end of a long line of Christian leaders who sought... to construct a Christian identity... Chrysostom wanted to define clearly what it meant to be a Christian... this meant preaching the meaning of Christian identity at every possible opportunity.'²⁵ This description of the objective of Chrysostom and

²³ *Hom. in Matt.* 27.3 (PG 57.347–50); in *Genes.* 45.2 (PG 54.416); *De stat.* 5, 6–14 (PG 49.70–8). More references in Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity*, 160.

²⁴ Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity*, 147–8.

²⁵ B. Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity: Greeks, Jews and Christians in Antioch* (Cambridge, 2007), 277. The book is full of interesting information about the religious situation at Antioch in the fourth century, especially about the 'privatization'

of other identity to the motivation of Christian preachers does not fairly describe what was going on in the minds of these men, it is not what the preachers thought that they were doing, and it does not explain why congregations found their preachers' demands persuasive. First of all Chrysostom and his colleagues did not think that they were creating something new. They thought that they were propagating New Testament teaching. Of course, there was, and had to be, innovation. After all the Antioch of Chrysostom was very different from the Gallilee of Jesus. The relations between Christianity and the surrounding society had been transformed by the conversion of the Roman Constantine. More recently, the ascetic movement was giving rise to new and more rigorous demands. All this required a great deal of adaptation and clarification, but adaptation to a changing environment was merely acceleration of a continuing more or less subconscious process.

The objective of Chrysostom, and his colleagues, was much wider and their purpose was much grander than the creation of a new identity. They believed that they knew God's plan for the human race, and they spent their lives trying to implement it. What Chrysostom asked of his congregation was what he thought was full implementation of the Christian religion as founded on the Bible and expanded and developed in the traditions of the Church. To achieve this required both reshaping human behaviour, and strengthening and expanding the Church. The dynamics of these preachers' campaign was derived from the fact that they felt that they were doing God's will. They did not advocate plain living, the giving away of riches to the poor, the shunning of the circus and the theatre, the insistent admonitions that girls should dedicate their virginity to Jesus, that widows should not remarry, that everybody should give up swearing, and so on, in order to make members of their congregation different from fellow citizens who did not do these things, or not to the same extent. but because the behaviour they taught was good for its own sake. It was commanded by God and necessary for salvation. In as far

and internalization of the traditional cults. But the application of the discourse of identity, in the sense in which the word is currently used by sociologists and many historians, ignores what the individuals concerned were fearing, thinking, and doing, and therefore does not help to understand the causes of religious changes.

as they were successful, it was because members of the congregation were ready to believe this too.

It is also relevant that human motivation is almost invariably mixed. At one level the demand for total Christianization was about God's will being fulfilled on earth, but at another level it was about power. When looked at in a wider perspective, the preaching of Chrysostom and his colleagues can be seen to be part of a sustained offensive on the part of Christianity, and particularly Nicene Christianity.²⁶ At the same time as Chrysostom was preaching in Antioch, monks were destroying pagan temples in the countryside east of the city, and the bishop of the neighbouring Apamea was demolishing its principal temple.²⁷ The Western emperor Gratian had cut the historic link between the Roman state and the old Roman state-religion,²⁸ and both he in the West and Theodosius in the East had put the whole weight of the Roman state behind Nicene Christianity, issuing laws penalizing paganism and non-Nicene Christians.²⁹ At the same time the fact that the emperor and many of his leading officials,³⁰ and in cities like Antioch a large part of the population, was now Christian made the objective of a totally Christianized society seem achievable. Even so it took nearly two centuries for anything like the desired degree of Christianization to be achieved. Chrysostom and preachers like him were teaching men to live as they thought God wanted men and women to live; at the same time they were consolidating and expanding a disciplined organization in competition with other organizations. In as far as they were successful, these sermons did create a new Christian identity, but that was not the purpose but a consequence of the exercise.

²⁶ P. Chuvin, *Chronique des derniers païens* (Paris, 1990), 63–103, 257–69.

²⁷ See F. R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c.370–529*, vol. i (Leiden, 1993), 123–9.

²⁸ On this much discussed episode see my introduction and translation of Ambrose, *Epistulae* 72, 72 A (Symmachus' *Third Relatio*), and 73 in Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches*, 60–93; Lizzi Testa, 'Christian Emperor, Vestal Virgins and Priestly Colleges', and Pashoud, *Eunape, Olympiodore, Zosime*, 271–3.

²⁹ See for instance W. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops* (Oxford, 1990), 157–65.

³⁰ On Christianization of court society: J. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and the Imperial Court AD 364–425* (Oxford, 1975), 127–72.

The project was certainly divisive. Such preaching tended to separate Christians from pagans and Jews, and of course it created divisions in the Christian community itself, between adherents of different interpretations of Christian belief. But, once more, this was not the purpose of preaching, which was to create the single community united by a shared creed and common values and behaviour. Of course, the exclusiveness of Chrysostom's Christianity was not his personal idiosyncrasy, nor restricted to his colleagues of the Nicene persuasion. The religious groups against whom he preached were just as convinced that they had a monopoly of truth as he was. While the emperors Constantius II and Valens supported what Chrysostom would call 'Arian' Christianity, the Arians had a monopoly of church buildings. Nor was this exclusiveness and intolerance an aspect of religion which only happened to be fashionable in the second half of the fourth century. It was a feature of Christianity from the beginning, and it was already a dominant feature of the religion of the Old Testament: 'I am the Lord thy God you shall not have any Gods before me . . . you shall not make yourself a graven image . . . you shall not bow down to them and serve them; for I the lord God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation.'

What made Christianity, and perhaps all monotheistic religions,³¹ potentially divisive³² is the fact that many of its adherents believed that their beliefs and practices were the only ones that were pleasing to God, and that those who did not share them, whether sectarian Christians, pagans, or Jews, were not only mistaken, but also wicked and ruled, or at least deceived, by evil spirits, demons, or devils. So Chrysostom was, for instance, very little concerned to show how Meletians differed from say *Homoians*, or from followers of Paulinus, or indeed from Jews. He did not try to build up a Meletian identity. The means by which he sought to strengthen the Meletian group was

³¹ See G. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, 1993).

³² That Christianity need not be, and has not always been, intolerant is argued by H. Drake, 'Fourth Century Christianity and the Paranoid Style', in T. W. Hillard et al. (eds.), *Ancient History in a Modern University* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1998), ii. 357–68. For debate and dialogue as opposed to confrontation see M. Kahlos, *Debate and Dialogue and Forbearance and Compulsion: The Rhetoric of Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in Late Antiquity* (London, 2009).

by getting people to attend Meletian services, to join processions organized by the Meletians, and particularly to participate in the cult of martyrs organized by the Meletians. He also celebrated the memory of Nicene bishops. As for Arians and Jews, if he addressed them at all, he was less often concerned to prove that they were mistaken than simply to abuse them as worthless and dangerous.

The ascetic ideal was certainly one of the factors that sharpened intolerance in the fourth and subsequent centuries. The professed and indeed its actual goal of ascetic self-discipline is to destroy the passions, not least the passion of anger, and to promote gentleness, and readiness to forgive wrongs. Asceticism does not, however, necessarily, either then or now, make those who practise it milder or more tolerant towards those who do not share their beliefs. 'You can drive out nature with a pitchfork, but she will always come back.'³³ It is not a coincidence that the years which saw the growth of ascetic literature also saw an intensification of pressure on Christian sectarians, pagans, and Jews.³⁴

(III) POSITIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Chrysostom wanted his preaching to have something like the effect of life among the monks, insisting that it is possible even for a city-dweller to follow the basic regime of the ascetic life; even a married man can fast and pray and discipline himself.³⁵ Chrysostom generally assumes that human beings are gifted with a power of free will, which makes them capable of performing everything that God requires of them. To deny this would be Manichaean and heretical.³⁶ Chrysostom is certain that virtue can be taught, and it is his principal objective to teach his congregation the requirements of Christian virtue.³⁷

³³ *Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret* (Horace, *Ep.* 1, 10.24).

³⁴ Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization*, esp. i. 1–97; J. Hahn, *Gewalt und religiöser Konflikt*, *Klio Beiheft* ns 8 (Berlin, 2004) examines the complex causes of some notorious episodes of religious violence in Eastern cities.

³⁵ *Hom. in Matt.* 55 (56).6 (PG. 58.548).

³⁶ *Ibid.* 59.2–3 (PG 58.576–7).

³⁷ *Hom. in Cor.* 14.3 (PG 61.118); *De Anna* 4.2 (PG 54.662).

Chrysostom wants his hearers to concentrate their attention on the state of their souls and the prerequisites of salvation, to despise this world and to fit themselves for the world to come. He calls on them to attend church regularly. Prayer at home is important, but is not a substitute for communal prayer.³⁸ He also insists on seriousness, sobriety, and self-control during religious services³⁹ and religious processions, the atmosphere at which was evidently often far from calm and reverential: 'There is great tumult and great confusion, and our assemblies differ nothing from a vintner's shop, so loud is the laughter, so great the disturbance, as in the baths, as in the market, the cry and tumult is universal.'⁴⁰ He calls on fathers of families to encourage regular psalm singing at home, particularly after meals.⁴¹ Chrysostom invariably calls for plain living with much Bible reading,⁴² and advises his hearers that they ought to leave some time before going to bed to meditate upon the sins they might have committed on that day.⁴³ He regularly demands active sympathy for the misery of the poor. He recalls their shared humanity, the fact that they too are creatures of God, and he insists that the wealthy should spend their money to help the poor, rather than to make themselves more comfortable, or to win popularity by public munificence. So he addresses the rich: 'Are not you the ones who create robbers? Are not you the ones who add fuel to the fire of the envious? Are not you the ones who create runaway slaves and traitors as you dangle your wealth before them like a bait?'⁴⁴ The models to be followed are not the famous *exempla* of classical literature, but the martyrs. He

³⁸ *De incomprehensibili natura dei*, ed. A.-M. Malingrey and R. Flacelière, *S. Chr.* 28, vol. i (Paris, 1970), 222–7.9; *De poenitentia* 9 (PG 49.343–8).

³⁹ *Hom. in Acta* 24 (PG 60.190).

⁴⁰ *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 36.8 (PG 61.313).

⁴¹ *Hom. in Rom.* 4 (PG 60.417).

⁴² As Jaclyn Maxwell has pointed out (Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity*, 98–102), this advice of Chrysostom implies that literacy was wider than is often assumed, for instance by W. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), 313–22. More evidence of the extent of literacy is to be found in the essays of H. Humphrey (ed.), *Literacy in the Roman World*, JRA Suppl. 3 (Ann Arbor, 1991); Bowman and Wolf (eds.), *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*; R. Brownling, 'Literacy in the Byzantine World', *BGMS* 4 (1978), 39–54, distinguishes between different levels of literacy.

⁴³ *Hom. in Matt.* 41.4 (PG 57.450).

⁴⁴ *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 21 (PG 61.176). See also reference in Kelly 1995, 97–9.

stresses again and again: 'What you do for the poor and to the sick and to prisoners you do to Christ.'⁴⁵ Those with only moderate wealth are urged to keep a small chest in the room where they pray, and every day before they say their prayers to put away a small sum for the poor.⁴⁶ The insistence on the importance of charitable giving, indeed that the only justification for owning wealth is that it enables the owner to use it to help the poor, is of course based on the teaching of the New Testament, but this teaching was given a new emphasis by the ascetic movement. Giving up one's possessions is after all a difficult form of self-discipline. The call for charitable giving, and the criticism not only of extravagant living, but of even the possession of riches, is found in Basil, Augustine, and Ambrose and in fact in nearly all the ecclesiastical writers of this period, but nowhere are these themes raised as regularly and urgently as in the writings of Chrysostom.

(IV) NEGATIVES AND PROHIBITIONS

Provocative dress, make-up, and any kind of flirtation are of course absolutely contrary to the monastic morality that Chrysostom was trying to propagate among lay persons.⁴⁷ That is why Chrysostom returned to these topics again and again, just as he regularly criticized the vanity and excessive influence of women. So he admonished elderly society ladies at Constantinople: 'At your age, when you are really old women, and widows into the bargain, why do you force your bodies to become young again, wearing curls on your forehead, like prostitutes, [by your example] intimidating all other free-born ladies to deceive those whom they meet in the same way, and that in spite of being widows.'⁴⁸ Not surprisingly the old ladies became his enemies.

⁴⁵ R. Brändle, *Matth 25, 31–46 im Werke des Johannes Chrysostomus* (Tübingen, 1979), 42–52.

⁴⁶ *De elem.* 3 (PG 51.265–6); *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 43.4 (PG 61.372–3). *Hom. in Psalmos* 41.1–2 (PG 57.455).

⁴⁷ *Vainglory* 90: 'Young men are troubled by desires, women by love of finery and excitement. Let us therefore repress all those tendencies' (trans. Laistner).

⁴⁸ Palladius, *Dial.* 8 (PG 47.27). Theophilus held a meeting of the opponents of Chrysostom at the house of Eugraphia, one such old lady.

As we have seen earlier,⁴⁹ Chrysostom most heartily agreed with the teaching 'I do not assent a woman to be a teacher, nor must a woman domineer over a man . . . for Adam was created first and Eve afterwards.'⁵⁰ But it would be a mistake to think that he hated women as such. He clearly had a real friendship with the aristocratic nun Olympias, and the letters of encouragement and consolation he wrote to her from exile are, strangely, at the same time impersonal and pedagogical, and intimate.⁵¹

Again and again he calls on members of his congregation to shun the public shows, above all chariot racing and theatricals. He complains that, 'After a long course of sermons . . . Some left us and went to the horse races, and became so frenzied that they filled the entire city with cries and disorderly shouting, which involved loud laughing rather than lament . . . Is this to be tolerated? If you wanted to see animal races, why did you not yoke together the animal passions in yourself, the anger and lust; and subject them to the yoke of philosophy?'⁵² He regularly reminds the leading citizens that to seek popularity and fame by providing shows for the people is to seek for vainglory (*κενοδοξία*); so is the seeking after worldly power and public office.⁵³ He scolds the excesses and carousing of traditional civic festivals, notably the New Year Festival, and also celebration of the new moon with drunkenness.⁵⁴ All these activities arouse the emotions and excite the passions. Chrysostom thinks that all passion is dangerous. In his view both theatricals and chariot races are dangerous because both nourish the passions at the expense of reason. Besides, while suffering leads to virtue, amusement leads to sin.⁵⁵ The passion for the races makes the fans forget everything they have learnt in church,⁵⁶ and the

⁴⁹ See above 169.

⁵⁰ *Hom. in 1 Tim.* 9 (PG 62.543–8).

⁵¹ Jean Chrysostome, *Lettres à Olympias & Vie anonyme d'Olympias*, texts and French translation, ed. A.-M. Malingrey, SC 13 (Paris, 1968).

⁵² 'Against the games and theatres (New Homily 7)', PG 56.263–70; the citation is 263.10 and 265.25 trans. Mayer and Allen, 119–20. The sermon was preached at Constantinople in 399.

⁵³ *On Vainglory (De inani gloria et de educandis liberis)* 4–10.

⁵⁴ *In Kalendis* 2 (PG 48.954–5).

⁵⁵ *Homily 42 on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. Walker, Sheppard, and Browne, NPNF 11.261–2.

⁵⁶ *Homily against the Games and the Theater*, PG 56.263–66; trans. Mayer and Allen, 119–21.

theatre is a school for immorality.⁵⁷ Today Chrysostom would have preached not only against pornography but also against watching football and viewing television.⁵⁸

Chrysostom was a born educator. He knew very well that deeply rooted habits cannot be changed easily. He proposes that his hearers should undergo a lifelong course of self-training, daily self-examination, remembering their sins, showing penitence, and praying to God for forgiveness. In other words he is persuading his hearers to adopt basic elements of ascetic discipline into their daily life.⁵⁹ He was aware that he was asking a lot. So he advises his congregation to start by trying to observe commandments that are relatively easy to fulfil.⁶⁰ That may be the reason why he repeatedly, and almost obsessively, tells his congregation that they must obey the Third Commandment ('You shall not take the Lord's name in vain');⁶¹ that is, to refrain from swearing.⁶² His regular exhortations that his hearers must give up going to the theatre and the races, and that the women among them must stop wearing fine clothing and make-up, also call for relatively superficial changes in lifestyle which Chrysostom may have thought relatively easy to make.

(V) THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

Chrysostom was well aware that if he was going to Christianize the morality of the Antiochenes he had to start with their children.

⁵⁷ *Homily 42 on the Acts of the Apostles*, NPNF 11.262: 'In a theater is laughter, ribaldry, devil's pomp, dissoluteness, waste of time, adultery... a practical training for fornication... Not so the prison, there you find humbleness of mind...'

⁵⁸ The popularity of the public shows in Antiochene life is reflected in Chrysostom's own imagery: see A. Koch, *Johannes Chrysostomus und seine Kenntnisse der antiken Agonistik im Spiegel der in seinen Schriften verwendeten Bilder und Vergleiche* (New York, 2007).

⁵⁹ On all this see Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity*, 163.

⁶⁰ *Hom. in Acta* 8 (PG 60.73–6). If he thinks this commandment relatively easy to observe, his enforcement is inexorable. Ibid. 74: 'If any man refuses to conform to this order (the order to stop swearing), that man I do prohibit to set foot on the church's threshold, be he the prince, he that wears the crown.'

⁶¹ Chrysostom ignores the importance of oaths in the administration of justice.

⁶² Exodus 20: 7.

Chrysostom's educational philosophy is perhaps most accessible in the little book *On Vainglory and the Education of Children* (*De inani gloria et de educandis liberis*).⁶³ This book is quite consciously a more realistic supplement to the *Adversus Oppugnatores*.⁶⁴ In the earlier treatise he had rejected traditional education on the ground that its aim was to instil an ambition for what he calls 'vainglory', and he advocated (with very considerable rhetorical exaggeration) education by monks as an alternative. In *On Vainglory and the Education of Children* he shows how parents⁶⁵ can achieve the same end, that is to make their children grow up into good Christians by early training in the home.

The treatise is extremely interesting, and not least because Chrysostom's principles of education are in some, though of course not in all, respects surprisingly modern. Chrysostom has something like today's educational psychology. He thinks physical punishment should be reduced to a minimum though he also insists that it should be kept as a last resort.⁶⁶ He thinks young children should be taught through stories.⁶⁷ Modern educationalists would agree with him, but of course they would probably not agree with Chrysostom that the stories should be drawn from the Bible—although until comparatively recently many mothers would have agreed with Chrysostom about the importance of Bible stories. Chrysostom wants boys to be taught not to be angry, and not to try to get their way by brute force.⁶⁸ He is strongly opposed to any form of conspicuous consumption, and he is against snobbery. The children he has in mind are children of wealthy parents, and he insists that they must treat slaves with respect.⁶⁹ Children must be brought up to have sympathy

⁶³ Also *Hom.* in *Eph.* 21 (PG 62.149–56).

⁶⁴ *Vainglory* 19.

⁶⁵ The education of girls seems to be left largely to mothers: *ibid.* 90.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 30; so also Ps.-Plutarch, *Ed. of Childr.* 12 (Bebbitt 40).

⁶⁷ *Vainglory* 36–46; a pagan educationalist would probably have agreed on principle, but would have advocated different stories and poems: Plutarch, *How to Study Poetry* 14 D (Bebbitt 74–7) and the rest of the treatise, though it is concerned with an older age group than Chrysostom's treatise.

⁶⁸ *Vainglory* 66–75; so also Ps.-Plutarch, *Ed. of Childr.* 14D (Bebbitt 48–50). Ps.-Plutarch recommends that the child or young man is to discipline his anger by keeping his temper with slaves (*Vainglory* 69–72), indeed to treat his slaves like brothers (*ibid.* 72).

⁶⁹ *Vainglory* 72.

with the poor and to be ready to give away their wealth in order to assist them. All this is modern. The rule that boys should not be violent, and should not display what many would think typical boyish behaviour, is certainly not how boys were educated a generation ago, though the current tendency is in that direction. On the other hand there is not a hint in Chrysostom's treatise that children should be allowed to develop their own individuality and to make up their own minds about what to believe, and what to think right or wrong. The child's mind is like a wax tablet, and it is the parents' duty to inscribe it with the right knowledge and values.⁷⁰

Moreover, a child is to be made good by being carefully shielded from seeing or learning about the evil and cruelty in the world.⁷¹ The underlying idea is that when a young person sees or hears nothing other than what is good and right during childhood, the good and right becomes an integral part of his or her character, so that when the young adult goes into the world and experiences what is really going on there, he or she will not be tainted. This philosophy goes back to Plato, and has had a very long life, though today television, which children watch quite indiscriminately from a very early age, has made it totally impracticable. Television would certainly have shocked Chrysostom, and not only because of the sex and violence that is shown on it, but because it is a kind of theatre, and, as we have seen, there are few activities that Chrysostom attacks as regularly as the theatre and chariot races. This is of course very far from modern educational theory which gives a definite place in the development of the child's personality to experience of and acting in drama. Modern educational theory also favours coeducation. Chrysostom wanted boys and girls to be kept strictly separate. This is in accordance with his ascetic ideals. These ideals are also reflected in the advice that children should fast twice a week and that they should pray regularly.⁷² In fact the entire composition of the treatise reflects the

⁷⁰ *Vainglory* 20; so also *Ed. of Childr.* 3F (Bebbitt 14–16). One might add that Chrysostom favours traditional hierarchy and discipline: a wife must obey her husband, a child its father, and a servant his master, *Hom. 10 in Col.* (PG 62.367).

