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AMBROSIASTER'S POLITICAL THEOLOGY

Sophie Lunn-Rockliffe

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Preface

This work began as a doctoral thesis in the History Faculty at the University of Cambridge. In the early stages of research on Ambrose's political thought I took a detour to look at the works of Ambrosiaster, supposedly a 'pseudo-Ambrose.' I quickly realized that Ambrosiaster's writings, while presenting peculiar problems in their anonymity, were a rich and intriguing repository of a particular kind of political thinking and the detour became the main subject of my doctorate. This book falls naturally into two distinct parts because 'placing.' if not 'identifying.' Ambrosiaster still seems to me to be the necessary precursor to any examination of his works. In exploring Ambrosiaster's political theology and diabology, I have taken one of many possible angles on his corpus, but one I believe to be significant in its own right as well as having important influence on medieval thinkers.

Many people and institutions have provided material, intellectual, and moral succour over the years. My interest in late antiquity was first sparked as an undergraduate in Oxford by Henry Chadwick, Caroline Humfress, and Patrick Wormald (†), and George Garnett introduced me to the world of political thought; I am extremely grateful for the wise tutelage of them all. I was generously supported during my Ph.D. by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and by St John's College, Cambridge. The librarians of St John's and Peterhouse and of the Bodleian Library in Oxford and the University Library in Cambridge were unfailingly helpful. Janet Fairweather very kindly provided me with copies of some papers on Ambrosiaster and her (as then unpublished) translations of Ambrosiaster's *Commentaries* on Romans and Corinthians when I was still at an early stage of doctoral research, and this was crucial in encouraging me to look at the rest of his œuvre. My doctoral examiners, Malcolm Schofield and Margaret Atkins, have been helpful and supportive beyond the call of duty. I finished the thesis in the first year of a Research Fellowship at Peterhouse, Cambridge, and while revising the thesis into its present form I benefited from continued immersion in

its stimulating intellectual environment as a Fellow and College Lecturer. Several colleagues supplied key references and sparked new trains of thought, among whom James Carleton Paget and Scott Mandelbrote were particularly helpful. The reader for Oxford University Press and the editors of *Oxford Early Christian Studies* read the raw thesis minutely and made incisive and helpful comments on it. A number of people have provided references, tips, and stimulating conversation over the years, among whom Richard Finn OP, Lucy Grig, David Hunter, Neil McLynn, and Tina Sessa were particularly helpful. Gavin Kelly was tireless in his provision of expert help on matters of translation; it goes without saying that any errors which remain are entirely my own. Throughout, I have benefited enormously from the patient, kind, and perceptive supervision, and ongoing support and interest of Peter Garnsey.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who know the manifold ways in which they have contributed to the production of this book: Alex Gooden, Maddy Holmes, Lorna Huett, Richard Latham, Katherine Lunn-Rockliffe, Rebekah Polding, Umar Salam, Emma Winter, Helen Wright, and Giles Waller. I conclude with thanks to my parents, to whom this book is dedicated.

S.L.-R.

Contents

Abbreviations

AC	*Antiquité Classique*
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
AH	*Art History*
AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology*
AJP	*American Journal of Philology*
ANL	Ante-Nicene Library
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
Aug	*Augustinianum*
AUSS	*Andrews University Seminary Studies*
Byz	*Byzantion*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CF	*Classical Folia*
CH	*Church History*
CJ	*Classical Journal*
CP	*Classical Philology*
CQ	Classical Quarterly
CR	Classical Review
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum (Series Latina)
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
CTh	*Codex Theodosianus*
CTP	Collana di Testi Patristici
DOP	Dumbarton Oaks Papers
DR	Downside Review
DubR	Dublin Review
EL	Ephemerides Liturgicae
FC	Fathers of the Church
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte

GRByzSt	Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies
Greg	Gregorianum
Hist	*Historia*
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
HTS	*Harvard Theological Studies*
ICUR	*Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JEH	*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
JHI	*Journal of the History of Ideas*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
Lewis and Short	Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1879)
LNPF	Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
MAAR	Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome
OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
PBA	Proceedings of the British Academy
PL	Patrologia Latina
PR	*Philosophical Review*
PRE	*Paulys Real-Encylopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*
RBén	*Revue Bénédictine*
RBibl	*Revue biblique*
RÉA	*Revue des études augustiniennes*
RecAug	*Recherches augustiniennes*
RÉJ	*Revue des études juives*
RHE	*Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*
RHL	*Revue d'histoire et de littérature religieuses*
RSR	*Recherches de science religieuse*