⁷¹ *Vainglory* 37–8; 56–61 The most dangerous sights, and the ones most urgently to be shunned, are those which are sexually enticing whether encountered in the street or watched in the theatre.

⁷² *Vainglory* 79–80.

ascetic ideal, for its argument is structured on the disciplining of the senses, the disciplining of tongue and speech, hearing, smell, and sight, and touch being discussed in turn.

Chrysostom's educational programme has much in common with the recommendations of pagan treatises such as Pseudo-Plutarch's essay 'On the Education of Children', and Plutarch's 'How to Study Poetry'. Both Christians and pagans focus on moral education, and their moral recommendations are similar. There are however some important differences. For instance Pseudo-Plutarch discusses whether close and admiring relationships between boys and older men are a good thing or not. This is very different attitude from that of Chrysostom who can hardly find adequate words to express his horror at homoeroticism, which for him is 'a new and lawless lust' and 'a plague worse than all plagues'.⁷³ Another difference is that the threat of divine punishment, whether in this life or after, does not figure in the educational programme of Pseudo-Plutarch.⁷⁴ Chrysostom, on the other hand, insists that the boy must be made acquainted with the prospect of divine reward and punishment.⁷⁵ Above all there is a big difference in the ultimate goal of the recommended training. Pagan education aims at preparing the boy to be a worthy member of civic society. 'I regard as perfect, so far as man can be, those who are able to combine political capacity (*πολιτικὴ δύναμις*) with philosophy.'⁷⁶ But the purpose of the education recommended by Chrysostom is to make the child into a perfect Christian. He is not interested in preparing the young person to fit comfortably into society, such as it is with all its faults and vices, nor is he concerned

⁷³ *Ed. of Childr.* 11D (Bebbitt 52), see also Ps.-Lucian, *De amoribus*, ed. M. D. MacLeod in Loeb Lucian, vol. 8, 243–61, discussed in Foucault, *Le Souci de soi*, 243–66; contrast Chrysostom, *Adversus oppugnatores* 3.8.

⁷⁴ But Plato has myths of reward and punishment after death, e.g. the myth of Er at the end of the *Republic* and *Phaedon* 62, and Plato remained the most influential ancient writer on education.

⁷⁵ *Vainglory* 52: 'When he is fifteen years or more let him hear of Hell. Nay, when he is ten or eight or even younger let him hear in full detail the story of the flood, the destruction of Sodom, the visitations inflicted on Egypt—whatever stories are full of divine punishment. When he is older let him hear also the deeds of the New Testament—deeds of Grace and deeds of Hell.'

⁷⁶ *Ed. of Childr.* 8A (Bebbitt 36).

to prepare the young man to take an active part in political life.⁷⁷ Chrysostom's Christian view of the relationship between education and religion was of course quite different from that of pagan educationalists. For Chrysostom the contents of education are essentially prescribed by God, and revealed in the Bible. But for philosophical pagans it is the traditional education culminating in the study of philosophy that will show young people what religion requires from them. So according to Pseudo-Plutarch 'philosophy teaches how to distinguish the good from the shameful and the just from the unjust... philosophy teaches man how to bear himself in his relations with the gods.'⁷⁸

On the face of it the education recommended by Chrysostom involves an enormous narrowing of the educational experience of the child. It would seem that the Bible is substituted for the whole range of works of classical philosophy and poetry.⁷⁹ This impression is misleading. The programme of Chrysostom's treatise is not intended to provide a substitute for the traditional education. It is in fact going to be a supplement to the normal upper-class schooling.⁸⁰ Chrysostom does not envisage the possibility that the education provided by pedagogue, grammarian, and sophist might disappear. He does not even appear to have considered—at least not in public—the extent to which Christian education, understanding of the Bible and of theological arguments, and indeed of his own preaching depended on secular education. What Chrysostom is doing is instructing parents, especially fathers, to take a more direct part in the education of their children by providing them with a totally Christian upbringing at home, which will supplement and in important respects neutralize the educational impact of the traditional schooling, and of society at large. One hundred and fifty

⁷⁷ He is not opposed to training for public life, but this is not his concern. The only reference to public virtue is *Vainglory* 89: 'Let us teach him to attend to political affairs such as are within his capacity, and free from sin. If he serve in the army let him learn to shun base gain; so too if he defends the cause of those who have suffered wrong [as an advocate?], or in any other circumstances.' This reads like an afterthought. He leaves this aspect of education entirely to the father and tradition.

⁷⁸ *Ed. of Childr.* 7E (Bebbitt 34).

⁷⁹ Plutarch, *How the Young Man Should Study Poetry* (*De liberis educandis*).

⁸⁰ On Christian acceptance of pagan schools see H. I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité* (Paris, 1950), 425–31.

to two hundred years later the traditional education disappeared altogether—or at least was radically transformed⁸¹—together with many other features of life in the classical city. But in the age of Chrysostom this was not foreseen by anybody

(VI) THE STOIC PROGRAMME WITH A DIFFERENCE

Chrysostom always made his programme of moral transformation seem much less revolutionary than it actually was. As we have seen, he made his 'monasticism in daily life' sound very similar to the way of life advocated by the Stoics. The exhortation to be indifferent to what the majority think or do, and to renounce luxury, the insistence that for the true Christian there is no evil except sin, are strongly reminiscent of, for instance, Seneca, *Ad Helviam* 12.3, and of his *Ad Lucilium* 18.1–8, where Seneca advises Lucilius to keep the Saturnalia with sobriety, to discipline himself for three or four days at a time, wearing the roughest of cloaks, eating the roughest food, and sleeping on the hardest of beds: in short 'make poverty a companion.'⁸² But Chrysostom's ideal is not the same as that of the Stoics. He does not want to restrict austerity and renunciation to limited periods of training. He wants it to pervade the entire life, and his hearers are to renounce every kind of luxury and display. Above all they are to understand that their every action has a religious significance ('whether you eat or drink do all for the glory of God'),⁸³ and that every aspect of life should be shaped in obedience to God's will as revealed in the inspired Scripture. This goes well beyond anything the Stoics believed or demanded, but Chrysostom was nevertheless trying to persuade his audience that what he was demanding of them was a better and truer version of what had for generations been taught by Stoic and Stoically influenced philosophers. At the same time, Stoicism continued to shape his own thought, even though in

⁸¹ W. Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (Oxford, 2001), 244–7.

⁸² *Fiat nobis paupertas familiaris.*

⁸³ *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 10.31–2 (PG 61.86–8).

most of his writings the underlying Stoic background ideas are often completely overlaid by biblical texts and doctrines.⁸⁴

(VII) THE IMPACT OF CHRYSOSTOM'S SERMONS

The texts of many of Chrysostom's sermons appear to derive from shorthand reports made while he was actually speaking. They contain many references to the circumstances of a particular sermon, and include spontaneous comments by the preacher on the audience's reaction to what he had just said. It is clear that his congregations admired and enjoyed Chrysostom as a performer. Moreover, the huge popular demonstrations that followed his deposition showed that he had become extremely popular. But Chrysostom was far from satisfied with the practical results of his preaching.⁸⁵ His hearers continued to find chariot racing more exciting than church services and sermons, and they did not significantly change their way of life. This does not surprise us, and probably did not surprise him. Even in the comparatively easy matter of giving up swearing, he knew that he would change the behaviour of only a few of his hearers.⁸⁶ But Chrysostom was not the only preacher calling for a Christianization of life. Something like Chrysostom's message was conveyed by many preachers in many cities for many generations, and in the long run it did make a difference. It helped to bring about the 'end of Ancient Christianity', the transformation which can be illustrated by comparing the world views of Augustine with those of Gregory the Great.⁸⁷ In this way Chrysostom was not only a teacher, but in a sense a prophet. But the world in which many of his demands could be realized was a very different world from the world he knew. He certainly had no idea how different it would be.

⁸⁴ See also above, 143. The Stoic paradoxes can often be sensed behind passages in several of Chrysostom's sermons in which he preaches on the vanity of worldly wealth and power, e.g. in *Hom. in Col.* 7 (PG 62.347–9). Chrysostom is far from being the only Christian author to be strongly influenced by Stoicism: cf. Henry Chadwick, *Boethius: The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology and Philosophy* (Oxford, 1981), 228–34 on the Stoicism in Boethius' *Consolatio Philosophiae* 2.

⁸⁵ *In Lazaro* 1 (PG 48.963–5).

⁸⁶ *Hom. in Acta* 8.

⁸⁷ Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, *passim*.

Chrysostom's Attitude to the Classical City

(I) VAINGLORY (*Κενοδοξία*)

The pamphlet on the education of children begins with several chapters¹ criticizing the pursuit of what Chrysostom calls 'vainglory', which at first sight has little to do with children. For what Chrysostom attacks in these chapters is the seeking of the fame, glory, and applause by leading citizens who expend large sums on public spectacles in the hippodrome or theatre. The rejection of vainglory is part of the ascetic ethic. The monk separating himself from his fellow citizen must reject the glory and celebrity which reward worldly success, and be content with the satisfaction that comes from knowing that he is doing God's will, and the assurance that this will bring him heavenly reward. Paradoxically it was possible, and even common, for a monk to gain celebrity, applause, and personal authority through precisely the harshness of the ascetic discipline of his retreat from the world. But that is far from being the purpose of monastic retreat. Indeed it may entirely destroy the merit acquired by ascetic discipline.²

But of course the vainglory which Chrysostom attacks is not the acclaim which might be acquired by an ascetic, but the direct pursuit of glory and status in public life. To explain what he means he describes the glory sought by a civic official performing a liturgy who incurs heavy expenses in the preparation of a public show in order to hear the crowd of assembled spectator acclaim him as the patron and benefactor of the city, whose grand and lavish munificence

¹ Chs. 1–15.

² Evagrius Ponticus, *Eight Thoughts*, 7.1–21; *Thoughts*, 14, 15, and elsewhere.

is like 'to the copious waters of the Nile', while some will even say that 'in respect of the lavishness of his gifts he is what the Ocean is among waters'.³ Vainglory is like a courtesan, her appearance is brilliant, but what is behind the make-up is worthless. Another instance of the pursuit of vainglory attacked by Chrysostom is a lifestyle involving the wearing of extravagant clothes, and the keeping of a great house, with an abundance of bronze statues, and large number of servants, with a view to building up the owner's social status (*σχήμα*), through conspicuous consumption.⁴ Chrysostom insists that it must be the aim of education from the earliest years to make sure that the child will not pursue vainglory. Such pursuit is a seeking after 'external goods' which do not depend on us. The real goods, the goods which depend on us, and are under our own control, are the good actions of the soul, and these require us to despise 'vainglory', luxury and riches, and the honours conferred by the crowd, and to love poverty; to uphold goodness (*ἐπιείκεια*), and to exceed the limits that nature seems to have set us, by striving for and achieving a life dedicated to virtue (*Vainglory* 15).

It is Chrysostom's aim as educator to teach boys to despise applause, instead of training them to develop an appetite for it. This would seem a revolutionary objective, for Greek and Roman upper-class men had traditionally made it a principal aim in life to win glory for themselves and their family by spending money on public spectacles and the like, and this ambition was indeed the motive and driving force behind most kinds of public-spirited action. It might be thought—and it has indeed been suggested by Peter Brown⁵—that Chrysostom's teaching represents a radical rejection of the ethos of the classical city, and also of the classical Empire.

But I doubt whether Chrysostom or any other personality⁶ of late antiquity was consciously aware of the extent to which customs and

³ *De liberis educandis* 4.

⁴ *Ibid.* 13 ff.

⁵ P. Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (London, 1978), 306–19.

⁶ This includes the Pelagian writer who could write *tolle divitem et pauperem non invenies*, but had not given any thought to how this could be brought about, except by voluntary renunciation on the part of the rich, nor—at least so it would seem to me—did he have any expectation that this ideal would ever be realized. On the Pelagian *De divitiis* see S. Toscano, *Tolle Divitem: etica, societa e potere nel 'de divitiis'* (Catania, 2006).

ceremonies like the public games helped to stabilize the civic society, whose permanence they took for granted. The precise interrelation between 'mere ceremony' and social stability is not widely recognized even today. Moreover, if Chrysostom was aware that by attacking the competitive motivation of civic magnates he was undermining the foundations of the classical city, he hardly expected his preaching to be sufficiently effective to make a difference.⁷ In any case I doubt whether he gave much thought to the effects the full implementation of his teaching would have on the functioning of civic institutions. After all, he expressed indifference to the detrimental effect the widespread adoption of celibacy would have on the population. What mattered was that celibacy was preferred by God, and would help those who practised it to achieve eternal life in heaven. In the same spirit, he waged a lifelong campaign against the taking of oaths. The possible consequences to social life if oath taking, for instance in courts of law, was abolished do not interest him. If challenged, he might well have replied that, in the highly unlikely case of his preaching achieving the total abolition of swearing, the Lord would supply an alternative.

Chrysostom accepted both the city and the Empire. They were the basis of social life as he knew it, and he never tried to visualize life without them.⁸ Cities are gifts of God. Though they are not absolutely good, they are necessary because of human sin.⁹ Chrysostom's ultimate aim was to remake Antioch into what he considered a truly Christian city, with all its inhabitants living as Christian a life as they could manage. He points out that Antioch was where the followers of Jesus were first called Christians.¹⁰ Christianity was thus part of the traditional identity of the city.

⁷ When Christian preachers and writers exhorted their hearers to give away their wealth, or not to marry, or not to harbour political ambitions, or not to shun the theatre, they tacitly assume that their commands will be followed only by very few. They do not take seriously the consequences that would ensue if their recommendations became universal practice.

⁸ *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 34 (PG 61.291). He knows that man is not self-sufficient and that men need each other; that is why God 'founded cities, and brought all into one place'. See also *De stat.* 16.17 (PG 49.172).

⁹ *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 34 (PG 61.291).

¹⁰ *De stat.* 3.3; 14.6 (PG 49.48 and 153); *Hom in 1 Cor.* 21.9 (PG 61.178).

Of course Chrysostom wanted the pagan festivals and rituals together with the accompanying public spectacles to be abandoned altogether.¹¹ They are to be replaced by Christian festivals, particularly those commemorating the Antiochene martyrs, Babylas, Ignatius, Julian, and Drosis, and of the Nicene bishops Meletius¹² and Philogonius.¹³ The Nicene bishop Eustathius who died in exile and whose body was consequently buried in Thrace was similarly honoured as a martyr with a festival at Antioch.¹⁴ According to Chrysostom, Antioch was fortified on all sides by the relics of martyrs.¹⁵ Even the Maccabees, Jewish martyrs who had died rather than break the Jewish food laws, were revered as honorary Christians, and Chrysostom preached at their festival.¹⁶ Christmas was for the first time celebrated at Antioch in 386, and Chrysostom preached a sermon at that first service.¹⁷ Music was being given a more prominent place in the Christian liturgy. During the Arian period, Flavianus and Diodorus had assembled their partisans in martyria where they chanted hymns and psalms.¹⁸ These two men were the first to divide choirs into two parts and to teach them to sing the psalms of David antiphonally. Introduced first at Antioch, the practice spread in all directions, and penetrated to the ends of the earth,¹⁹ not least to Ambrose's Milan. Like Ambrose, Chrysostom encouraged the singing of hymns, arguing that while discussion produces conflict, song unifies. Singing the psalms helps people to understand their text.²⁰ There is no direct evidence that Chrysostom

¹¹ e.g. *Vainglory* 48–9: children to be named after biblical characters or saints rather than after ancestors, and the ceremony of giving names to candles and naming the child after the candle that has burnt longest should be abandoned.

¹² *Hom. de S. Meletio* (PG 50.513–20).

¹³ St Julian: PG 50.665–76; St Drosidis: PG 50.683–94; St Ignatius: PG 50.587–95; Philogonius: PG 48.747–56; Sancti martyres: PG 50.708–12. Calendar of Antiochene martyrs Soler, *Le Sacré et le salut*, 190–7.

¹⁴ *In S. Eustathium* (PG 50.597–606); *In Lucianum martyrum* (PG 50.519–26).

¹⁵ *De cemeterio et de cruce* 1 (PG 49.393).

¹⁶ *In sanctos Maccabaeos* 1–3 (PG 50.617–28); R. Ziadé, *Les Martyrs Maccabées: de l'histoire juive au culte chrétien. Les Homélies de Grégoire de Nazianze et de Jean Chrysostome*, *Vigiliae Christianae* Suppl. 80 (Leiden, 2007).

¹⁷ *Hom. in diem natalem* (PG 49.351–62 of 386).

¹⁸ Theodoret, *HE* 2.19.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 2.24; cf. Soler, *Le Sacré et le salut*, 207.

²⁰ *Hom. in Ps.* 41.1–2 (PG. 55.155–6, 7); *Hom. in Isaïam* 5 (PG 56.62): secular songs, the songs of the theatre, weaken self-control, drag down the courage of the

used singing to maintain the morale of his followers under pressure in the way Ambrose did, but then again there is none that he did not! Chrysostom certainly hoped to Christianize the ceremonial as well as the moral life of his city, but there is no reason to think that he ever considered the negative effect on the functioning of the city as a whole if the reforms he advocated were to be generally adopted.²¹

(II) THE CHURCH IN A CIVIC EMERGENCY: CHRYSOSTOM DURING THE RIOT OF THE STATUES

In 387 Antioch faced catastrophe. On 25 or 26 February a protest against increased taxation got out of hand. The house of one notable was set on fire, another only saved by the police. The lamps outside the public baths were cut down and the governor's palace threatened. The riot culminated in the overturning of images of the emperor Theodosius and his family in the centre of the town. Finally, the *comes Orientis* brought in some units of the army and quickly restored order.²² The insult to the imperial images, it was generally agreed, would be interpreted, and was indeed interpreted, by the emperor as an act of rebellion. A number of individuals, including some children, were immediately executed, and it was generally expected that worse was to come. It was widely feared that the city would be handed over to soldiers for plunder and destruction. There was a mass exodus.²³ Many of the fugitives fell victim to bandits. The emperor sent two judges to investigate the incident. Leading citizens were arrested, put on trial, and found guilty. They faced sentences of

soul, promote dissipation. But song is a human need. It cannot be abolished, but can be filled with Christian content. Fathers of families are to encourage regular psalm singing, especially after meals.

²¹ See Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity*, 110–13 on Chrysostom's sometimes low expectations.

²² Accounts of the riot: Libanius, *Or.* 19.27–37; 20.3; 22.4–9. Cf. R. Browning, 'The Riot of A.D. 387 in Antioch', *JRS* 42 (1952), 13–20.

²³ The inhabitants had every right to be terrified. Two years later units of the army were allowed to massacre thousands at Thessalonica after a general had been killed in a riot in the hippodrome. See above, 89–91.

capital punishment, which were however deferred for confirmation by the emperor. The city's baths and its theatres were closed, and its status of provincial capital transferred to Laodicea. Caesarius, one of the judges, returned to the emperor at Constantinople to report on the trial. It was probably on 10 April that the citizens learnt that the emperor had pardoned the city and its decurions.²⁴ According to Chrysostom the judges were moved to leniency by the intercession of monks of the neighbourhood, while the city owed its eventual pardon to the petition of its bishop.

Thanks to twenty-two sermons of Chrysostom, and four orations of Libanius, the Riot of the Statues is probably the best-documented urban riot in the whole of antiquity. For the present work the story of the riot is important because it illustrates the influence the Christian Church had achieved at Antioch, as well as some of the factors which had helped it to achieve that influence. Events on the day of the riot had begun with the leaders of the city assembling outside the governor's palace to protest at the recently announced increase in taxation. When this appeal met with no response the protesters, accompanied by a large crowd, which seems to have included the theatre clique (presumably chanting its customary acclamations followed by petitions), moved to the house of bishop Flavianus and demanded his support. This in itself is significant. Many evidently thought that the religious standing of the bishop would make him a more effective spokesman for the city than its secular leaders had been. The bishop listened to their appeal, and a day or two later set out for Constantinople to petition the emperor.

The episode took place during Lent, and Chrysostom's sermons cover the whole period. Chrysostom normally preached on Saturday or Sunday, or even on both days, but appears to have preached more frequently at times of special anxiety, as for instance during the panic immediately following the riot, and during the period of the trials. He certainly did his best to reduce panic, and restore hope among members of his congregation. The first sermon, which set the tone for the rest in the series, was actually delivered a few days before the

²⁴ Frank van de Paverd, *St John Chrysostom, the Homilies on the Statues* (Rome, 1991), has a very thorough analysis of the evidence. A chronological summary of the episode is on pp. 363–4.

riot.²⁵ Chrysostom starts by commenting on 1 Timothy 5: 23: 'Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine infirmities.' Chrysostom points out that Paul did not say 'use wine', but 'use a little wine'; and that he did this not because Timothy needed this admonition, but because we need it. For the immoderate drinking of wine does not produce fewer diseases than the drinking of water, but far more, and those severe, bringing upon the mind a war of conflicting passions and a tempest of perverse thoughts, and reducing the strength of the body. We should not say 'let there be no wine' but 'let there be no drunkenness', for wine is the work of God, but drunkenness is the work of the devil. Chrysostom then goes on to ask why it is that the good and the just are often allowed to undergo suffering that seems undeserved. Why did God permit so saintly a man as Timothy to fall into such a state of infirmity, and again, why is it that moderate and meek men are daily being dragged before a judge by men who are lawless and wicked, and why are men put to death upon false accusations? Chrysostom then gives nine possible reasons to account for the fact God often allows the just to suffer in this life. He considers that God cannot intend to deprive good men of the recompense of their labours. Eventually after the end of their life here, there must needs be a time when they will receive recompense for their present efforts. 'Let us therefore not call God lightly to account, but let us give him glory in all things.' Job is the model. If a man who has given many alms loses all he has, and gives thanks for his loss, he will draw down much greater favour from God. He will not receive twofold, as Job did, but a hundredfold in the life to come. But if the loser of money blasphemes (i.e. blames God for his loss) not only will he not regain his wealth, but he will suffer far worse, he will lose his soul. Chrysostom then calls on his congregation to root out blasphemy in the city, 'and should you hear any one in the public thoroughfare, or in the midst of the forum blaspheming God [which here I think means both blaming God, and taking his name in vain by swearing], reproach and rebuke him; and if it should be necessary to inflict blows, spare not to do so. Let the Jews and Greeks learn that the Christians are

²⁵ Did Chrysostom anticipate serious trouble which would result in suffering by the innocent? But a lesson from Job was probably read during Lent—as at Milan, see Ambrose, *Ep.* 76 (Maur. 20), 14.

the saviours of the city, that they are its guardians, its patrons and its teachers.'

Soon after Chrysostom had delivered this sermon, there occurred the overturning of the imperial images and the ensuing panic. Chrysostom continued his course of Lent sermons without changing his main themes. Men must not question the actions of God, for his purposes are beyond human understanding. God is accessible through prayer, but prayer must be accompanied by sincere efforts to fulfil the moral demands of the New Testament. Chrysostom regularly comments on the progress of the crisis, but the basic sequence of ideas remains the same as in the first sermon. Chrysostom interprets the day's reading from the Bible, he reminds his congregation, sometimes at considerable length, that the fact that guiltless individuals who have lived pious and charitable lives may suffer like Job and his seven sons and three daughters, and indeed like the inhabitants of Antioch if they were to suffer collective punishment for the insult to the imperial family, is no reason to accuse God of injustice. To bear suffering and still to praise God is to earn high merit, and will receive a correspondingly high reward in heaven. In any case, the worldly wealth and comfort which are threatened in the present crisis are really no advantage. Chrysostom explains at length that, if you compare their situations without bias, the rich are no better off than the poor. The poor man is free from the fear that he may lose his wealth. The poor man, because he is hungry, will enjoy his plain food more than the rich man his delicacies. The weary labourer will sleep more soundly than the rich man in his soft couch overlaid with silver.²⁶ As for the present situation, the only hope lies in patience and prayer. 'Let every man and woman whether meeting together in church or remaining at home call upon God with much earnestness. He will doubtless accede to these petitions.'²⁷ But prayer is not enough. If it is to be heard, it must be accompanied by energetic efforts at moral improvement. In this the Lenten fast will be an ally, but it must be a real fast, not just abstinence from meat but from sin too. 'If you see a poor man, take pity of him! If you see an enemy be reconciled to him! If you see a friend gaining

²⁶ *Hom. de stat.* 2.8 (PG 49.45). Some of this reminds one of Lucretius 2.20–36. Had Chrysostom read Epicurus?

²⁷ *Ibid.* 3.2 (PG 49.49).

honour, do not envy him! If you see a handsome woman, pass her by!’²⁸ In the case of the rich Chrysostom demands what he has demanded for the whole of his preaching life: that they give their wealth to the poor. There is another commandment which he repeats in practically every one of the sermons in this series: his congregation must give up swearing and refrain from taking any kind of oath. They are not only to abstain from swearing themselves, but also to make a serious effort to persuade their fellow citizens to do the same.

One may ask why in this dire emergency Chrysostom gives such supreme importance to the abolition of swearing. One reason is, of course, that this is explicitly and unambiguously commanded in the Bible. But another reason is that in these sermons Chrysostom is particularly concerned with sins of the tongue—not only swearing, but also blaspheming God and slandering men: ‘Let the mouth fast from disgraceful speeches and railing. For what does it profit if we abstain from birds and fishes, and yet bite and devour our brethren.’²⁹ Sins of the tongue are simple to formulate and, at least so it might seem, easy to avoid. In the third homily Chrysostom explains his educational procedure ‘Desire to fix three precepts in your mind . . . to speak ill of no one, to hold no one for an enemy, and to expel from the mouth altogether the evil custom of oaths . . . Let us correct each other . . . If we thus set our lives in order there will be deliverance from the present calamity. I think it is the best method of correction to take the law by parts . . . So if we achieve correct observance of these three precepts during the present Lent, we shall more easily also achieve the rest.’³⁰ Chrysostom is calling on the citizens of Antioch to make a very determined effort to live better lives, and so to seek to regain divine favour. He is in fact giving them an active role in the struggle to save themselves and their city from the great danger in which they find themselves. In a later sermon he tells his congregation that the fear of what might happen to themselves and their city has been more beneficial than his sermons. ‘How many words did we speak before this [i.e. before the riot and

²⁸ Ibid. 3.4 (PG 49.52–3).

²⁹ *Hom. de stat.* 3.7 (PG 49.58).

³⁰ Ibid. 3.7 (PG 49.59). Translation based on version in the *Library of the Fathers* of 1893.

the days of fear] in exhorting many that were listless, and counselling them to abstain from the theatre . . . and still they did not abstain, but they flocked together to the unlawful spectacles of the dancers, and they held their diabolical assembly in opposition to the fulness of God's Church. But behold now . . . they of themselves have shut up their orchestra, and the hippodrome has been left deserted . . . now they are all fled from the theatre to the church.³¹ He gives his hearers hope that the emperor will be merciful. For Theodosius is naturally merciful, but in any case he will be reminded of the ruler's duty to be merciful by bishop Flavianus.³²

In *Homily* 21 Chrysostom reports the words of a speech with which Flavianus had purportedly addressed Theodosius together with the emperor's reply to the speech. Chrysostom's message is that the pious emperor had yielded to the pleas of the holy bishop. As we might expect, the pagan Libanius took a different line. According to him, what decided Theodosius to pardon Antioch was the report of Caesarius. Both accounts are obviously tendentious. The most likely explanation is that Theodosius reached his decision after considering both the report of Caesarius and the plea of the bishop. We cannot now reconstruct what went on in the mind of Theodosius. But Theodosius had issued a decree of amnesty for Easter 387,³³ and we know from the emperor's relations with Ambrose that he was ready to accede to Christian arguments put forward by a bishop.³⁴ It is another question again, whether Theodosius yielded to bishops, or at least made it seem that he yielded to them, because he thought that to be seen to do so would be politically advantageous,³⁵ or because the bishops had genuinely touched his Christian conscience. However that might have been, there was at this time good reason to believe that, as far as Theodosius was concerned, a petition by bishop might be successful, where a petition going through secular channels might not.

³¹ *Hom. de stat.* 15.1, trans. E. Budge in *Library of the Fathers* edn. (1885).

³² *Hom. de stat.* 3 *passim*.

³³ *Hom. de stat.* 6.3 (PG 49.84; cf. 21.3 (PG 49.217) and Van de Paverd, *St John Chrysostom, the Homilies on the Statues*, 51–4. Was it *Const. Sirmond*. 8?

³⁴ See above, 90.

³⁵ Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, 107–8.

In the classical city public religion provided procedures for upholding public morale at times of danger or emergency. At Rome the priests interpreted prodigies or entrails of sacrificial animals to obtain guidance as to how the peace of the gods could be restored, and current dangers overcome. The experience of Julian the Apostate had shown that at Antioch the old civic religion no longer worked. A substitute was needed. Chrysostom's *Homilies on the Statues* show that this function was now being performed by church services. In any case, quite apart from the impact of preacher and liturgy, the church was becoming the place where the authorities could communicate with the governed. During a moment of growing panic in case units of the army were about to be let loose on the city, Celsus the governor of Syria, a pagan incidentally, came into Chrysostom's church to reassure the congregation.³⁶

³⁶ *Hom. de stat.* 16.1 (PG 49.161–2).

Chrysostom on Church and State¹

In the sermons after the Riot of the Statues Chrysostom had to deal with the overwhelming power of the emperor, who, if he so decided, could order the destruction of any city of the Empire. It was not the first time. Chrysostom had previously experienced the impact of the emperor's power in the field of religion. He had seen first Constantius II, and later Valens, hand over the churches of Antioch to the *Homoians*, and later still Theodosius hand them back to the Nicenes. He had also lived through Julian's brief attempt to revive the pagan cults and to give them back their traditional status in public life and ceremony. These experiences almost compelled Chrysostom, both as an individual and as a priest, to formulate views about the function of the Empire and the proper attitude of a Christian, and especially of a priest, to the emperor and his government.

Probably the earliest treatment by Chrysostom of the monarchy is the *Comparison of a King and a Monk*, dated by Kelly 368–9, and by Hunter to 378.² This treatise is not related to any actual political situation. It is an apology for the monastic life, essentially an application to the ascetic life of the Stoic paradox that virtue is the sole good, and the only basis for true happiness, and that wisdom is the only true freedom and wealth.³ The monk's life represents the fulfilment of Christian philosophy. It is a life governed by virtue. There-

¹ Much material in Isabella Sandwell, 'Christian Self-Definition in the Fourth Century AD: John Chrysostom on Christianity, Imperial Rule and the City', in I. Sandwell and J. Huskinson, *Culture and Society in Later Roman Antioch* (Oxford, 2004), 35–58.

² See above, 129.

³ Cf. e.g. Cicero, *Paradoxa stoicorum*.

fore the condition of a monk is superior to that of a king. This little pamphlet still reads rather like a school exercise.

Somewhat later, perhaps in 383,⁴ Chrysostom wrote the treatise *de S. Babyla, contra Iulianum et gentiles*.⁵ In this treatise he describes how the bishop Babylas of Antioch prevented an unnamed emperor from entering his church because the emperor had murdered a child hostage.⁶ At the same time he stresses that the bishop's courageous remonstrance was expressed in moderate and diplomatic language. Chrysostom presents the bishop's behaviour as an example for priests to follow. If he has sinned even an emperor must be reprimanded, but the reprimand must be delivered with tact and moderation.⁷

Chrysostom returned to the theme of the relations of priest and emperor in the *Homiliae in Oziam*.⁸ The sermons are reflections on Isa. 6: 1 and Chr. 26: 16–20. Of these sermons nos. 2, 3, 5, and 6 seem to date from 386/7.⁹

The text on which the sermons are based tells how king Uzziah of Judah wished to enter the temple of the Lord to burn incense. But

⁴ Circa twenty years after Julian (PG 50.567); but see also above, 149.

⁵ PG 50.533–72; critical edition and French trans. by M. Schatkin in SC 362 (Paris, 1990).

⁶ Authenticity of the story has been doubted, but is accepted by M. Schatkin, in her edition in *Sources chrétiennes*. That the sin to be expiated was the killing of a hostage is unique to Chrysostom's version. Eusebius, in *HE* 6.34, calls the emperor Philip, but does not identify the sin. In *Chron. Pash.* 1.503.9–504.6 the emperor is Decius, and the killing of Gordian III is the sin. According to Malalas 12.303.5–305.2 Numerian was the emperor excluded from the church, and the reason was that he was a pagan. I wonder whether the hostage killing is a topical allusion which might provide a date for the treatise.

⁷ Eusebius, *HE* 6.39.

⁸ The theme dominates only in *Homily* 5. In *Homily* 3 Chrysostom is not so much concerned to emphasize the *parrhesia* of the priest as to rebuke arrogance, as exemplified by the behaviour of the king.

⁹ They do not in fact belong together. *Homilies* 2, 3, 5, and 6 were spoken consecutively, but nos. 1 and 4 are linked neither to the others nor to each other. Both seem to have been composed at Constantinople. It has even been argued that *Homily* 4 is not by Chrysostom at all, but by some much later preacher who imitated Chrysostom's style, and more specifically the homilies in *Oziam*. As we have seen *Homily* 5 seems to be earlier than the *De sacerdotio*, which it seems to anticipate, and this has led to the conclusion, accepted by Kelly, that *Homilies* 2, 3, 5, and 6 were written not long before the *De sacerdotio*, and at Antioch 388–90. Dumortier (*Ed.* 11–12) points out that Chrysostom claims inexperience as a preacher (2.3 (66–71); 3.5 (56–9)), which suggests that the sermons were spoken soon after his ordination in 386. He suggests late 386 to early 387.

Azariah, the priest, and the priests that were with him stopped the king and told him that he was not entitled to burn incense in the temple; only the sons of Aaron, the priests, were entitled to do so. The king had done wrong and must leave the sanctuary. When the king persisted he was struck with leprosy. Chrysostom's sermons provide a commentary on the story, pointing out successive moral lessons that are to be learnt from it.¹⁰ What was the essence of the king's offence? It was arrogance (*ἀπόνοια*). For arrogance is the root of all evils. It is the state of mind that caused the devil to fall from heaven. It is arrogance that makes men trespass beyond the limits set to them by God.¹¹ Even awareness of one's own virtues can result in arrogance, which in turn leads to sin, as it did in the case of king Ozias, who had reigned with exemplary piety before he disastrously overstepped the limits set to him. While arrogance drives even the most pious into sin, humility (*ταπεινοφροσύνη*) enables even sinners to earn forgiveness.¹²

The Bible focuses on the offence of the king, but in the fourth sermon Chrysostom gives at least equal attention to the courage shown by the priest, who ignored royal pomp and power, and who considered himself the stronger because he was defending God's law.¹³ He enlarges upon the greatness of the priest's office which, as he asserts, surpasses that of a king.¹⁴ Moreover according to Chrysostom the basic offence of the king was not his wish to burn incense, but his insistence on entering the sanctuary of the temple, which only priests were allowed to enter.¹⁵ A year later, after the Riot of the Statues, when the people of Antioch were awaiting the judgement of the emperor in fear and trembling, Chrysostom reminded them of

¹⁰ *Homily* 3.3–4.

¹¹ Here the meaning of *ἀπόνοια* seems to be close to *hybris*. Neither *ἀπόνοια* nor *ταπεινοφροσύνη* occur in the treatise on the education of children. Cf. biblical vocabulary of arrogance: Mark 7: 20 *ὑπερηφανία*; Rom. 11: 23 *ὑψηλάφρονουντες* humility: Matt. 18: 4 *ὁστις ταπεινώσει ἑαυτὸν*.

¹² *Hom.* 4.4.

¹³ *Hom.* 5.2 (131). 'There is nothing weaker than a man who treads the divine laws under foot, but nothing more powerful than one who defends the divine laws.'

¹⁴ *Hom.* 5.1 (*PG* 56.130–1): 'You will see that the position of a priest is much higher than that of a king... God has made even the royal head subject to the warnings of the priest.'

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 'He broke into the holiest of holy, a place that is forbidden to all but the high priest.'

the greatness and authority of the priesthood of bishop Flavianus who had gone to Constantinople to plead for them: 'For if he (the bishop) has received authority to loose sins committed against God, much more will he be able to take away and blot out those that have been committed against a man. He is himself a prince, and a prince more dignified than the other [the emperor Theodosius]. For the sacred laws place under his hand even the royal head. And when there is need for a good thing from above, the emperor is accustomed to fly to the priest, not the priest to the emperor. He (the priest) too has his breastplate, that is righteousness.'¹⁶

Throughout his preaching life Chrysostom emphasized the superiority of things heavenly over the things of this world: 'If you are a Christian no earthly city is yours... we are enrolled in heaven and our citizenship is there.'¹⁷ He never leaves any doubt that the emperor and his court are among the things of this, our inferior, world. He points out that in important ways it was better for the Church when the emperors persecuted it than when the end of persecutions allowed Christians to relax. While they were persecuted they were more sober minded and kinder, more earnest.¹⁸ Christianity was superior to paganism precisely because it did not need to be shored up by human honours, and in fact did better without the support of emperors.¹⁹

Eusebius²⁰ and Ambrose²¹ assigned to the Roman Empire a role in God's design for the world, for, as they argued, it was the existence of the Empire that had made the worldwide expansion of Christianity possible. Chrysostom did not privilege the Empire in that way. For him it was merely the last stage before the arrival of Antichrist.²² He

¹⁶ *Hom. De stat.* 3.6.

¹⁷ *De stat.* 17.12 (PG 49.178): 'If you are a Christian no earthly city is yours. Though we gain possession of the whole world, we are but strangers and sojourners in it. We are enrolled in heaven. Our citizenship is there.' *Hom. in 2 Cor.* 16.5 (PG. 61.518): 'We are by nature sojourners... if we are intent on being citizens here, we shall be citizens neither here nor there.'

¹⁸ *Hom. in 2 Cor.* 26.4 (PG 61.580).

¹⁹ *S. Bab.* 41–2 (PG 50.544).

²⁰ *Oratio de laudibus Constantini* 16.4; earlier Melito in Eusebius, *HE* 4.26.7–8; Origen, *C. Celsum* 2.30.

²¹ Ambrose, *Hom. in Ps.* 45.21 (CSEL 64. 343–4).

²² *Hom. in 2 Thess.* 4.1 (PG 62.486).

preserves some of the detachment of the age of persecutions. For instance, he advises that Christians should try to resolve disputes among themselves through priests, and not in the public courts.²³

But at times he could speak about the emperor and the empress in extremely enthusiastic terms, most strikingly in two sermons celebrating the presence of the empress Eudoxia, and, on the following day, of the emperor Arcadius, at church services honouring a martyr. When he preached these sermons, Chrysostom was contributing to the Christianization of public ceremony: church attendance by the emperor or empress was gradually becoming part of the regular imperial ritual. It is, of course, difficult to say how far Chrysostom's rhetorical enthusiasm was diplomatic, and how far it expressed real joy at this public display of Christian piety by the imperial family. However he did not forget to use the imperial presence at his service to draw a moral. He points out that when the emperor comes to church to pay his respect to the martyrs, he comes without his diadem, and his armed guards lay down their shields and spears. In other words, Chrysostom emphasizes that the emperor himself is aware of his infinite inferiority to the martyr, and of the humility that he owes him.²⁴

On other occasions Chrysostom points out how much misery accompanies the pomp of court, how some emperors have been murdered, and what disasters the imperial house has in the past inflicted on itself.²⁵ He stresses that to be brought up among the luxury and indulgence of court is the worst possible education. It is likely to make a man more unreasonable than a wild animal. Hardship and setbacks are the whetstones of our character.²⁶ He cites the fact that the emperor Theodosius, after the Antiochenes had offended him in the Riot of the Statues, had threatened to destroy the city of Antioch with all its people. He comments: 'Such are the whims of royalty. They indulge in power to the extent that they wish;

²³ Homily 'Against Publishing the Errors of Brethren' (PG 51.357).

²⁴ Emperor and Empress venerate the martyr: PG 63.473–7, Ibid. 467–72. Neil McLynn, 'The Transformation of Imperial Churchgoing in the Fourth Century', in S. Swain and M. Edwards (eds.), *Approaching Late Antiquity: The Transformation from Early to Late Empire* (Oxford, 2004), 235–70.

²⁵ *Hom. in Phil.* 15.5 (PG 62.295).

²⁶ *Hom. in Act.* 54.33 (PG 60.378).

power is so great an evil.²⁷ What makes an emperor great is not his power, but his piety: 'We owe a debt to Theodosius not because he was emperor but because he was pious, not because he wore the purple but because he was armed in Christ.' Chrysostom's injunction to abstain from swearing applies to all, even to the ruler: 'If any man refuse to conform to this order, that man I, by my word as with a trumpet's blast, do prohibit to set foot over the church's threshold, be he even the prince himself. Either depose me from this station or, if I am to remain, expose me not to danger' (i.e. to the danger of punishment by God if he fails to enforce God's commandment against swearing).²⁸

This belittling of monarchy and its pomp²⁹ is not, and could not be, the whole story, because the power of the emperor and his representatives was a dominant fact in the world in which Chrysostom and his congregation lived, and the exercise of imperial power was the source of such peace, order, and justice as existed: 'Since vice was a thing apt to dissolve and subvert our race, God set those who administer justice in the midst of our cities as a kind of doctors that drive away vice.'³⁰ Courts and rulers are necessary: 'If you were to abolish the public tribunals you would abolish all order from our life... If you deprive the city of its rulers, we must lead a life less rational than that of brutes, biting and devouring one another, the rich man the poorer, the stronger the weaker.'³¹ So Chrysostom fully endorses Paul's teaching that 'the Powers that be are from God'.³² Paul does not mean that every ruler 'is from God', but only that the institution of monarchy is. His argument is that in this respect rulership is like marriage. The institution of marriage is ordained by God, but not every married couple has been joined by him: 'For we see many that come to be with one another for evil, even by the

²⁷ *Hom. in Col.* 7 (PG 62.347).

²⁸ *Hom. adversus. Catharas.* 6 (on anniversary of death of Theodosius) (PG 63.491–4). Warning to ruler: *Hom. in Act.* 8.3 (PG 60.74).

²⁹ The tombs of martyrs are more splendid than the imperial palace, and in his tomb (in St Apostles at Constantinople) Constantine is only the doorkeeper of fishermen (i.e. apostles) (*C. Judaeos et gentiles*, PG 48.825); also *Hom. in 2 Ep. ad Cor.* 26.10 (PG 61.582).

³⁰ *Hom in 1 Cor.* 34.7 (PG 61.291).

³¹ *De stat.* 6.1 (PG 49.81–2).

³² *Hom in Rom.* 23 (PG 60.613–22). The commentaries on Romans were probably composed at Antioch: Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 91.

law of marriage, but we should not ascribe this result to God.³³ So it is with the powers that be. Chrysostom explains that Paul insists on the need to obey the authorities, because at that time, and later, Christians were accused of causing sedition.

But this does not mean that that his endorsement of Paul's injunction that Christians must submit to secular rulers was no more than tactical. He is emphatic that Paul's commandment remains valid. He certainly sought to obey it himself. This is very clear in the sermons he delivered after the Riot of the Statues at Antioch.³⁴ It is significant that in these sermons he told his congregation that they all bore responsibility for what had been done, and that the emperor therefore had every right to punish them severely. Chrysostom did not for a moment question the right of the emperor to inflict the punishment he chose. Even if to those punished the punishment seemed undeserved, it was part of the inscrutable will of God, to question which would be sinful, and in any case individuals are not the best judges of their own guilt: "The emperor threatens to punish the innocent. I was not present!" For that very reason you will be punished, because you were not present, and did not check the rioters.³⁵ What the people must do is accept the whole situation as sent by God as a punishment for their sins, and make every effort to change their way of life to one more pleasing to God.

Grob-Albenhausen argues that the message of the sermons in which Chrysostom insists on the superiority of the priest or the monk over the secular ruler are incompatible with the sermons in which he upholds Paul's 'the powers that be are ordained by God', and with his condemnation of resistance in the sermons preached after the Riot of the Statues. According to him the Riot caused Chrysostom to change his mind, and to become more sympathetic towards the claims of the state.³⁶ I do not think that this hypothesis is necessary. The apparent contradiction is to be explained by the distinction between the realms of the sacred and the secular. Both Ambrose and Chrysostom were

³³ *Hom in Rom.* 23 (PG 60.613–22).

³⁴ See above, 209–15.

³⁵ *De stat* 2.4 (PG 49.58).

³⁶ K. Grob-Albenhausen *Imperator christianissimus: Der christliche Kaiser bei Ambrosius und Johannes Chrysostomus*, Frankfurter althistorische Beiträge 3 (Frankfurt, 1999), 144–203.

aware that the Empire and the state are necessary, and, at a worldly level, beneficial.³⁷ They knew very well, even from personal experience, how much their Church had to gain from the favour of the emperor, and how much to lose if he turned against it.

I do not think that either Chrysostom, or Ambrose for that matter, ever saw it to be part of their duty to preach resistance to secular misgovernment. But both would not have hesitated for a moment to preach resistance to any infringements of what they considered the rights of the Church. A good ruler must, of course, do everything he possibly can to uphold Nicene Christianity, even though this might be disagreeable to those of his subjects who did not accept the definition of Nicaea, or to Jews, and even harmful to the interests of the Empire as a whole. Chrysostom was certain that he must in all circumstances ensure that God received the things which were God's. Of course it must always be a problem where to set the boundary between what is God's, and what is Caesar's. But for Chrysostom—as for Ambrose—there was no question that to hand over a church for use by the Arians was an offence against God, which must be resisted to the utmost. This was the principle which Chrysostom was to uphold in the Gainas affair.³⁸

³⁷ See Tiersch, 2002, 190–6 for a balanced account of Chrysostom's view of the emperor and secular administration.

³⁸ See below 227–31.

Chrysostom and the Imperial Court

(I) BISHOP OF THE IMPERIAL RESIDENCE

After Chrysostom had become bishop of Constantinople in 397, he came into direct contact with the court. As bishop of the capital more was expected of him than simply to look after his congregation. It was certainly an important part of his remit to win more followers for the emperor's religion, Nicene Christianity, which was relatively weak at Constantinople.¹ In this task he was actively supported by the empress Eudoxia, a remarkable woman, the daughter of the Frankish general Bauto² and his Roman wife. She had been brought up in the house of a son of Promotus,³ one of the leading generals of Theodosius, and in close contact with Theodosius' own children.⁴ The powerful head of the imperial bedchamber, the eunuch Eutropius, who was to use his influence to get Chrysostom elected bishop of Constantinople, is said to have also arranged Eudoxia's marriage to Arcadius in 395. She gave birth almost annually, and in January 400 Arcadius promoted her to the rank of Augusta.⁵ No sooner had Chrysostom been consecrated than he set out energetically to reform

¹ Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, 157–65; C. Tiersch, *Johannes Chrysostomus in Konstantinopel (398–404)* (Tübingen, 2000), 111–12 points out that Chrysostom's earliest sermons at Constantinople suggest that he felt he was addressing a minority: *Sur l'égalité du Père et du Fils*, *Hom.* 111, 14–27 (*S. Chr.* 396, 288), 324–9 (*ibid.* 314).

² *PLRE* 1.159–60.

³ *Ibid.* 750–1. His widow Marsa became a passionate opponent of Chrysostom (*Palladius, Dial.* 4 (*PG* 47.16)).

⁴ *PLRE* 2.410.

⁵ K. G. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1982), *Life* 48–78, *Augusta* 65–7.

both the administration and the ethos of the Church of Constantinople.⁶ At the same time he took measures to tighten the provincial organization of the Church, by extending the disciplinary power of the bishop of Constantinople over the bishops of neighbouring provinces. The fact that he was able to depose the bishop of Ephesus and numerous other bishops of the province of Asia in 401 shows that at this time he enjoyed the firm support of the emperor.⁷ The expansion of the authority of the bishop of the residence was evidently imperial policy.⁸

At Constantinople, ecclesiastical business and secular politics were closely interwoven. The eunuch Eutropius had brought about Chrysostom's appointment to the see of Constantinople, but when he issued a law which limited the Church's privilege of asylum,⁹ he faced Chrysostom with a dilemma. Should he ignore this encroachment on the privileges of the Church, or was he going to oppose it, and if the latter, ought he to limit his opposition to private conversations or to oppose the measure openly? It seems that he decided on private conversation, but did not dissuade Eutropius.¹⁰ Later, in summer 399, Eutropius fell into disgrace and himself sought asylum in the Great Church. Now Chrysostom had to decide how far he ought to protect a man who was being persecuted by the emperor at the instigation of the establishment and the army.¹¹ Chrysostom compromised. He gave Eutropius asylum, but he also preached a sermon in the course of which he criticized the eunuch as a man who had been an enemy of the Church, whose fall could serve as a moral lesson to the congregation. Two years later in 401, Porphyrios, the bishop of Gaza, came to Constantinople to ask permission to destroy the principal temple of that city: he applied to Chrysostom for

⁶ Palladius, *Dial.* 5, PG 47.19–21; Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 115–27.

⁷ Tiersch, *Johannes Chrysostomus in Konstantinopel*, 309–26.

⁸ Cf. the letter of Gratian and Valentinian II extending the jurisdiction of the pope (*Coll. Avellana ep.* 13 and Libeschuetz, *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches*, 244–8).

⁹ Socrates, *HE* 5.5; Sozomen, *HE* 8.7.

¹⁰ *In Eutropium* (PG 52.392).

¹¹ *Ibid.* (PG 52.391–6). Both the relevance to Eutropius and the genuineness of a second homily, traditionally entitled *De capto Eutropio* (PG 52.396–414), have been doubted. On Eutropius and his fall see Tiersch, *Johannes Chrysostomus in Konstantinopel*, 264–80.

support for an action which would anger the pagan citizens of Gaza, who had always been good taxpayers. Chrysostom replied that he was at that moment on bad terms with the emperor and the empress, and he therefore advised Porphyrios to seek the support of Eudoxia's eunuch Amantius, who had great influence with his mistress. Porphyrios duly approached Amantius, and through him gained the support of the empress Eudoxia, and eventually also the emperor's permission to organize the destruction of the Marneion at Gaza.¹²

There was at least one occasion when the emperor exploited the prestige of his bishop on a mission that was entirely secular. Arcadius was in a very difficult position. His army was to a large extent made up of barbarian federates. Their commander was a Goth called Gainas. Gainas was a powerful figure. In late summer 399 Gainas had made a condition of his taking up the command against the rebellious general Tribigild that Arcadius must dismiss the man who in practice seems to have been his confidant, the eunuch and master of the imperial bedchamber, Eutropius. Eutropius was duly dismissed and executed. Later (in my opinion in December 399),¹³ Gainas marched on Constantinople, and compelled the emperor to dismiss and to surrender into his custody three of his principal advisers, the praetorian prefect Aurelianus, the very distinguished retired general Saturninus, and the *comes* John. Gainas spared the men's lives, but exiled them to a remote Balkan province.¹⁴ A praetorian prefect was appointed who was agreeable to Gainas. But some time later relations between Arcadius and Gainas broke down. Gainas left the capital, and on 12 July 400¹⁵ a large number of Gothic soldiers and their families were massacred in Constantinople.¹⁶ A state of war existed between the emperor and a large part of his

¹² *Vita Porphyri* 32–54 (ed. H. Grégoire and M. A. Kugener, *Collection Byzantine* (Paris, 1930)), discussed by Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 168–70.

¹³ Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, 107–8; 264–7. Alan Cameron and Jacqueline Long, *Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius* (Berkeley, 1991), 161–75 argue that the coup took place in spring 400.

¹⁴ On their return from exile they disembarked in Epirus (Zosimus 5.23). Their exile was therefore not under direct supervision of Gainas, but of that of some provincial commander.

¹⁵ *Chron. Pasch.* sa 400.

¹⁶ Synesius, *De providentia* (*Egyptian Tale*), 2.3; Socrates, *HE* 6.6; Sozomen, *HE* 8.4.

army and Gainas was declared a public enemy, Chrysostom was sent to Gainas in a last attempt at reaching a settlement, and to obtain the return of the exiles.¹⁷ The mission was unsuccessful, but the fact that it was thought worthwhile to attempt it at all shows that the bishop of the capital would inevitably become involved in secular affairs. Whether he liked it or not, he was part of the political establishment.

In these circumstances the question of what was the duty of a bishop *vis-à-vis* the emperor, and indeed the empress, was no longer an academic one. The strategy of promoting the ascetic morality which he had adopted as a priest in his sermons at Antioch, irrespective of social consequences, regardless of whom he might offend, and heedless of the complications that he might create for himself and others, was not appropriate for a bishop of Constantinople. This was shown very clearly in Chrysostom's confrontation of the general Gainas.

(II) THE GAINAS AFFAIR

Gainas was, as we have seen, a general of Gothic origin who was in command of the units of the army, mainly barbarian federates stationed in and around Constantinople. Gainas and many of his Gothic soldiers were *Homoians*, whom Chrysostom, and of course the imperial laws, treated as Arians. As such they were not allowed to have a church within the city. Some time in March 400,¹⁸ Gainas asked the emperor to allow him to have the use of a church in the city, where he and his Gothic troops could attend *Homoian* services,

¹⁷ The dating of this mission after the massacre of the Goths at Constantinople has been argued by me in Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, 191–2, basing the argument on Theodoret, *HE* 5.33; Synesius, *De providentia* (*Egyptian Tale*), 1268; and *Cum Aurelianus et Saturninus acti essent in exilium* (PG 52.413–20). Tiersch (*Johannes Chrysostomus in Konstantinopel*, 300–4) agrees; but Cameron and Long (*Barbarians and Politics*, 173–5, 192) and G. Albert (*Goten in Constantinople* (Paderborn, 1984), 151–79) link the mission with Gainas's original coup, which they date to April 400.

¹⁸ I have argued for this date in my *Barbarians and Bishops*, 258. In Sozomen, *HE* 8.4, the episode coincided with the appearance of a comet, which Chinese sources record from 19 March to well into April.

within the walls of the city. We are exceptionally well informed about subsequent events. Each of the ecclesiastical historians Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret has an account. Their histories were written more than thirty years after the event, but we also have the account of 'Pseudo-Martyrius', composed soon after Chrysostom's death in 407, and the nearly contemporary *De providentia* of Synesius. This is not the place to discuss the differences between these authorities. The central episode is clear. Gainas complained to Arcadius that it was not right that he and his troops should have to leave the city every time they wished to attend a service; that is why he was asking the emperor for a church to be made available within the walls. Arcadius felt inclined to grant the request, but asked Gainas to attend a second time to receive his final decision. When Gainas duly appeared before a meeting of the consistory, so did Chrysostom, accompanied by a number of bishops. Chrysostom then opposed the granting of the church. His argument was that to concede a church would contravene the law of Theodosius, the father of Arcadius, which forbade Arians to hold assemblies within the city.¹⁹ He charged Gainas with ingratitude in that he, a man who had entered the Empire as a deserter and fugitive, and had nevertheless risen to the high rank of commander in chief and consul designate, was not satisfied with what he had achieved, but was asking the emperor to break a law of his own father, and to dishonour God. We are told that Gainas abandoned his request. Chrysostom had won, but it was a Pyrrhic victory.

Chrysostom's behaviour was criticized. Socrates cites it as an example of how he made enemies, and he blames Chrysostom for being rude to Gainas gratuitously. Socrates has a point. From our point of view it was perfectly reasonable for Gainas to make this request on behalf of the men who were after all defending the Empire.²⁰ Furthermore Gainas commanded large forces, both in the city itself and just outside it, and had recently forced the emperor to dismiss and exile three prominent politicians. It was dangerous, and from a secular point of view irresponsible, to provoke so power-

¹⁹ Sozomen, *HE* 8.7; Joh. Ant. frg.189.

²⁰ Socrates, *HE* 6.5.

ful a figure. Chrysostom will have known this. He was not a fool. Why did he risk serious trouble?

It seems that when Chrysostom was acting in the role of priest and moral teacher, he was oblivious of reasons of state. Chrysostom judged the actions of a public figure, acting in a public capacity, by precisely the same standards as he did those of a private person, acting privately. Even an emperor must be held to the same rules of morality as any private individual. In his judgements of members of the imperial house Chrysostom considers only the private morality of the imperial personalities. That a ruler who has done wrong has acted in his political or military capacity, and quite possibly for the public good, is no justification as far as Chrysostom is concerned. A good king is characterized by self-control and rejection of luxury, and by his humanity (*φιλανθρωπία*). The real ruler is not the one who has the title, but the one who can rule himself.²¹

It is likely enough, though it cannot be proved, that when Chrysostom decided to intervene in the Gainas affair, he consciously followed the example set by Ambrose in 385–6, when the latter refused to hand over a church at Milan for a service which the emperor and his Gothic soldiers could attend. In both cases the demand for a church was made at Easter, the most important date in the Christian calendar. Ambrose was in fact the bolder of the two bishops, because he refused to hand over a church for a service which would be attended not only by soldiers, but also by the emperor's mother and the emperor himself. But unlike the intervention of Chrysostom, Ambrose's initiative had no bad consequences for himself.

There surely was more to this episode than our sources tell us. For Pseudo-Martyrius' narrative clearly has the apologetic tendency to clear Chrysostom of an accusation which was evidently being made, namely that by his intervention against Gainas Chrysostom had in some way betrayed both Church and state. Unfortunately Pseudo-Martyrius does not tell us on what grounds precisely Chrysostom's behaviour had been construed as treasonable.²² The alleged treason

²¹ *Hom in Act.* 52.5 (PG 60.366)—once more echoing a Stoic paradox.

²² The treason charge was added to the report of the bishops of the Council of the Oak after they had already deposed Chrysostom simply for failure to appear at the

cannot have been simply that Chrysostom's *parrhesia* had destroyed good relations between Gainas and Arcadius, because the historian's emphasis on Chrysostom's *parrhesia* is clearly defensive, and is intended to refute the charge. The accounts of both Pseudo-Martyrius and Sozomen, who seems to have used Pseudo-Martyrius, are designed to prove that Chrysostom did not betray emperor and Church. Consequently neither provides any information which would enable us to understand why some people concluded that Chrysostom had been guilty of just that. There is something missing from their accounts, and we can only speculate what that is. We do however have a piece of evidence which suggests that Chrysostom may have been less uncompromising than the narratives of Pseudo-Martyrius, Sozomen, and Theodoret suggest. For, as was mentioned earlier,²³ within six months of this episode Chrysostom travelled to Gainas's camp in Thrace to negotiate the release of the three captive politicians, as well as a settlement between Gainas and the East Roman government. Thus in spite of his apparently uncompromising rudeness in the consistory, it was apparently still thought that Chrysostom was the Roman who was most likely to get a favourable response in negotiations with Gainas. People evidently believed that personal relations and mutual respect between Chrysostom and Gainas had not been destroyed. Perhaps Chrysostom had proposed a compromise which is not mentioned in sources which are clearly slanted to show him as an unrelenting opponent of everything 'Arian'. For instance, Chrysostom might perhaps have permitted also some 'Arian' services to be held in the church which he had assigned to the Goths who accepted the Nicene creed, and in which he had occasionally preached himself.²⁴ However that may be,²⁵ the outcome was tragic. For when the population and garrison of the city

hearing. The accusation was that he had allegedly called Eudoxia Jezebel (Palladius, *Dial.* 8 (PG 47.30)). It therefore had nothing to do with Gainas.

²³ See above, 226.

²⁴ See also now Dolezal, 'Johannes Chrysostomos and the Goths', *Acta Universitatis Carolinae Pragenses* 2 (2006), 165–85.

²⁵ Synesius, *De providentia* 1256–7, perhaps implies that some compromise with the Arians had been made, although he only states that something of the kind was proposed, not that it was implemented. Socrates, *HE* 6.5, criticizes Chrysostom's rudeness to Gainas, but his narrative does not suggest that Gainas's request was granted in any way.

rose against the Goths, those caught within the walls took refuge in the church, where they were burnt alive.²⁶ If there were people who thought that Chrysostom's opposition to Gainas's request was in some ways treasonable, the outcome of his subsequent mission to Gainas cannot have restored his reputation.²⁷ For the embassy was evidently unsuccessful. Peace between Gainas and Arcadius was not restored. The three politicians eventually returned to Constantinople from their exile, but they returned with feelings of deep resentment against Chrysostom.²⁸

(III) THE UPS AND DOWNS OF CHRYSOSTOM'S RELATIONSHIP WITH EUDOXIA UP TO THE SYNOD OF THE OAK

As we have seen earlier, Chrysostom found it difficult to come to terms with women who exercised power outside the household, and he was obviously also deeply suspicious of female attractiveness. This psychological handicap proved disastrous at Constantinople, where he could not avoid having dealings with the great ladies of the court, and not least with the energetic and powerful empress Eudoxia.²⁹ Chrysostom nevertheless did not cease to attack the vanity of women. Women endanger their souls by their love of dress and make-up,³⁰ and they will also endanger the souls of men, unless men protect themselves by keeping the dangerous habits of women in check.³¹ Half seriously he claims that the vanity of women is so

²⁶ The burning of the church must have created an extremely difficult situation between Chrysostom and the court. Our sources are completely silent about this.

²⁷ Theodoret, *HE* 5.33, with Synesius, *De providentia (Egyptian Tale)* 1268 and Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, 191–2.

²⁸ Zosimus 5.23. Since the exiles returned by ship to Epirus, their exile had not involved life with Gainas's army, but banishment from the Eastern Empire.

²⁹ On this formidable and fascinating lady see Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 48–78; Eudoxia is said to have persuaded Arcadius to dismiss the eunuch Eutropius (Philostorgius, *HE* 11.66; cf. Sozomen, *HE* 8.7).

³⁰ *De virginitate* 61–2.

³¹ *Homilia in Heb.* 29.3 (*PG* 63.206–7), also *Homilia in Col.* 7.5.

great that, if they were able, they would gold-plate their hair, lips, and eyebrows.³² Yet, if the empress dressed in her golden apparel could be seen standing next to Paul, the prisoner bound with chains, no one would look at the empress. The congregation would admire Paul, a truly great man in fetters, more than a woman adorned with golden chains, which was after all a commonplace sight in the theatre, the baths, and processions.³³ Remarks such as these did not make him popular with the ladies at Constantinople.

Chrysostom's relationship with the empress were complex, eventually disastrous, yet also tragic. One feels that the catastrophe was unnecessary, and largely the result of mutual misunderstanding. Chrysostom blamed principally Eudoxia for his trial. The fragmentary version of a sermon he delivered before going into exile³⁴ has some violent attacks on Eudoxia. He compares her to Jezebel, to Job's wife, to Herodias, and to the wife of Potiphar.³⁵ 'Yesterday you called me thirteenth apostle, today Judas. Yesterday you chose to sit next to me, today you leap at me like a wild beast.'³⁶ On the other hand it is also clear that at the beginning of his episcopate there developed a quite close relationship between bishop and empress, when the two were allies in the fight against Arianism. When Chrysostom organized choirs to march in procession through the streets of Constantinople, singing hymns to counter Arian processions, Eudoxia paid for silver crucifixes and wax candles to be carried in the processions, and she lent Chrysostom the services of her eunuch Briso to supervise the event.³⁷ Even though Eudoxia eventually was to contribute significantly to Chrysostom's downfall, her behaviour towards the bishop on a number of occasions shows that she also greatly admired and venerated him. For all the uncertainty Chrysostom displayed in relations with women, he was not a woman-hater. His relationship with Olympias was one of real friendship, and surely very much more

³² *Homilia in Col.* 7.5.

³³ *In Col.* 10.4.

³⁴ On the problem of their authenticity see below, 241–2.

³⁵ PG 52.431–2, 437–8.

³⁶ *Cum iret in exilium*, PG 52.437. Ps.-Martyrius 542b abuses Eudoxia. According to this supporter of Chrysostom she was neither woman nor man, dissipated, greedy, corrupt, arrogant like the devil, with a sting like that of a scorpion.

³⁷ Sozomen, *HE* 8.8.

equal than the relationship between Jerome and the ladies who were his disciples.³⁸

The deterioration of relations between Chrysostom and Eudoxia can to some extent be reconstructed. In 398, or soon after, Chrysostom praised Eudoxia effusively for her humility in joining a procession escorting relics. But early in 401 Chrysostom incurred her hostility because he had accused her of seizing somebody's property.³⁹ It may be that this was the occasion when Chrysostom was supposed to have compared Eudoxia to Jezebel, the remark which was made the basis of a charge of treason at the Synod of the Oak.⁴⁰ According to Theodore of Trimithus and Pseudo-George of Alexandria, writing in the seventh century, Eudoxia seized the estate of a widow of a condemned senator.⁴¹ But this quarrel did not last. On 6 January 402 Chrysostom baptized Eudoxia's son, the later Theodosius II.⁴² Immediately after began a troublesome affair involving bishop Severian of Gabala. Before leaving Constantinople for Asia, to settle problems of ecclesiastical discipline at Ephesus and elsewhere, Chrysostom encouraged Severian to preach in his place at Constantinople.⁴³ In consequence a serious conflict developed between Severian and Chrysostom's official deputy, the deacon Serapion. When Chrysostom returned some time after Easter 402, he took the part of the deacon, and ordered Severian to leave the city. Eudoxia countermanded his order. Public rioting ensued, presumably in support of Chrysostom. The disturbance must have been considerable. When Eudoxia tried to get Chrysostom to make peace with Severian, he resisted. Finally Eudoxia came into the Church of the Apostles, placed baby Theodosius II on Chrysostom's knee and again pleaded with him, swearing several oaths, to make peace with Severian. Chrysostom held out for a little while, but then gave in. The reconciliation of the bishops was treated as an act of

³⁸ Chrysostom, *Lettres à Olympias. Vie anonyme d'Olympias*, introd., texte crit., trans., notes, A.-M. Malingrey (Paris, 1968).

³⁹ *Vita Porphyri* 37.

⁴⁰ Palladius 8. (PG 47.30). Cf. Ps.-Martyrius 543 on alleged *φύλαργυρία* of Eudoxia.

⁴¹ F. Halkins, *Douze récits byzantins sur Jean Chrysostome* (Brussels, 1977), 191–204.

⁴² Sozomen, *HE* 8.18.5; cf. Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 172.

⁴³ Socrates, *HE* 6.11.4–6; Sozomen, *HE* 8.10, gives as a motive for his coming to Constantinople the possibility of earning donations for his church by preaching.

significance, celebrated by two days of public festival.⁴⁴ Not long before, during his intervention in the affairs of the Church in Asia, Chrysostom had ordained Eudoxia's tutor Pansophius bishop of Nicomedia, an act which was much criticized.⁴⁵

A couple of months later, on 24 June 402, Eudoxia, while driving in her carriage, was successfully petitioned by a group of exiled Egyptian monks, the so-called 'Long Brothers', to support them in their case against Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria.⁴⁶ As a result of her intervention, the emperor ordered Theophilus to come to Constantinople to answer the charges of the Long Brothers in court, and he instructed Chrysostom to preside over the trial. Chrysostom clearly would have liked to help the Egyptian monks,⁴⁷ but knew that he would not only be contravening canon law, but that it would also be extremely dangerous for himself if he intervened in affairs of the diocese of Egypt, and so incurred the hostility of the powerful patriarch of Alexandria. He had in fact already refused to take up the case of the Long Brothers personally,⁴⁸ and had made several efforts to reconcile the monks with Theophilus.⁴⁹ Now, as a result of Eudoxia's intervention, he was precisely in the situation which he had carefully tried to avoid ever since the Long Brothers had arrived at Constantinople around autumn 401.⁵⁰ Eudoxia's intervention was in no way motivated by hostility to Chrysostom, but it set off the succession of events which led to his downfall.

(IV) EUDOXIA AND THE FALL OF CHRYSOSTOM

Theophilus did not tamely submit to the emperor's command. He delayed his journey to Constantinople while he prepared a counter-attack, directed against Chrysostom. He got in touch with

⁴⁴ Sermons of both Chrysostom and Severian survive. *PG* 52.423–6, 425–8.

⁴⁵ Sozomen, *HE* 8.6.

⁴⁶ Palladius, *Dial.* 8 (*PG* 47.26).

⁴⁷ See below, 235–6.

⁴⁸ For details see Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 196 ff., 215.

⁴⁹ Palladius *Dial.* 7; Sozomen *HE* 8, 13.

⁵⁰ Palladius, *HL* 24.

Chrysostom's opponents in Constantinople and began to assemble material for a case against their bishop. He also persuaded Epiphanius, the venerable and widely respected bishop of Salamis on Cyprus, to travel to Constantinople and to attempt to get Chrysostom condemned for Origenism.⁵¹

Chrysostom did not go in for the construction of metaphysical systems, and his sermons did not propagate any elements of specifically Origenist theology.⁵² But the Long Brothers whose case Chrysostom seemed to have taken up were under the influence of Origen, particularly in their insistence that the divine nature is wholly spiritual and incorporeal. This was why Theophilus had launched his attack, when he assembled a council of bishops to excommunicate them as Origenist heretics. Moreover the Long Brothers had lived in close contact with Euagrius Ponticus at Kellia, not far from Nitria in the desert south-west of the Nile Delta,⁵³ and Euagrius was certainly strongly under the influence of Origen.⁵⁴ We are told that Ammonius, one of the Brothers, was particularly close to Euagrius,⁵⁵ and also that he knew by heart numerous lines of Origen, and of Origen's follower Didymus the Blind.⁵⁶ We have already seen Chrysostom's ascetic ideas bear some resemblance to those of Euagrius Ponticus.⁵⁷ Whether this resemblance was due to direct influence of these near contemporaries on each other, or whether both followed a common ascetic tradition, is difficult to decide. However, it is surely no coincidence that two followers of Chrysostom, Heraclides, his deacon, whom Chrysostom appointed to the see of Ephesus,⁵⁸ and Palladius⁵⁹ whom Chrysostom appointed bishop of Helenopolis and who was to become his biographer, had both spent time with

⁵¹ On the condemnation of Origen see E. A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early-Christian Debate* (Princeton, 1992).

⁵² The accusation of Origenism was not in fact raised at the Synod of the Oak.

⁵³ Palladius, *HL* 10.1; 38.10. On the site, its church, doctors, bakers, hostel for pilgrims, and linen weaving of monks, see *ibid.* 7.4.

⁵⁴ N. Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford, 2004), 240.

⁵⁵ Palladius, *HL* 24.2, 11.5; Socrates, *HE* 4.23.

⁵⁶ Palladius, *HL* 11.4.

⁵⁷ See above, 164.

⁵⁸ Sozomen, *HE* 8.6.

⁵⁹ *HL* 18 (nine years).

the Long Brothers at Kellia. It is likely that Cassianus, another deacon of Chrysostom, and Germanus who in 404 travelled to Rome to rally support for Chrysostom, had also spent some time in the same Origenist environment in Egypt. Cassianus and Germanus later went to Gaul, where Cassianus propagated the ascetic ideas of Euagrius in his *Conferences*. So there was a *prima facie*, even if circumstantial case for linking Chrysostom with Origen which Theophilus could try to exploit with a view to having Chrysostom condemned as a heretic.

Epiphanius arrived at Constantinople in April 403, and immediately set out to undermine Chrysostom's legitimacy as bishop. But he failed and soon returned to Cyprus where he died on 12 May. It was around now that Chrysostom delivered a passionate sermon against the vanity of women, in which he seems to have illustrated what female vanity might lead to by citing the example of queen Jezebel, who had Naboth falsely accused and stoned to death, so that her husband, king Ahab, could seize Naboth's vineyard. According to Socrates, Chrysostom composed this sermon with Eudoxia in mind, because he believed some people who had told him that she had supported Epiphanius. Sozomen is uncertain whether there was in fact any connection between the sermon and the visit of Epiphanius,⁶⁰ for the sermon was about the vices of women in general, not about any particular woman. However, some members of Chrysostom's congregation evidently thought that the sermon had been aimed at Eudoxia. This interpretation seems to have been reported by enemies of Chrysostom to Eudoxia, who believed them, and was duly enraged by this mischievous report. Eudoxia would have had

⁶⁰ Sozomen, *HE* 8.16. The accounts of Socrates and Sozomen are not incompatible. That the sermon played an important part in Eudoxia's decision to turn against Chrysostom is accepted also by Sozomen. The only difference is that Sozomen makes it clear that if Chrysostom did indeed believe that Eudoxia had encouraged Epiphanius, he was mistaken. That is quite likely. It would confirm that Chrysostom was not in close contact with the court, something which is also suggested by Palladius' biography. Eudoxia had met the Long Brothers and introduced them to Epiphanius, and they convinced Epiphanius that they were not Origenists. Chrysostom may well have heard of this interview, but in a garbled version. He may well have resented Eudoxia's intervention in an ecclesiastical dispute, and his indignation at this intervention will have been fanned by the garbled account of her relations with Epiphanius.

every reason for anger, because she had in fact refused to support Epiphanius. What had happened was that Epiphanius offered to save the life of her sick child on condition that she withdrew her support from Chrysostom, but she had rejected him with the words, 'You have not the power to raise the dead, otherwise your archdeacon would not have died.'⁶¹ So Eudoxia had re done her considerable best to foil the intrigue of Epiphanius. Nevertheless the anger of Eudoxia at such seeming ingratitude on the part of Chrysostom cannot be a complete explanation of her husband's, the emperor's, decision not to try Theophilus, but to put Chrysostom on trial instead,⁶² for Arcadius did not change his policy before the arrival of Theophilus at Constantinople, three or four months later.

Theophilus finally arrived at Constantinople late in August 403.⁶³ None of the clergy of the city went out to welcome him, because they knew that he was an enemy of their bishop. This suggests that the emperor was still thought to be on Chrysostom's side. In fact Arcadius even now reminded Chrysostom that he must proceed with the trial of Theophilus. But Chrysostom refused, as we read in his letter to pope Innocent.⁶⁴ It was this refusal which, according to Tiersch,⁶⁵ was the turning point. It was then well into September 403. The emperor accepted the charges against Chrysostom which Theophilus had assembled, and ordered him to be tried by a council of bishops. At this point Eudoxia was one of Chrysostom's chief opponents. But this was the result of a series of misunderstandings, and not based either on principle or on personal loathing.

Chrysostom and Eudoxia were both highly emotional people. Eudoxia obviously had great admiration for Chrysostom, and was quite ready to humiliate herself before him as a supplicant,⁶⁶ as she was to do when she recalled him from his first exile. But she was also

⁶¹ Sozomen, *HE* 8.15.

⁶² Socrates, *HE* 6.14–15.

⁶³ The time when the grain fleet from Egypt normally arrived at Constantinople.

⁶⁴ *Ep. 1 ad Innocentium* in Palladius, *Dial.* 2 (*PG* 47.9): 'Aware as I was of the laws of our fathers respecting and honouring this man, having moreover in my hands a letter of his which demonstrated that judicial cases may not be tried outside the territory of their origin, but that matters affecting each province should be settled within that province, I refused to act as his judge...'

⁶⁵ Tiersch, *Johannes Chrysostomus in Konstantinopel*, 345–6.

⁶⁶ Socrates, *HE* 6.11: Eudoxia begs Chrysostom to be reconciled with Severian.

very conscious of her dignity and of the respect owed to her as Augusta. It seemed to Eudoxia that Chrysostom had simply ignored this. She undoubtedly became very angry, and her anger may well have been an important factor in the success of the intrigue of Chrysostom's secular and clerical enemies. But again this hatred did not last. Chrysostom's exile was very short,⁶⁷ and what really decided that Chrysostom would be tried and condemned was the fact that the emperor Arcadius had turned against him.

(V) WHY DID ARCADIUS TURN AGAINST CHRYSOSTOM?

There is no evidence that Chrysostom attempted to build up personal relations with the emperor Arcadius. In this he was unlike Ambrose who corresponded with Gratian over theology, used his diplomatic skills in the service of Valentinian II, and probably saved the latter's throne by diplomacy. His relationship with Theodosius I was more distant, but he always kept in close contact with the court. As a result he was extremely well informed about what went on there. It was only for a short time after the episode of the synagogue at Callinicum that he stayed away. Chrysostom, on the contrary, evidently kept himself very much to himself.⁶⁸ His sermons are not critical of Arcadius, either specifically or by allusion, but, as we have seen, he made it clear that his God-given duty as moral reformer made him a potential critic of the emperor as much as of anybody else. But it is evident that Arcadius strongly supported Chrysostom for a long time. He yielded to Chrysostom over the Arian church. He sent Chrysostom to negotiate with Gainas. He must have supported Chrysostom's intervention in the affairs of the diocese of Asia. Even in the affair of the Long Brothers his first intention was that Chrysostom should preside over the trial of Theophilus of Alexandria. It

⁶⁷ See below, 244.

⁶⁸ Palladius, *Dial.* 19 (PG 47.67): 'It was rare for him to enter into company, except in church. He was irritated at lengthy interviews with those who desired it.' Cf. *ibid.* 18 (PG 47.62).

was only after Chrysostom had refused to judge Theophilus that Arcadius quite suddenly reversed his policy, and had Theophilus try Chrysostom. It was this change of front by the emperor which made it certain that Chrysostom would be condemned. Why did he do it? My answer—necessarily a simplification—would be that at Constantinople itself and in neighbouring provinces there was a powerful coalition of secular magnates, bishops, clerics, and monks who for different reasons wanted to get rid of Chrysostom.⁶⁹ It is likely that Chrysostom's behaviour during the Gainas affair had incurred serious criticism.⁷⁰ On at least two occasions popular support for Chrysostom had led to disturbances in the streets of Constantinople.⁷¹ Chrysostom was a controversial reforming bishop.⁷² He had antagonized the monks of Constantinople when he tried to get them under the disciplinary control of the bishop.⁷³ He had difficulties with his clergy, a few of whom had hoped to be elected themselves, from the start of his episcopate. His moral regime was unpopular. He dismissed some clerics,⁷⁴ and handed others over to secular courts for trial. His efforts to centralize church finance were extremely unpopular.⁷⁵ He cut subventions with which the see of Constantinople had subsidized bishops of some other cities. He intervened in neighbouring dioceses and deposed bishops for misconduct. In this he was almost certainly encouraged by the emperor, but his actions upset accepted hierarchies, and made him extremely unpopular with his colleagues.⁷⁶ Chrysostom's episcopate had been

⁶⁹ W. Liebeschuetz, 'Friends and Enemies of John Chrysostom', in *From Diocletian to the Arab Conquest* (Aldershot, 1990), no. V = Ann Moffatt (ed.), *Maistor: Classical, Byzantine and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning* (Canberra, 1984), 85–111.

⁷⁰ See above, 228–31.

⁷¹ Anti-Arian processions lead to street fighting: Sozomen, *HE* 8.8; serious popular demonstrations of support against Severian: the homily *De recipiendo Severiano* (PG 52.426), see also above, 233.

⁷² On his efforts to reform clerical morals, ecclesiastical finance, and the trouble-making mobility of monks of Constantinople and the reactions to his efforts see Tiersch, *Johannes Chrysostomus in Konstantinopel*, 135–82.

⁷³ Sozomen, *HE* 8.9.

⁷⁴ Socrates, *HE* 6.4. Ps.-Martyrius 156–7 (PG 498b–499a).

⁷⁵ Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 141. Tiersch, *Johannes Chrysostomus in Konstantinopel*, 152–60.

⁷⁶ Palladius, *Dial.* 14 (PG 47.47–51); Ps.-Martyrius 70, Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 172–80, and Tiersch, *Johannes Chrysostomus in Konstantinopel*, 309–26.

filled with controversy and conflict, and so Arcadius decided to drop him.

The careers of both Ambrose and Chrysostom show that by the end of the fourth century close cooperation between the emperor and the bishop of his residence could be of great benefit to both parties. Not only holy men, but also venerated bishops of the great cities now exerted great influence in all ranks of society.⁷⁷ But the relationship was inherently unstable. The emperor's power was absolute. His will—in theory at least—was law, so that panegyricists could define his imperial role as 'living law'. It cannot have been easy even for a truly Christian emperor to tolerate the exercise of independent power by the bishop of his capital, particularly if the bishop was active, highly popular, and outspoken, as was the case with both Ambrose and Chrysostom. Coexistence was made more difficult by the fact that the traditions which guided the policies of bishop and emperor were different, even opposed. In the past bishops had been persecuted by emperors. Moreover the morality taught by bishops did not allow exemption for reasons of state. Coexistence, never mind cooperation, required considerable tact on both sides. Ambrose clearly knew exactly how far he could go and what restraint was required. He managed to combine cooperation with criticism. But even he did not find it easy.⁷⁸ Outspokenness, as it was practised by Ambrose and Chrysostom, was rare as long as the Empire lasted, and it was probably only made possible by particular political constellations.⁷⁹ Arcadius was aware of the advantages of cooperating with Chrysostom. After all, his first decision was that Chrysostom should be the judge of Theophilus, not the other way round. It was only when Chrysostom, urging canon law, refused to judge his colleague that Arcadius went over to the side of Chrysostom's enemies. Chrysostom's refusal was surely not the fundamental reason why Arcadius turned against him,⁸⁰ but it may well have been the last straw.

⁷⁷ Summarized below, 268.

⁷⁸ This is well shown in McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*.

⁷⁹ See below, 259–61.

⁸⁰ So Tiersch, *Johannes Chrysostomus in Konstantinopel*, 345–6.

(VI) DID CHRYSOSTOM CONTEMPLATE
RESISTANCE AFTER THE SYNOD OF THE OAK?

The verdict of the bishops of the Synod of the Oak was that Chrysostom was to be deposed. The bishops' sentence was immediately reported to the emperor Arcadius, and confirmed by him on the spot. But for some time no action followed. This was because rioting broke out, and Chrysostom's supporters crowded into and around the cathedral, and prevented imperial officials from making an arrest. This situation continued for three days.⁸¹ What was Chrysostom's reaction to these events? He certainly did not accept the verdict. He had never recognized the jurisdiction of the Synod. He had refused to obey no fewer than four summonses to appear before the bishops.⁸² He insisted that in accordance with canon law he ought to be tried by a larger and less prejudiced court. About six months later, sometime after Easter 404, and before he went into exile a second time, he wrote to pope Innocent I, urging him to call a larger council to review the judgement of the Synod of the Oak. Among the surviving works of Chrysostom is a sermon entitled *Antequam iret in exilium*, which he probably gave during the interval between his condemnation and his departure into exile, probably on the second day after the verdict.⁸³

Unfortunately the sermon has come down to us in a badly damaged state. The text as we have it is certainly very corrupt.⁸⁴ For instance, Chrysostom is first reported to have rejected with indignation the accusation that he had eaten before administering baptism: 'If I baptized after eating food, may I not be named among bishops.' In a later passage, however, he defends what he had just denied by arguing that Jesus had given communion to his disciples after the

⁸¹ Sozomen, *HE* 8.18.

⁸² Chrysostom may have remembered Ambrose's refusal to appear before the imperial consistory, which was to adjudicate his dispute with the *Homoians* (Ambrose, *Ep.* 75 (Maur. 21)).

⁸³ Tiersch, *Johannes Chrysostomus in Konstantinopel*, 351–2.

⁸⁴ The text is preserved in fragmentary versions PG 52.429–32 (*Antequam iret in exsilium*); and *ibid.* 431–6 (*Cum de expulsionem ageretur*) and a Latin version of the preceding piece: 435*–438 (*Cum iret in exsilium*). On it see Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 230–1.

Last Supper.⁸⁵ Clearly Chrysostom would not have contradicted himself so blatantly in the same sermon. Nevertheless, the first part of the preserved text, which has no personal attacks, is generally accepted as genuine. The authenticity of the second part, with its violent attacks not only on Eudoxia but on women in general, has been doubted. It has survived in two versions which resemble each other, but are not identical. Kelly, following Seeck and Lietzman, argues that our text is made up of bits and pieces of the sermon as they were remembered by different listeners. *Sit nomen Domini benedictum* (May the lord's name be blessed),⁸⁶ the sentence from Job cited in the disputed second version of the second part, undoubtedly figured in the original sermon. For in the sermon Chrysostom delivered at Constantinople after his return he mentions that he had quoted this sentence before leaving to go into exile.⁸⁷ So even the second part of the sermon as transmitted in these questionable versions is at least in part based upon what Chrysostom had said. However, it is clear that the text of these versions is too uncertain to be pressed.

Nevertheless, if Seeck, Lietzmann,⁸⁸ and Kelly are right about at least the first part of our text, we can use it to reconstruct the situation in Chrysostom's cathedral after the Synod of the Oak. It would appear that there was a crowd in the cathedral, keeping watch day and night.⁸⁹ Chrysostom was still undecided whether to stay in his cathedral and to challenge the authorities to force him out, or to leave voluntarily and to go tamely into exile.⁹⁰ He prepared his

⁸⁵ PG 52.431 and 435*–436*.

⁸⁶ PG 52.438.

⁸⁷ PG 52.441.

⁸⁸ O. Seeck, *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt*, 5 vols. (Berlin, 1910–13), 5.361 and 591 n. 31; H. Lietzmann, s.v. Ioannes 55 (Johannes Chrysostomos), *PW* 9.2 (1817–28).

⁸⁹ 'You have kept watch for so many days and nothing has weakened you, fear not threats...' (τοσαύτας ἡμέρας ἐγρυπνήσατε καὶ οὐδὲν ὑμᾶς ἔκαμψεν... οὐ φόβοι, οὐκ ἀπειλαί (PG 52.430, similarly 436).

⁹⁰ 'But if it had not been for your love, I would not today have asked your leave to depart. If God wishes that to happen, let it happen, if God wishes me to stay here I consider it a favour' (Καὶ εἰ μὴ διὰ τὴν ὑμετέραν ἀγάπην, οὐδὲ σήμερον ἂν παρηγησάμην ἀπελθεῖν... εἰ βούλεται θεὸς τοῦτο γενέσθαι, γινέσθω, εἰ βούλεται ἐνταῦθα εἶναι με, χάριν ἔχω (PG 52.430).

congregation for the second possibility, telling them that they would always be present with him in his thoughts,⁹¹ even if he were to leave them, but he also expresses readiness to undergo martyrdom.⁹²

Details of the sermon recall what Ambrose said in sermons during his dispute with the empress Justina in 385–6. Chrysostom did not take his congregation into his confidence as to precisely what accusations he was facing, just as Ambrose had been careful not to spell out to his congregation what exactly was to be decided at the tribunal which he was refusing to attend.⁹³ Ambrose too had urged his congregation not to worry, since their bishop would not abandon his congregation.⁹⁴ Both Chrysostom and Ambrose make the devil responsible for the present crisis,⁹⁵ and both refer to Jezebel, Herodias, and Job,⁹⁶ though not in support of exactly the same argument. Both cite Job's wife: 'Curse God and die!' (*Dic verbum contra dominum et morere*).⁹⁷ That themes used by Ambrose recur in the sermon of Chrysostom could be the result of the two bishops finding themselves in similar situations, but it remains quite likely that Chrysostom had read Ambrose's sermons, or had otherwise heard about Ambrose's conflict with Justina. Chrysostom did not of course in the end sit it out as Ambrose had done. On the third day Chrysostom slipped out of church and voluntarily surrendered to an official (the *curiosus*).⁹⁸ This is Sozomen's version, but according to his own letter to Innocent I, he was arrested in the middle of the city, while being escorted through the streets by the whole populace.⁹⁹

⁹¹ 'Wherever I will be there you will be also, and where you are there will I be too' (ἢ ὅπου ἐγὼ, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐκεῖ, ὅπου ὑμεῖς ἐκεῖ καὶ ἐγὼ (ibid.).

⁹² 'I am ready to be slain on your behalf ten thousand times' (ἐγὼ μυριάκις ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν σφαγῆναι ἑτοιμὸς (PG 52.430), cf. Ambrose, *Ep.* 75A (Maur. 21A), 1.

⁹³ The accusations he mentions in the *Cum iret in exilium* version of the speech (PG 52.435*) are quite different from those he faced at the Synod of the Oak (listed in Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 299–301). Similarly Ambrose in the sermon *Ep.* 75A (Maur. 21A) is vague about the issues to be discussed in the tribunal to which he has been summoned.

⁹⁴ Ambrose, *Ep.* 75A (Maur. 21A), 1–21.

⁹⁵ Ambrose, *Ep.* 76 (Maur. 20), 15, Chrysostom, PG 52.429.

⁹⁶ Ambrose, *Ep.* 76 (Maur. 20), 14–16, 18; Chrysostom, PG 52.431–2; 437–8.

⁹⁷ Job 2: 9; Chrysostom: PG 52.438; Ambrose: *Ep.* 76 (Maur. 20), 16.

⁹⁸ Sozomen, *HE* 8.18.

⁹⁹ Palladius, *Dial.* 10.

(VI) CHRYSOSTOM AND EUDOXIA: RECALL AND
FINAL EXILE

Chrysostom was taken under guard to the harbour of Constantinople, from where a boat took him across the sea of Marmara to Praenetos, situated between Helenopolis and Nicomedia.¹⁰⁰ At Constantinople people protested violently at the exiling of their bishop.¹⁰¹ There was a frightening earthquake shock,¹⁰² and some serious incident happened in the palace. The evidence of our sources is not clear, but they perhaps suggest that Eudoxia had a miscarriage.¹⁰³ The decision was quickly taken to recall Chrysostom. Eudoxia sent her chief chamberlain, the eunuch Briso, to Chrysostom, with a note begging the bishop to return from exile: 'Your holiness must not think that I knew about what happened. I am innocent of your blood. Wicked and depraved men have worked this plot against you. I am weeping, as God whom I worship is witness. I remember your hands baptized my children.'¹⁰⁴ At first Chrysostom refused. He insisted—correctly—that according to canon law a bishop deposed by a council of bishops could only be recalled by a council. But the situation in Constantinople grew worse. A band of monks hostile to Chrysostom occupied the cathedral in protest at the decision to have him recalled, only to be expelled with bloodshed by units of the army.¹⁰⁵ These circumstances induced Chrysostom to change his mind and to return to Constantinople, and after a brief hesitation, also to resume his episcopal duties. The sermon which Chrysostom delivered on this occasion has been preserved. In it he recalls how Eudoxia had humbled herself by begging him to return, and he went on to praise the empress as 'mother of the Church', 'sustainer of the monks', 'patroness of the saints', and 'supporting

¹⁰⁰ For the story of Chrysostom's recall see Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 232–7.

¹⁰¹ Socrates, *HE* 6.16; Sozomen, *HE* 8.18.

¹⁰² Theodoret, *HE* 5.34.

¹⁰³ Palladius, *Dial.* 9 (PG 47.30); Ps.-Martyrius 69.

¹⁰⁴ *Post reditum* (PG 52.445).

¹⁰⁵ Ps.-Martyrius 79; *Sermo post reditum* 3 (PG 52.444); *Ep. ad Innocentium*; Palladius, *Dial.* 2 (PG 47.8–12, relevant 10); Zosimus 5.23.

staff of the poor'. Good relations between Eudoxia and Chrysostom had been restored.

Chrysostom himself most unwisely provoked his disastrous final clash with Eudoxia, after a silver statue of the empress Eudoxia had been erected just outside his cathedral. The event was celebrated with theatrical shows involving mimes and dancers, and these were subsequently to be repeated, perhaps annually.¹⁰⁶ Chrysostom was exceedingly angry. It is likely that the noise accompanying the performances disturbed services in the cathedral. The fact that the festivities were in honour of a powerful woman only made them more objectionable. In view of Chrysostom's passionate and regularly repeated demand that members of his congregation must not attend the theatre, establishment of a new theatrical event just outside his cathedral must have looked to him like a deliberate snub. Socrates suggests that in the circumstances Chrysostom should have petitioned the court to stop the games.¹⁰⁷ But he was so angry that he forgot the need for diplomacy and tact, and proceeded to preach a sermon in which he strongly attacked the people who came to watch this celebration of the empress. This not surprisingly annoyed Eudoxia, and she promptly threatened to call a synod of bishops to review the canonicity of Chrysostom's resumption of his episcopal duties.¹⁰⁸ Thereupon, Chrysostom delivered a sermon which began with the words 'Again Herodias raves, again she dances, and again desires to receive John's head on a charger.'¹⁰⁹ Even if he did not intend this phrase to be taken for an explicit attack on Eudoxia, his previous experience should have told him that she would certainly see it as one. I suppose it is possible that he relied on his popularity, and thought that he could sit out any storm that might be raised by his *parrhesia*. He would have been right to assume that he had the people behind him. Awareness of Chrysostom's popularity did

¹⁰⁶ Sozomen, *HE* 8.20; Socrates, *HE* 6.18.

¹⁰⁷ Socrates, *HE* 6.18.

¹⁰⁸ After a bishop had been deposed by a council, it was doubtful whether he could canonically resume his duties unless the judgement had been reversed by another council. Chrysostom's sentence had not been so reversed.

¹⁰⁹ R. Brändle, *Johannes Chrysostomus, Bischof, Reformator, Märtyrer* (Stuttgart, 1999), 128 and n. 71 points out that perhaps Chrysostom did not refer to Eudoxia at all, but meant only to signify in a rhetorical way that the festival of John the Baptist had come around again. But was there a festival of John the Baptist in autumn?

indeed make the authorities reluctant to depose him once and for all, but it did not in the end save him from deposition and exile.

The controversial sermon seems to have been delivered in November 404. At Christmas that year the emperor notified Chrysostom that he and Eudoxia would not attend St Sophia for the Christmas service, as had been their habit. Moreover Arcadius declared that he would not take communion with Chrysostom before a synod of bishops had formally legalized his resumption of his episcopal duties.¹¹⁰ A schism between the followers of Chrysostom and his opponents was developing. Chrysostom's opponents saw that the Easter baptisms would give him an opportunity to demonstrate the strength of his following, and they asked Arcadius to depose him before that could happen. So the emperor convened a synod sometime before Easter which duly did the deed. Chrysostom was forbidden to hold any more services in St Sophia. He obeyed, but the duty of Easter baptizing was taken over by his clergy.¹¹¹ On 17 April 405 assemblies of ordinary citizens and of catechumens waiting to be baptized by clergy loyal to Chrysostom were dispersed by force with considerable bloodshed.¹¹² Chrysostom was confined to his palace. The court was still reluctant to use force to expel him from the city. It was evidently hoped that he would depart voluntarily. Eudoxia herself is said to have asked him to go, saying that she would take responsibility. He replied that every man is responsible for his own actions, and that he could no more shelter behind her than Adam had been able to blame his sin on Eve, or Eve hers on the serpent. The situation recalls that of Ambrose during his conflict with Justina, and Chrysostom may well have been aware of this. He may have hoped to prevail as Ambrose had prevailed. But Arcadius at Constantinople was stronger than Valentinian II at Milan. In that city the Arians were

¹¹⁰ See Socrates *HE* 6. 18; Sozomen *HE* 8. 20.

¹¹¹ Where did the baptisms take place? Brändle (*Johannes Chrysostomus, Bischof, Reformator, Martyrer*, 129–30) and Kelly (*Golden Mouth*, 244) suggest St Sophia and St Irene. But Chrysostom in the *Letter to Innocent* (PG 47.10) writes 'church' in the singular. It certainly was not St Sophia, for according to Palladius Accacius of Beroea warned the emperor that if he went to attend the Easter service (surely in St Sophia) he would find that church empty (*Dial.* 9 (PG 47.33)). Ps.-Martyrius (91) does not name the church(es).

¹¹² F. Van Ommeslaeghe, 'Chrysostomica: la nuit de Pâques 404', *Analecta Bolandiana* (1992), 110–12, 123–34.

evidently already very much a minority, even though Justina and Valentinian still adhered to the sect. Chrysostom sought for help from the pope and the emperor of the West. His letter to Pope Innocent has been preserved by Palladius. The West was sympathetic, but in 404 relations between the Eastern and Western courts were deteriorating,¹¹³ and by 405 Stilicho, the power behind the throne in the West, was openly claiming control of the dioceses of Dacia and Macedonia which were being administered as part of the Eastern Empire.¹¹⁴ So, Western sympathy was of no use to Chrysostom; quite the reverse. His strong Western support will only have given the establishment at Constantinople another reason why they could no longer tolerate the bishop's presence in their city, and must have strengthened their resolve never to have him back. On 20 June Chrysostom was ordered to go into exile. What the authorities had feared happened. There was a huge riot in which both St Sophia and the Senate House were burnt. The hostility to Chrysostom was very deep. It was only in 413 that his name was restored to the diptychs of Antioch and in 417 to those of Constantinople, and it is clear that Atticus, the bishop of Constantinople, was even then still very unhappy with the move. But he yielded to the demands of Alexander, bishop of Antioch, and of Pope Innocent I, and of the people of Constantinople itself. Chrysostom's body was brought back to Constantinople for burial in 438.

¹¹³ Cameron and Long, *Barbarians and Politics*, 249–50. In the 390s Stilicho had claimed that Theodosius had willed him to be the rightful regent of East as well as West (ibid. 170, 49–51).

¹¹⁴ Alan Cameron, *Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Oxford, 1970), 158; Zosimus 5.26.

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Part IV

Conclusion

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Ambrose and Chrysostom Compared

(I) SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

As we have seen, these two highly gifted and influential men had very different personalities. Ambrose had a wide range of gifts: he was a theologian and translator of Greek theology into Latin. Above all he was very much in control of himself, aloof and statesmanlike, a clever and, if necessary, ruthless ecclesiastical politician. Chrysostom was not really interested in theology.¹ He was basically a pastor and minister, who saw it as his duty to save souls by reforming morals. He, too, was evidently not without administrative skills, and he could be diplomatic; but he was also extremely passionate and liable to lose his temper. He was aware of this weakness,² but it nevertheless brought about his downfall. But considering how different the two men were, it is astonishing how many features their lives and their writings had in common.

Both men were from strongly Christian families. Both were brought up by a widowed mother. Both were highly educated. Both knew both Greek and Latin. Both originally aimed at a career in the imperial service, though only Ambrose started on this career. Both were strongly influenced by the ascetic ideal. Early in his ecclesiastical career each of them wrote treatises on virginity, advising virgins not to marry, and widows not to remarry.³ The literary styles of the two men are different, but the basic concepts and arguments are the same. Both make use of a stock of concepts and arguments which can be found in

¹ Cf. remarks of Lochbrunner, *Über das Priestertum*, 124–8, 207.

² *De sacerdotio* 6.12 (PG 687–8).

³ See above, 66–73, 152–5.

the writings of most Christian authors writing treatises or sermons about virginity and widowhood at this time. There are some personal differences. The virginity of Mary was extremely important for Ambrose, for whom it was a proof of the power of celibacy and abstinence, while Chrysostom was not particularly interested in the theology of Mary. In the writings of Ambrose it sometimes seems as if 'purity', the abstinence from sex, is in itself a supreme virtue which enables men to live the life of angels. For Chrysostom too celibacy is extremely important, but he stresses that it is a discipline necessary to train the body for the perfect Christian life. Not that Ambrose disregards ethics. In fact his ethical teachings are very similar to those of Chrysostom, though the emphasis is different. As far as I can see, Ambrose's ascetic strategy was focused on two objectives: to persuade young girls to take the veil as consecrated virgins, and to build up a team of celibate clergy. Chrysostom wanted to reform everybody. Both bishops strongly, consistently, and successfully fought for Nicene Christianity against the *Homoians*. Both Ambrose and Chrysostom exploited the cult of martyrs for sectarian politics, and both encouraged the singing of psalms and hymns.

The social ideals of the two bishops also seem to have been similar, though social themes occupy a much greater space in Chrysostom's writings.⁴ But Ambrose certainly won enormous popularity among the people of Milan, who evidently considered him their friend and patron. Moreover we have seen that he sometimes did employ a social discourse quite close to that of Chrysostom and other ascetic preachers.⁵ Both Ambrose and Chrysostom attacked the rich, both wanted wealth to be used to help the needy, and neither went so far as to want to abolish the rich.⁶ Chrysostom, however, preached moral reform so aggressively as to come close to publicly shaming important members of his congregation.⁷ Ambrose was far too

⁴ The surviving writings of Ambrose are lengthy treatises, each of which seem to be essentially a collection of sermons dealing with a particular dogmatic theme, just as Chrysostom's commentaries on various books of the Bible seem to be compilations of exegetical sermons, not necessarily delivered consecutively, or in the same location, on a particular book.

⁵ See above, 74–6.

⁶ e.g. Chrysostom: *De stat.* 2.13, 19.

⁷ Ps.-Martyrius 40 (ed. Wallraff).

much a man of the world to make a habit of offending powerful parishioners.⁸

Both accepted the need for secular government, and indeed for the imperial system. Ambrose came near to developing a two-power theory of the relations between Church and state. Chrysostom did not develop any kind of generalizing theory as to how the respective spheres of state and Church, bishop and emperor, were to be delimited, but he proclaimed the superiority of the priesthood over worldly power in provocative phraseology which Ambrose would certainly have avoided. Both were quite ready to call on the state to suppress heresy, and to accept state support for reorganization of the Church. Both were prepared to assist the emperor politically. The ways in which the two bishops related to the secular authorities were different. In spite of his often courageous outspokenness, Ambrose was part of the system, part of the establishment. Chrysostom was more detached. He gave his advice from outside in sermons, and in ad hoc interventions. Though both men were occasionally used by emperors for diplomatic purposes, Ambrose was far more successful. He gained vital time for Valentinian II. Chrysostom's mission to Gainas did not achieve a settlement, and he was left with the bitter hostility of the exiles, whose return he had failed to negotiate. Both bishops upheld the independence of the Church, and the right of the bishop to rebuke even an emperor in matters related to the emperor's salvation, or to the well-being of the Church. Ambrose intervened more frequently, but he did it in a way that was extremely skilful, as McLynn has shown. His interventions became more dramatic and provocative in retrospect as Ambrose publicized them to contemporaries and posterity in his letters. Chrysostom was not afraid to state quite openly that he included the court and the emperor in his moral criticism and in his campaign for reform on ascetic lines. As far as we can tell, Ambrose did not do that. What was particularly harmful to Chrysostom was the fact that his criticism of the vanity of women was taken personally by the empress Eudoxia. Chrysostom did not sacralize the emperor, which was not at this stage considered the Church's business. But he did on occasions speak of emperor and

⁸ For an exception see above, 72 n. 68.

empress in extravagantly laudatory terms. Ambrose did not sacralize the emperor either, though—accomplished diplomat that he was—he presented dead emperors as model Christians, assured of an honoured place in heaven. Both enlarged the authority of their sees over neighbouring dioceses. Ambrose did so without creating fierce enemies. The hostility Chrysostom aroused by his outside intervention greatly contributed to his fall. Both men had fervent supporters among women,⁹ but both were also suspicious of women, and especially of women in positions of leadership.¹⁰ Both had conflicts with royal women, Ambrose with Justina, Chrysostom with Eudoxia. As far as we know Ambrose had no personal contact with Justina, and won. Chrysostom from time to time had a warm working relationship with Eudoxia, and lost.

(II) AMBROSE AND CHRYSOSTOM ON PRIESTLY DUTIES: *DE SACERDOTIO* AND *DE OFFICIIS* *MINISTRORUM*

The similarity of the titles of the two works suggests similarity of content, which in turn may suggest that one of these two nearly contemporary authors was influenced by the other. Chrysostom's *De sacerdotio* was written between 386 and 392, so it is later than Ambrose's *De officiis*, and could conceivably have been influenced by it. It certainly has some features in common with Ambrose's pamphlet. Both works are very classical. Ambrose's treatise is closely modelled on Cicero's *De officiis*. Unlike Ambrose, Chrysostom has not based his treatise on a classical secular model. If he was inspired by an earlier work, it was by the *De fuga* of Gregory of Nazianzus, which is Gregory's apology for taking flight when his father wanted to make him a bishop. But his choice of the dialogue form of course

⁹ e.g. Monica, the mother of Augustine, was a great admirer of Ambrose.

¹⁰ e.g. Ambrose, *On Naboth* 17.71: 'Consider that Ahab had Jezebell for his wife... who turned his heart, and made him accursed on account of his horrible sacrilege. She recalled him from his penitential position.' About women in general *ibid.* 5.26: 'Women really enjoy fetters, so long as they are bound in gold. They even enjoy wounds so that gold may be inserted into their ears' (trans. B. Ramsey).

goes back ultimately to Plato. Chrysostom's dialogue has elements of personal apology. So has Ambrose's treatise on the priesthood; for he starts by explaining why he has done so little preaching during his first three years as bishop. Later he explains that the reason why he had smelted down precious vessels belonging to the Church of Milan was in order to obtain money to ransom prisoners.¹¹

Both Ambrose and Chrysostom emphasize the need for a priest to be ever reviewing his own life to avoid falling short of the very high standards expected of him, and thus laying himself open to punishment not only for his own sins, but also for those people whose souls are his responsibility.¹² Both admit their initial lack of qualifications for the priesthood. The theme runs through the whole of Chrysostom's treatise; in Ambrose's work it is only touched on in passing.¹³ Both authors occasionally intersperse general advice with topical allusions. So Chrysostom alludes to unqualified individuals being ordained, while Ambrose criticizes the recent mass expulsion of strangers from Rome during a famine.¹⁴ Both pamphlets have a full account of the social duties of a priest (or a bishop). So both works deal with the duty of hospitality,¹⁵ and the care for widows and virgins,¹⁶ though the two men handle these themes rather differently. Something that may surprise the modern reader is that both authors concede that an oath need not be binding in some circumstances. Ambrose has clearly included this topic because there is a corresponding section in Cicero's work; in principle he agrees with Cicero.¹⁷ His treatment of this topic is of course quite different from Cicero's, being based on interpretations of certain biblical episodes.¹⁸ In John's treatise, his own failure to keep his word is the starting point of the whole discussion.¹⁹

¹¹ 1.41 (214–16); 2.28 (136–43).

¹² e.g. *De sacerdotio* 4.2 (PG 663–5) and Ambrose, *Off.* 3.1.

¹³ *Off.* 1.3–4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 3.7 (45–51; cf. Davidson's edn. 789–90).

¹⁵ *Off.* 2.21. *De sacerdotio* 3.16 (PG 48.656).

¹⁶ *Off.* 2.29. *De sacerdotio* 3.16–17 (PG 48.654–8).

¹⁷ *Off.* 3.76–81 modelled on Cicero's *De offic.* 3.76–81.

¹⁸ Davidson's edn. 861–87.

¹⁹ The problem was discussed by near contemporaries: Cassian, *Conf.* 17, argues that in certain circumstances promises need not be kept, and lies may be told. So too did Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Hilary of Poitiers. Augustine in *De mendacio* and *Contra mendacium* insists that a lie is never justified.

These are definite resemblances, but I do not think that they are sufficient to make it likely that John's *De sacerdotio* was influenced by Ambrose's *De officiis*. After all the overall arguments of the two works are fundamentally different. Ambrose defines the duties of the priest in terms of the general moral principles which should govern the conduct of all Christians. Chrysostom focuses on the tremendous elevation, and the almost superhuman responsibility, of the priestly office, and on the huge moral qualities it requires its holders to possess. Each treatise certainly reflects the personality of its author. The argument of *De sacerdotio* is far more subjective than that of Ambrose's *De officiis*.

(III) AMBROSE AND CHRYSOSTOM ON RULERS AND PENITENCE: THE HOMILIES IN OZIAM AND THE APOLOGIES FOR DAVID

As Chrysostom's *De sacerdotio* bears some resemblance to Ambrose's *De officiis*,²⁰ so his *Homiliae in Oziam* resemble Ambrose's two *Apologies for David*, which also have as one of their themes the relations of priest and king. Ambrose is Christianizing the traditional Roman view of the emperor. He accepts that the emperor is the source of human law, and therefore not bound by it; he is *legibus solutus* in Ulpian's formulation, but he is also strictly subject to the law of God. The imperial dignity which Romans, and especially the late Romans, conceived as almost godlike is therefore not destroyed or even diminished if the emperor humbles himself before God, in order to display his profound repentance for sin. By making his peace with God the emperor not only provides for his own salvation, but is also acting in the interest of his Empire. David's experience teaches a universal lesson: men will sin. But forgiveness through humble repentance is available to all. For all his famous outspokenness, Ambrose was a diplomat, and whatever he might have thought privately, he was careful not to

²⁰ The theme dominates only in *Homily 5*. In 3 the emphasis is not so much on the *parrhesia* of the priest as on condemnation of arrogance as exemplified by the behaviour of the king.

put himself forward as a new Nathan. But Chrysostom, at least in *Homily 5*, singles out for praise precisely the *parrhesia* and authority of the priest.²¹

It is significant that Ambrose and Chrysostom had similar views about the power of penitence. Neither of them takes the long-established view that after a man or a woman has been baptized, he or she can have only one more chance to receive pardon for their sins, and this only by an act of profound and humiliating penance. Ambrose and Chrysostom each taught that it is never too late for penance, provided the penitent is sincere. Ambrose wrote a treatise 'On Penance' (*De paenitentia*) in which he refutes the rigorist view of the Novatians.²² It was one of the charges against Chrysostom at the Synod of the Oak that he would forgive a sinner however often he repented.²³ Even friends are said to have criticized Chrysostom for his leniency towards sinners,²⁴ a leniency which he did indeed expound in sermons.²⁵

(IV) WHY DID AMBROSE SUCCEED AND CHRYSOSTOM FAIL?

If one compare the episcopates of the two men one reason why one failed while the other succeeded seems quite obvious: Ambrose had political and diplomatic skills which Chrysostom lacked, or perhaps only refused to employ in critical situations. Ambrose was a controversial figure who made enemies. He certainly annoyed Jerome: 'I withhold my judgement of him...fearing either to praise or to blame him, because if I praise him people will blame me for flattery,

²¹ See above.

²² *De paenitentia*, PL 16.485–546; English trans. by De Romestin in *NPCF* 20.329–59. Chrysostom too deprived Novatians of churches (Socrates, *HE* 6.22; but not it would seem because of their strictness towards sinners, but rather because, though they too were adherents of the creed of Nicaea, they insisted on having bishops of their own (Socrates, *HE* 6.22 and Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 125–6.

²³ The sixth charge made by Isaak, the monk. For list of charges see Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 299–301.

²⁴ Socrates, *HE* 6.21.

²⁵ e.g. *Hom.* 8.1 *De paenitentia*.

and if I blame him I will be criticized for speaking the truth.²⁶ Yet for all his *parrhesia*, Ambrose knew that tact and diplomacy were needed in all his public relations, whether with his own clergy, the bishops of Italy, or the emperor and members of his court. Chrysostom was deficient in this respect. He incurred the enmity of Eudoxia quite unnecessarily. Elsewhere I have argued that he incurred the enmity of a leading group of magnates of Constantinople.²⁷ The fact that an unpredictable cleric had enormous influence over the people of Constantinople made secular politicians decide that his presence in the city was dangerous, quite apart from the hostility he had incurred during the Gainas troubles. The bad relations with his clergy and the monks at Constantinople and with many bishops of nearby cities provided the means by which he could be overthrown. Unpopularity with clergy and fellow bishops made him vulnerable, because a bishop could be deposed canonically by a vote of a synod of bishops. Theophilus of Alexandria skilfully exploited Chrysostom's unpopularity among neighbouring bishops and united them in support of his intrigue against the bishop of Constantinople. Chrysostom retained the support and admiration of not a few bishops, but he had antagonized a sufficient number to make it possible for the emperor to have him formally deposed by the vote of a synod, on two successive occasions.

Ambrose too must have had initial difficulties with his clergy; after all many of them had served under an 'Arian' (i.e. *Homoian*) bishop for a long time. He mentions one cleric who deserted him during his 'Arian' troubles, but he seems to have won over most of them.²⁸ Moreover, Ambrose was on good terms with bishops of Italy, including successive popes at Rome. The two bishops whom he asked the emperors to depose after the Council of Aquileia (AD 381) had their sees in the Balkans.²⁹ He corresponded with colleagues on problems of biblical interpretation. He was, at least in theory,³⁰ extremely accessible. Around 380 all Nicene bishops had an interest in working

²⁶ *De viris illustribus* 124.

²⁷ Liebeschuetz, 'Friends and Enemies of John Chrysostom' and *Barbarians and Bishops*, 195–207.

²⁸ *Off.* 3.9.59.

²⁹ Ambrose, *Ep. ex.* 4 (Maur. 10).

³⁰ Augustine, *Conf.* 6.2.

together against the *Homoians*, who had so recently held their churches. Ambrose built on this, and achieved an uncontested ascendancy over the bishops of the north of Italy. But that ascendancy was not achieved at the expense of any other bishop, because the episcopate of northern Italy had not previously been structured hierarchically.³¹ Ambrose had some problems with monks, but there were not very many monks at or around Milan, and there was no Isaak.

Chrysostom's conflict with the empress Eudoxia was more personal than Ambrose's conflict with Justina. Eudoxia admired Chrysostom, and she looked up to him as a spiritual guide. She turned against him partly because he had criticized some property dealings of hers, partly (and subsequently) because she took some criticism which was meant more generally as directed at her personally. In both her and her husband's case the volte face from favour to hostility was sudden. The persecution of the Johannites continued and even intensified after her death. So her hostility was not decisive. The hostility of bishops, clergy, monks, and of an important section of the secular elite at Constantinople, was more important.

The fact that Ambrose succeeded, and ended up as a pillar of the regime of Honorius and Stilicho, while Chrysostom was deposed and died in exile was not simply a consequence of the different personalities of the two men, and of their respective diplomatic skulls. The political structures within which Ambrose and Chrysostom had to operate were not the same. Ambrose faced a much weaker imperial government. The emperor Gratian only made Milan his principal imperial residence in spring 381, and already in summer 383 he was killed by the usurper Maximus who then governed the western provinces Spain, Gaul, and Britain, and from 387 even Italy until he was defeated and killed in August 388. From the death of Gratian until the invasion of Italy by Maximus, Italy and the Balkans were governed nominally by the boy emperor Valentinian II,³² but in fact by his mother the formidable Justina, assisted by some influential officials and generals, outstanding among them Bauto, the father of Eudoxia, with Milan as the capital. This never was a strong regime, and its beginnings were particularly vulnerable. It needed all the

³¹ Humphries, *Communities of the Blessed*, 137–61.

³² Born in 371.

support that it could get. As Justina and Valentinian II were *Homoians*, that is in Ambrose's view Arians, Ambrose was not a natural ally. But they nevertheless sent him to negotiate with the usurper Maximus at Trier, first in autumn 383, and then again (probably) in 384/5, and he managed somehow to persuade Maximus not to invade Italy while the regime of Valentinian II was consolidating its position. So Valentinian and Justina and their followers were greatly indebted to Ambrose, and this was certainly an important reason why he was successful in preventing the return of the Altar of Victory to the Senate chamber, and why he emerged successfully from the year-long conflict with Justina and Valentinian II over the handing over of a basilica for Arian worship. Another important factor, especially in the conflict over the basilica, was surely the knowledge that Theodosius at Constantinople was a determined defender of the Nicene faith, and Valentinian and Justina could not afford to offend Theodosius by deposing a Nicene bishop.

From 388 to 390, after the defeat and death of Maximus, Ambrose had to deal with Theodosius himself. Theodosius was of course a formidable figure, a successful general who had just overthrown a usurper. But though he came to Italy as a liberator, Theodosius, like many liberators since, also came as a conqueror. Moreover it will have been evident to the governing elite in the West that Constantinople was the real seat of his power, and that his stay in the West would be temporary. So Theodosius had to seek all the support he could find, if he wanted to consolidate his settlement of the West,³³ and there is good evidence that he strove to broaden his support.³⁴ He pardoned the followers of Maximus. Symmachus, who had delivered a panegyric in praise of Maximus, was not only pardoned, but designated consul for 391, and in the same year Nicomachus Flavianus was appointed praetorian prefect of Italy, Africa, and Illyricum, the most powerful civil office in the West. Symmachus and Flavianus were pagans, but they were also leading members of the extremely rich and influential Roman senatorial aristocracy. Theodosius was certainly a pious Christian, moreover he was a baptized Christian, concerned for the

³³ On the settlement of the West and on Theodosius' relations with Ambrose see McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 294–334.

³⁴ See Leppin, *Theodosius der Grosse*, 135–76.

salvation of his soul. But if he was quite prepared to promote pagans in the interest of political stability, he surely found it more congenial to show favour to Christians, and above all to the Nicene bishops of Italy, among whom Ambrose, the bishop of the city, which was the centre of the imperial administration of Italy and principal imperial residence, was at the time the most important.³⁵ The weakness of Theodosius' position in the West was certainly one reason why he allowed himself to be publicly reprimanded as no emperor had been reprimanded before. After the death of Theodosius in 395, the two halves of the Empire were never again united under a single emperor. But the relative weakness of the position of the Western emperor compared with that of the emperor in the East was permanent. For the Eastern Empire had a civil administration which maintained control through crises like the revolt of Gainas, and under strong and weak emperors alike. No would-be usurper succeeded in the East between the proclamation of Julian as Augustus in 360 and the deposition of Maurice by Phocas in 602. Arcadius was not a strong personality, but he and his ministers were in a much stronger position *vis-à-vis* Chrysostom at Constantinople than Theodosius had been *vis-à-vis* Ambrose at Milan.

(V) WAS CHRYSOSTOM INFLUENCED BY AMBROSE?

When we compare the ideas of Chrysostom and Ambrose, we cannot help but notice a remarkable number of similarities, and parallels. This raises the possibility that Chrysostom, the younger man, was influenced by Ambrose. But on closer examination such influence seems unlikely, at least as far as the area of ideas and teaching is concerned. What the similarities and parallels in the works of the two bishops show is not that Chrysostom was influenced by Ambrose, but that the Christian culture in the East and West was still basically

³⁵ He was probably more important, certainly more active, than Pope Siricius (383–99), with whom Ambrose was on good terms: Ambrose, *Ep. ex. 14* (Maur. 41a) from Siricius to Ambrose, *Ep. ex. 15* (Maur. 42) from Ambrose to Siricius, show Ambrose as leader of the north Italian bishops and acting as an intermediary between them and the pope.

undivided, that at a time when the Greek and Latin regions of the Empire were drifting apart militarily and politically, they still enjoyed a single culture, so that comparable circumstances produced similar responses by clerics whether they served in the East or in the West.

When we come to actions, the situation may be different. We have seen earlier that it is quite likely that some of the more demonstrative actions of Ambrose, above all his repeated confrontation of the court, did encourage Chrysostom to behave similarly. There are obvious parallels between Chrysostom's behaviour in the Gainas affair, and that of Ambrose in his much more prolonged conflict with the empress Justina in 385/6.³⁶ It is likely enough, even if it cannot be proved, that Chrysostom took Ambrose as his model when he opposed Gainas. Again, when Chrysostom refused to attend and answer the charges against him at the Synod of the Oak, though summoned by imperial officials no less than four times, he may have remembered. Ambrose's refusal to appear before the imperial consistory which was to adjudicate his dispute with the *Homoians*; though Chrysostom stated as his excuse that the court was packed with his enemies, while Ambrose's had been that the court was made up of laymen who had no right to judge matters affecting the Church.³⁷ A third episode in which Chrysostom's conduct may reflect the influence of Ambrose is his behaviour in the interval between his trial and departure into exile.³⁸ We know that the exiling of Chrysostom was held up for three days by popular rioting,³⁹ and that during this time a congregation kept watch in the cathedral day and night with their bishop. The very poor version of the sermon with which Chrysostom addressed this audience,⁴⁰ such as it is, suggests that Chrysostom was at least contemplating the possibility of sustaining a siege in his church, and of challenging his deposition by staging a 'sit-in', as Ambrose had done. It would seem that Chrysostom was wavering whether to stay in his cathedral, and continue to resist, or to leave the church to go into

³⁶ See above, 86–9.

³⁷ Sozomen, *HE* 8.17; Ps.-Martyrius 53; Palladius, *Dial.* 8 (*PG* 47.28–9); cf. Ambrose, *Ep.* 75 and 75a.

³⁸ *PG* 52.427–36, cf. Tiersch, *Johannes Chrysostomus in Konstantinopel*, 351–2, cf. above xxxx.

³⁹ Sozomen, *HE* 8.18.

⁴⁰ On this undoubtedly heavily corrupt text see above, 241–2.

exile. Some sentences in the sermon even recall passages in the sermons Ambrose preached while he was undergoing a siege in his cathedral at Milan.⁴¹ That themes which had been used by Ambrose recur in the sermon of Chrysostom could of course be simply a result of the two bishops finding themselves in a similar situation, but it remains quite likely that Chrysostom had read Ambrose's sermons, or had otherwise heard about Ambrose's conflict with Justina.⁴² Chrysostom did not in the end sit it out, as Ambrose had done. He allowed himself to be escorted into exile. He was sufficiently a realist to appreciate that he could not outface Arcadius and Eudoxia at Constantinople, as Ambrose had outfaced Valentinian II and Justina at Milan.

The comparison of Ambrose and Chrysostom reveals two very different personalities, and indeed two different clerical types, the church-statesman and the pastor. Both were highly intelligent, learned, and thoughtful, and both already became famous in their lifetime. They shared many ideas. This was not however the result of the influence of Ambrose on his younger contemporary. In the fourth century new intellectual and theological and ascetic ideas still travelled more often than not from East to West, and not in the opposite direction.⁴³ But even when East and West were ruled by different emperors, in constitutional law the Empire remained one, and the regimes of East and West, though sometimes mutually hostile, in theory remained partners in a single administration.⁴⁴ The same was true of the churches in East and West. The Church was still essentially one. By and large, the same ideas, and the same controversies, were found in East and West. Comparison of Ambrose and Chrysostom provides evidence of the continuing oneness of the Christian world.⁴⁵

⁴¹ See references above, 243.

⁴² Chrysostom had potential supporters in Italy to whom he and his supporters appealed after his deposition: *Epp.* 42.168, 169. He eventually gained the support of the pope, emperor, and the bishops of Italy: Palladius, *Dial.* 4 (PG 47.15). See also below, 270 n. 28.

⁴³ P. Courcelle, *Les Lettres grecques en Occident de Macrobe à Cassiodore* (Paris, 1948), 119–36.

⁴⁴ See e.g. Girardet, *Kaisertum, Religionspolitik und das Recht von Staat und Kirche in der Spätantike*, 502–13.

⁴⁵ At the same time the world views of individual bishops all over the Empire—never mind those of members of their congregations—covered a wide range of ideas. The age was extremely productive. and alive with controversy.

Greek and Latin worlds remained in close communication. The mother tongue of Ambrose was Latin and that of Chrysostom was Greek, even if Ambrose certainly and Chrysostom probably was well versed in both languages. Constantinople was bilingual.⁴⁶ Though Constantinople was situated in the Greek-speaking world and the majority of its population was surely Greek-speaking, Latin was still the official language also of the Eastern Empire,⁴⁷ and the imperial families of Valens and Valentinian I and of Theodosius I originated in the Latin West. Even at Antioch young men hoping for a career in the imperial services studied Latin rhetoric and Roman law—much to the disgust of Libanius, Antioch's famous professor of Greek rhetoric. So if Chrysostom's actions sometimes seem to echo those of Ambrose, it is likely enough that he was well informed about Ambrose, and that he admired and imitated him. But the political situation in Constantinople was not the same as that in Milan, and what could be done and said with relative safety by a politically sophisticated bishop in his relations with the secular power at Milan could not be safely risked by a much less politically expert bishop at Constantinople.

⁴⁶ On Latin at Constantinople as late as the sixth century see Averil Cameron, 'Old and New Rome: Roman Studies in Sixth Century Constantinople', in P. Rousseau and M. Papoutsakis (eds.), *Transformations of Late Antiquity: Essays for Peter Brown* (Aldershot, 2009).

⁴⁷ On how this worked in detail see F. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II 408–450* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2006), esp. 84–107.

The Long-Term Influence of Ambrose and Chrysostom

Both Ambrose and Chrysostom have been remembered largely through their own writings. But there is a difference. Our knowledge of Ambrose's personality and the dramatic episodes of his life comes above all from his letters. That means Ambrose has to a considerable extent created his own historical image. We have a biography written by Paulinus, who obviously knew Ambrose quite well during the last years of the bishop's life, and who acted as Ambrose's secretary when Ambrose became too weak to write himself.¹ Paulinus makes much use of the letters and he also gives us some interesting facts which we would not know if he had not recorded them, but he is above all a hagiographer, concerned to show Ambrose as the source of miracles, and particularly of miracles involving the punishment of men who had crossed or slandered Ambrose, and also as a source of miraculous healing.² For Chrysostom we have the two biographies by the contemporaries Pseudo-Martyrius and Palladius, which are much fuller than Paulinus' *Life of Ambrose*,³ and in addition three quite detailed accounts in the ecclesiastical histories of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret. All these narratives have been written by men who admired Chrysostom—Socrates is the only one who is at all critical. But the five authors write from different points of view, and since the accounts, with the possible exception of that of Socrates,

¹ Paulinus, *V. Ambr.* 42.

² Miraculous punishments: Paulinus, *V. Ambr.* 12, 20, 34, 37; 54–5. Miraculous healing: *ibid.* 10, 21, 28, 43.

³ There are also later biographies whose historical accuracy is doubtful.

were written with an apologetic purpose, they allow us to observe the aspects of Chrysostom's life which were criticized and needed to be defended. The differences in the historical record reflect the beginning of a cultural division between East and West: historiography maintained a far more important place in the culture of the East than it did in the West.

In both East and West public confrontation of the secular power of the kind practised by Ambrose and Chrysostom was exceptional at that time, and for long after. It required an unusual combination of persons and circumstances to make it possible. In the Christian Roman Empire of the East, the Church and the Empire were so closely interwoven that there was no abstract problem of the right relations of Church and state. Justinian explains the situation: '*Sacerdotium* and *imperium* are the very greatest gifts of God to man, the first to look after divine matters (*divinis*), the second to direct and look after the business of men (*humanis*).'⁴ It is the role of the priest to pray for the welfare of the empire, but his prayers will be heard only if his conduct meets with God's approval. For this reason the uprightness of the priests is of the very greatest importance for emperors (*nihil sic erit studiosum imperatoribus sicut sacerdotum honestas*). The emperor must therefore pay the greatest attention, both to the dogma of God, and to the moral rectitude and reputation (*honestas/σεμνότης*) of the priests. It follows that the emperor must of necessity intervene in the affairs of the Church regularly, supervising its teaching and the conduct of its ministers. Justinian did this, and so did his successors in the East. This left little scope for independent initiatives by bishops.

In the West the situation was no different in principle. It did of course make a difference that the Empire weakened and collapsed, and that at city level government by *curiae* came to an end, and bishops began to exercise a considerable amount of what we would call secular power. But this made it even more necessary for the successor kings to keep control of the Church, and especially the appointment of bishops. In the successor kingdoms Church and state remained closely interlocked. It was only much later, in the Investiture Conflict, when the Church asserted its independence by

⁴ Justinian, *Nov.* 6 praef.

insisting on its right to appoint its bishops, that Ambrose's precedent came into its own. We know that when Pope Hildebrand, Gregory VII, excommunicated the German emperor Henry IV in 1076, he justified this act by citing as a precedent what Ambrose had done to Theodosius after the massacre at Thessalonica.⁵ Ambrose was regularly referred to in debates about the relations of Church and state in Elizabethan England.⁶ The fearlessness of Ambrose in speaking up for what he thought was right to the most powerful man in the world has become an example of how to face down tyranny. Ambrose's response to the massacre at Thessalonica set an example which the Church has not always followed, but has recognized as lastingly valid. In the words of the *Catholic Encyclopedia*: 'The Church is the guardian of morality and even emperors (and dictators), despite their lofty dignity and absolutism, are subject to moral laws as defined by the Church.'⁷

Ambrose's influence in the area of ideas and theology has been less conspicuous, and has received less attention from scholars.⁸ But his writings were important because they enabled Western clerics to become acquainted with Latin versions of Greek theological discussions, which they could not have read in the original. Ambrose's writings became standard expositions of Nicene theology. In his *Confessions* Augustine has described the enormous impact of Ambrose's personality. He tells us that his own view of Christianity was fundamentally changed by Ambrose's Sunday sermons, and by his employment of the Alexandrian technique of allegorical exegesis. Augustine recalls that Ambrose's interpretation of biblical texts had enabled him to overcome what had previously seemed insuperable obstacles to Christian belief: 'The Catholic faith I now concluded with myself, might well be maintained without absurdity... after I had heard one or two hard places of the Old Testament resolved... which when I understood literally I was slain.'⁹

⁵ Greg. VII, *Ep.* 4.2; 8.21.

⁶ P. Collinson, "'If Constantine, then also Theodosius": St Ambrose and the Integrity of the Elizabethan *Ecclesia Anglicana*', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 30 (1979), 205–29.

⁷ 1.375.

⁸ But see M. Zelzer, 'Das Ambrosianische Corpus *De virginitate* und seine Rezeption im Mittelalter', *Studia patristica*, 38 (2001), 510–23.

⁹ *Conf.* 5.14.

The impact of Ambrose's writings in the Greek world was surely slight, but there too his outspokenness, his *parrhesia*, was remembered as an example to be imitated.¹⁰ This theme is particularly prominent in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Theodoret who composed a dramatic, but, as we have seen, historically misleading, account of how Ambrose personally stopped Theodosius at the church door after the massacre of Thessalonica.¹¹ His *Ecclesiastical History* also alludes briefly to an episode of outspokenness on the part of Ambrose to the sometimes terrifying Valentinian I, which is almost certainly imaginary,¹² and he has a full account, amplified with dialogue, of Chrysostom's confrontation of Gainas in the presence of Arcadius.¹³ Theodoret wrote his History around 450, in exile after the second Council of Ephesus, and with every reason to be discontented with the use of imperial power.¹⁴ But Theodoret was a native of Antioch, and in his assertion of the right of bishops to rebuke even an emperor he is following the precedent of Chrysostom.¹⁵ Moreover while few, if any, later bishops of Constantinople imitated the *parrhesia* of Ambrose and Chrysostom, it became the rule in the Byzantine Empire that the emperor and his officials must listen respectfully to advice and criticism of monks and holy men.¹⁶

Chrysostom's *parrhesia* was admired and remembered, but in the long term his influence was essentially pastoral and ethical.¹⁷ It was propagated through his sermons, which were widely read in both the East and the West, although their impact was necessarily stronger and longer lasting in the East. Chrysostom's sermons, because of their

¹⁰ F. Trisoglio, 'Sant Ambrogio negli storici e nei cronisti bizantini', in G. Lazzati (ed.), *Ambrosius episcopus* (Milan, 1976), ii. 345–77; C. Pasini, *Le fonte greche su Sant' Ambrogio*, Tutte le opere di Sant' Ambrogio 24.1 (Milan, 1990).

¹¹ Theodoret, *HE* 5.17; also Sozomen, *HE* 8.4.

¹² Theodoret, *HE* 4.6.

¹³ *Ibid.* 5.32.

¹⁴ Leppin, *Von Constantin dem Grossen zu Theodosius II*, 253–59.

¹⁵ On Theodoret and *parrhesia* see *ibid.* 186–93.

¹⁶ See for example R. Lane Fox, 'Life of Daniel', in M. J. Edwards and S. Swain (eds.), *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1997), 174–225.

¹⁷ M. Wallraff and R. Brändle (eds.), *Chrysostomos Bilder der 1600 Jahre: Facetten der Wirkungsgeschichte eines Kirchenvaters*, Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 105 (Berlin, 2008), a very interesting collection of papers discussing the wide-ranging and lasting impact of Chrysostom.

underlying humanity and their strong social message, made an immediate and lasting impact. Many of his sermons were translated into Latin.¹⁸ Sermons of Chrysostom were also translated into Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, and Georgic. They have survived in innumerable manuscripts. Chrysostom's writings became fundamental for later Byzantine piety.¹⁹ One of the most used Greek orthodox liturgies is called the Liturgy of John Chrysostom, and the Anaphora, the central part of it, describing the inauguration of the Eucharist at the Last Supper, may in fact go back to him, or at least to his time.²⁰ Whether this is right or not, the fact that it has been attributed to him shows the respect and veneration he has long received, and continues to receive, in the Greek Orthodox Church.

When it comes to concrete instances, it is difficult to distinguish the direct influence of Chrysostom from the influence of the ascetic movement of which he was part. It has, however, been noted that Pelagius' Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Romans in many places resembles that of John Chrysostom, though direct dependence is once more difficult to prove.²¹ Certainly, the Pelagian emphasis on the power of the free will is very much like Chrysostom's often repeated insistence that it is in the power of individuals to reform themselves. Anianus of Celeda, a follower of Pelagius,²² translated homilies of Chrysostom, and in prefaces to these translations praises Chrysostom as teaching that man is capable of observing the moral commands of God in their totality.²³ Pelagius, like Chrysostom, sets a

¹⁸ B. Altaner, 'Altlateinische Übersetzungen von Chrysostomusschriften', *Kleine patristische Schriften*, TU 83 (1967), 416–36. Latin texts of sermons or bits of sermons, rightly or wrongly ascribed to Chrysostom, are printed as *Chrysostomus latinus* in PL Suppl. 4, 650–843. G. Bady, *Les Traductions latines anciennes de Jean Chrysostome: motifs et paradoxes*, in S. Gioanni and B. Grévin (eds.), *Formation et transmission des collections textuelles de l'Antiquité tardive au Moyen Âge, iv^e au début xiii^e siècle*, Collection de l'École Française de Rome (forthcoming).

¹⁹ Averil Cameron, *The Byzantines* (Oxford, 2006), 147.

²⁰ G. Wagner, *Der Ursprung der Chrysostomus Liturgie*, Liturgiewissenschaftliche Forschungen 5 (Münster, 1973), 73–130, discusses parallels in the phraseology of the liturgy and in the writings of Chrysostom. R. Taft, 'The Authenticity of Chrysostom's Anaphora Revisited', *Orientalia Christiana periodica*, 56 (1990), 5–51.

²¹ G. de Plinval, *Pélage, sa vie, ses écrits et sa réforme* (Lausanne, 1943), 131–3.

²² Mercator on Annianus: PL 48.293–355; de Plinval, *Pélage*, 213.

²³ In his introduction to eight translations of sermons on Matthew's Gospel, Annianus praises Chrysostom for teaching that man is capable of achieving in its

high value on virginity, and points out that marriage makes it more difficult for an individual to observe the laws of charity set out in the Gospels, and, again like Chrysostom, he insists that what matters ultimately is not celibacy but the observance of the laws of God, which is required of all Christians, no matter whether virgin, widowed, or married.²⁴ The anonymous Pelagian pamphlet *De divitiis* attacks the rich, and insists that they must give away all their wealth. It rejects the argument that the rich are needed to maintain charitable giving with the blunt: 'get rid of the rich and you won't be able to find a poor man!'²⁵ All this reads like a concentrated version of the teaching that Chrysostom spread over innumerable sermons.²⁶ Augustine was worried by a letter about an unnamed Pelagian in Sicily who taught that it is possible for man to be sinless if he wishes, insisted that the rich must give up their property, and emphasized that we must not swear at all. These are three often repeated doctrines of Chrysostom.²⁷ The exiled Chrysostom hoped for support from three ladies of the great Anician house. It is probably not a coincidence that members of this great Roman family were patrons of Pelagius.²⁸ Julian of Eclanum, that highly intelligent follower of Pelagius, and champion of the free will in opposition to Augustine's doctrine of grace, cited sentences from the writings of John Chrysostom to support both his insistence

entirety the virtue which God requires from him: *hominem totius vel quae iubetur vel quae suadetur a deo capacem esse virtutis* (PL 48.626–8 = PG 58.975–8), the translations *ibid.* 978–1057. See also introduction to translations of sermons in praise of Paul (PL 48.628–30). But confident insistence on the power of the human will to perform all that God demands is also found in Basil (PG 31.909A), and other early ascetic writers. See Lorenz, 'Die Anfänge des abendländischen Mönchtums im 4. Jahrhundert'.

²⁴ *De castitate* 9; *De virginitate* 7, see Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy and Heresy*, 256–68.

²⁵ *De divitiis* 12.

²⁶ Peter Garnsey, 'The Originality and Origins of the Anonymous *De divitiis*', 29–45; Toscano, *Tolle divitem*.

²⁷ Augustine, *Ep.* 156, 157. Pelagius against swearing: *De lege divina* 10; *De virginitate* 8; *Ad Celantiam* 19.

²⁸ See Chrysostom, *Ep.* 168 (to Proba), 169 (to Juliana), 170 (to Italica); cf. Peter Brown, 'The Patrons of Pelagius: The Roman Aristocracy between East and West', *Journal of Theological Studies*, ns 21.i (1970), 56–72 = *Religion and Society in the Age of Augustine*, 208–26.

that man is responsible for his actions, and his opposition to the doctrine of original sin.²⁹

The ascetic writings of both Ambrose and Chrysostom are essentially protomonastic, that is they are mainly concerned with institutions of ascetic life which are not yet governed by formal rules. Unlike the Rule of Pachomius, or the ascetic advice of Basil, which was to be consolidated into the Rule that bears his name, and unlike the Rule of Benedict, which was to become the dominant monastic rule in western Europe, the ascetic writings of Ambrose and Chrysostom are not yet concerned with the organizational, disciplinary, and ceremonial problems that are bound to arise in any sizeable community. The authority of Ambrose and Chrysostom, and of their ascetic writings, greatly helped the widespread acceptance of the ascetic ideal. However their writings also show how ascetic trends in East and West were beginning to diverge. The asceticism propagated in the writings of Chrysostom is extremely flexible, and covers a very wide range of lifestyles. This remained a characteristic of asceticism in the East. To cite Averil Cameron: 'The Byzantine monastic tradition accommodated not only large monasteries with a strongly communal life, and others with looser structures, but also individual holy men and ascetics.³⁰ With this diversity, and these individualist traditions, monks were at some periods difficult for emperors to control, and were often a source of disruption.'³¹ Much of the violence which took place in the course of the doctrinal conflicts in the fifth and following centuries was due to the intervention of monks on behalf of one or the other of the contestants.³² 'At the heart of Byzantine spirituality was the ascetic, the holy man or woman, who had rejected society in order to devote himself or

²⁹ On Julian of Eclanum and his controversy with Augustine see Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 381–97. PL 48.509–26; 658; 669–70: Chrysostom cited in Pelagian controversy.

³⁰ The thought world in which holy men and ascetics operated, mainly, but not entirely, in the East, is evoked by Peter Brown, 'Holy Men', in *Late Antiquity, Empire and Successors 425–600*, CAH xiv (2nd edn. Cambridge, 2000), 781–810.

³¹ See Cameron, *Byzantines*, 107–11; citation from 110. Cf. also G. Tate, *Justinien: l'épopée de l'empire d'Orient* (Paris, 2004), 245–62; Dagron, 'Les Moines et la ville', 229–76.

³² Cameron, *Byzantines*, 111. On the role of monks in ecclesiastical conflicts see Escolan, *Monachisme et église*, 347–87.

herself to God.³³ So the Eastern holy man provided what was in a sense a more accessible alternative to the organized Church, serving as a link between the individual worshipper and the supernatural world.³⁴

In Ambrose's Italy monasteries governed in accordance with a written rule were still very rare. As far as monks and monasteries were concerned, Ambrose's acetic writings reflect a situation in Milan which is just as fluid as that for which Chrysostom wrote his recommendations in Syria, though in Milan, as elsewhere in Italy, the ascetic movement was on a very much smaller scale than in Antioch and the Near East. However, Ambrose's insistence that his clergy should live a collective celibate life helped to shape the future.³⁵ Augustine followed his example,³⁶ and so soon did many others, among them Hilary and Caesarius of Arles.³⁷ Thus Ambrose anticipated the medieval rule, still observed in the Catholic, but not in the Greek Orthodox Church or the Protestant Churches, that a priest must be celibate.

Monasteries became very important in the West.³⁸ In the Germanic successor kingdoms they even came to perform some of the administrative, economic, and educational functions which cities had performed in the Empire. In fact they became essential pillars of the social order. Monasticism in the West did not become the popular movement which it was in the East. Ambrose had been particularly concerned that the clergy of his cathedral should live a monastic life. Subsequently bishops, aristocrats, and kings founded monasteries, and they did this for their own purposes.³⁹ So Western monasteries were altogether more controlled than monasteries in the

³³ Cameron, *Byzantines*, 147.

³⁴ N. H. Baynes, *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London, 1955), 26–7.

³⁵ Brown, *The Body and Society*, 357–65.

³⁶ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 198–200, 409–10.

³⁷ W. E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Cambridge, 1994), 91–2; D. König, *Amt und Askese: Priesteramt und Mönchtum bei den lateinischen Kirchenvätern der vorbenediktinischen Zeit*, *Reguli Benedicti Studia suppl.* 12 (St Otilien, 1985).

³⁸ I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450–751* (London, 1994), 181–202.

³⁹ F. Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich* (Munich, 1965); M. de Jong, 'Carolingian Monasticism: The Power of Prayer', *Cambridge Medieval History (700–900)*, ii (2nd edn. Cambridge, 1995), 622–53.

late antique East had been. 'Holy men' were to be of only marginal importance in the West, except in Wales and Ireland, that is, on the Celtic fringe.

For about six hundred years (c.600–1150) the great majority of monasteries in the West (except for the Celtic fringe) were run in accordance with the Rule of Benedict (c.480–c.548). But among the individuals who influenced the development of monasticism in the West was John Cassian,⁴⁰ a man who had for a time been a close associate of John Chrysostom.⁴¹ It is, however, uncertain how far Cassian's thought was actually influenced by Chrysostom.⁴² Cassian certainly described himself as a pupil of Chrysostom.⁴³ He had probably been ordained as deacon by Chrysostom, and remained loyal after Chrysostom's deposition. For it was he who, together with Germanus, was sent to the West by John's clergy to seek the support of pope Innocent and other important Western figures for the exiled Chrysostom.⁴⁴ It is surely unlikely that the experience of working closely with Chrysostom left Cassian quite unaffected. Perhaps it was his experience of the unregulated and undisciplined monks at Constantinople, and their prominent part in the fall of Chrysostom, that drew Cassian's attention to the importance of total renunciation of the world, and of discipline, obedience, and work.⁴⁵ Cassian insisted that study of the Bible is central to the ascetic life.⁴⁶ Some passages in

⁴⁰ Benedict, Rule 42 recommends that passages from Cassian's *Conferences* (or from the *Sayings of the Fathers*) should be read to monks after supper. Benedict used Cassian's writing when he compiled his *Rule*. Before Benedict's *Rule* became widely accepted, Books 1–4 of Cassian's *Institutes* were commonly used as a set of monastic regulations. On Cassian's influence see O. Chadwick, *John Cassian* (Cambridge, 1968), 148–62.

⁴¹ Goodrich, *Contextualising Cassian*; Cassiday, *Tradition and Theology in John Cassian*.

⁴² Cassian, *De incarnatione*, PL 50.2.266–7. C. Broc-Schmezer, 'Jean Chrysostome et Jean Cassien', in C. Badilita and A. Jakab (eds.), *Jean Cassien entre Orient et Occident: Actes du colloque international Bucarest 2001* (Paris, 2003), 33–47. Cassian was certainly very strongly influenced by Euagrius Ponticus, whose various writings (together with those of others) he can be said to have systematized into his two textbooks. As we have seen, some of the ascetic ideas of Euagrius are close to those of Chrysostom.

⁴³ *De incarnatione* 7.30.1–2; 31.1–4.

⁴⁴ Palladius, *Dial.* 13.

⁴⁵ Goodrich, *Contextualising Cassian*, 151–207.

⁴⁶ *Conf.* 14.8.

his writings suggest that he also believed that the monk has the responsibility to teach others,⁴⁷ and that monasteries could and should provide a model of Christian life for the lay world to imitate.⁴⁸ Chrysostom would have sympathized with these views.⁴⁹ But while there are parallels in world view, there is no evidence in the writings of Cassian that they were directly influenced by those of Chrysostom.⁵⁰ Broc-Schmezer found only one explicit citation from Chrysostom (and that of a passage from a *florilegium*), which Cassian interpreted in a way that Chrysostom (if the citation is indeed from him) almost certainly did not mean it to be understood, that is to emphasize the exceptional nature of the Virgin, the *theotokos*. Broc-Schmezer argues that the way Cassian uses biblical citations to clinch an argument, and in his practice of inventing explanatory speeches for biblical characters, might possibly have been influenced by Chrysostom.⁵¹ Cassian's principal objective, namely to produce a blueprint for a standard model of coenobitic monasticism which could replace the untidy diversity of protomonasticism that he found in Gaul, he certainly did not get from Chrysostom. For Chrysostom, notwithstanding his strong advocacy of asceticism, was not interested in the organizational and administrative problem of how to make a collection of monks into a successful ascetic community.

The ascetic movement has figured prominently in this book. The widespread appeal of asceticism among all classes in both East and West in late antiquity is not easy to understand for somebody brought up in the contemporary world, and it is clear that even among the contemporaries of Ambrose and Chrysostom there were many to whom their ascetic ideal did not seem sensible. We can however observe that in succeeding centuries an ascetic approach to life became more obviously appropriate, and in the end indispensable. For the sermons of Chrysostom and contemporary preachers

⁴⁷ *Conf.* 14.4.1, 16.13.3, and Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, 184–8. But Cassian was certainly very much more concerned with life inside the monastery than life in the outside world.

⁴⁸ See Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, 192–3.

⁴⁹ See above.

⁵⁰ Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 31.

⁵¹ Broc-Schmezer, 'Jean Chrysostome et Jean Cassien', 33–47; M.-A. Vannier, 'L'Influence de Jean Chrysostome sur le argumentation scripturaire du *De incarnatione* de Jean Cassien', *Revue des sciences religieuses*, 169 (1995), 453–61.

turned out to be prophetic. Chrysostom had preached to men, women, and children the worthlessness of what he calls vainglory, that is the applause, fame, and popularity sought by men who provided shows for the people in the theatre and circus. At the same time he denounced all who came to watch these spectacles. After the Riot of the Statues he told his congregation that the emperor's closing of the hippodrome, theatre, and baths had turned the city into a Christian city, indeed into a church,⁵² and that it is the practice of virtue, of humility, almsgiving, vigils, prayers, and sobriety, that makes a city and its citizens glorious.⁵³ Two hundred years later this condition had become permanent. John's imaginative destruction of the traditional culture of the secular city had become a reality. So instead of attacking the ethos of his contemporaries, the sermons of Pope Gregory the Great (590–604) would now help people to come to terms with their reduced circumstances.⁵⁴ From the seventh century impoverishment came to the East also, though considerably more radically at Constantinople and in Anatolia than in Syria.⁵⁵ The ascetic ideal propagated by Chrysostom was well suited to help people to adapt to the material impoverishment of the post-classical world in both East and West.

To sum up concisely: Ambrose achieved his most lasting influence as a result of his actions, the precedents of outspokenness and defiance he set for posterity, when he subjected even emperors to the moral law as defined by the Church and the Bible. Chrysostom's influence has been conveyed through his writings, that is the insight, piety, and ascetic morality of his sermons, and the spiritual vision of the holy life conveyed by them. The ascetic world views of Ambrose and Chrysostom were not, however, typical of how the average Christian, or even necessarily how every intellectual bishop, understood God, the world, and the Christian way of life. Synesius and Nemesius, for

⁵² Because everywhere people were praying that God would save Antioch from destruction.

⁵³ *De stat.* 15.1–4.

⁵⁴ Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, 227–80.

⁵⁵ C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400–800* (Oxford, 2005), 633–5; M. McCormick, *The Origin of European Economy: Communications and Commerce AD 300–900* (Cambridge, 2001), 103–19.

instance, were far more open minded, at least in thought.⁵⁶ But they represent an opposite extreme. So the influence of Ambrose and Chrysostom was greatest in later societies, which were very different from the urban society of late antiquity which Ambrose and Chrysostom had addressed.

⁵⁶ Synesius, *Ep.* 105, considers theological doctrine to be no more than an allegory of truth, i.e. a myth which he will preach in church, while continuing to philosophize at home. Nemesis' account of the nature of man is fully Christian but it is constructed on the basis of a discussion with pagan philosophers, especially Plato and Aristotle and the doctor Galen.

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