SC	Sources chrétiennes
SCH	Studies in Church History
SCHP	Studies in Church History and Patristics
SCI	Scripta Classica Israelica
SJT	Scottish Journal of Theology
StP	Studia Patristica
TAPA	Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association
TAPS	Transactions of the American Philosophical Society
TS	Theological Studies
VC	Vigiliae Christianae
YCS	*Yale Classical Studies*

Introduction

Peter Brown's 1967 biography of Augustine of Hippo has set the tone for the analysis of late antique Christian writers from Ambrose to Augustine, from Jerome to John Chrysostom, all of whom have received broadly biographical treatments in the last few decades.[1] Brown explores the ways in which an individual and his works were shaped by, and in turn shaped, late Roman religious, intellectual, political, and social life.[2] Such an approach depends on Augustine's works containing plenteous autobiographical material, and assumes that the reader can experience the world of Augustine through Augustine. In his Preface Brown even outlines his project in the future tense as if he has put his character in motion and is sitting back, waiting for him to perform.[3]

If an intimate appreciation of an individual's personal history is necessary for an understanding of his work, how, then, to approach Ambrosiaster's writings: *Commentaries* on Paul and a set of *Quaestiones*? This man (as man he surely was) has a personal history which is all but lost to us.[4] Even the origins of the name 'Ambrosiaster' have

[1] See J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome* (London, 1975); N. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan* (London, 1994); and J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom, Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (London, 1995).

[2] P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (London, 1967; rev. edn., 2000).

[3] See ibid., 9: 'Augustine will have to meet the challenge of new environments; his style of life will be unconsciously transformed by long routines; and outside circumstances, in their turn, will take on a different meaning at different times, by being subtly charged with his personal preoccupations. By writing, by acting, by influencing an ever-increasing body of men, he will help to precipitate changes in the world around him, that were no less headlong than his own inner transformations.'

[4] It has been suggested that Ambrosiaster was a woman; see P. R. Rodgers, review of G. Bray (ed.), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament*, vi. *Romans* (Downers Grove, Ill., 1998), *Novum Testamentum*, 42. 4 (2000), 408.

been obscured by modern scholarship. As I examine in Part I of this book, a time and place of writing can be identified for Ambrosiaster and suggestions can be made about his personal religious, intellectual, and social background. But these are only surmises and are all compromised by the simple fact that we do not know who he was, and can only provide a broad intellectual context for his works.

That said, Ambrosiaster's writings enhance our understanding of late-fourth-century Rome and the Roman church. As I establish in Chapter 1, Ambrosiaster's *floruit* can be dated to the late 360s to the mid-380s, and his place of writing to Rome. This period, coinciding with Damasus' episcopate (long cited as the basic dating framework for Ambrosiaster), benefits from any additional source material. The Pope himself left us letters, inscriptions, and poems, but no sermons; indeed, we lack a body of Roman sermons for this period, which makes the fact that some of Ambrosiaster's *Quaestiones* appear to have homiletic origins even more significant. We have official church correspondence such as synodal letters, and those letters and tracts collected in the *Collectio Avellana*. We also have the writings of individuals such as Jerome, which allow us to piece together various debates (most obviously over asceticism) in Rome in this period. We even have the testimony of Ammianus Marcellinus. But we have a surprisingly small range of Christian Roman writing.

Admittedly, Ambrosiaster's scant reference to current events means that his usefulness as a witness to the historical events of these years must be limited. Indeed, the very problem of dating all parts of Ambrosiaster's œuvre makes it difficult to use as a historical source for, for example, the last days of paganism. His work is too susceptible to circularity of argument; as parts of his works cannot be dated individually except by vague internal evidence, extrapolating from this evidence information about the religious status quo at a particular date is dangerous. However, as a guide to the preoccupations of a Christian intellectual in late-fourth-century Rome, Ambrosiaster's writings are extremely valuable. They are wide-ranging and deploy scripture and a smattering of Christian and pagan learning in an eclectic fashion. Furthermore, they manifest a distinctive attitude to earthly rulership which was to be lost in Ambrose and Augustine, under whose names his works were to be transmitted. Ambrosiaster does not feature at all in Inglebert's survey of Latin Eusebianism in the

period 303–410, but he should be located precisely in the context of the end of this Christian tradition of exalting earthly political, especially monarchical, institutions.[5]

The very fact that Ambrosiaster's works were circulated under the illustrious names of Ambrose and Augustine from an early date ensured their survival, popularity, and wide circulation. Unlike sacramental actions, the efficacy—or saving value—of a text was dependent on the orthodoxy and holiness of its author; thus Christians attempted to weed out pseudonymous texts, to discard forgeries, and to read and canonize only 'authentic' texts which were indeed by their purported authors. This textual critical approach is exemplified by Jerome's (and Gennadius' continuation of) *De Viris Illustribus*, a series of mini-hagiographies of Christian authors which incorporate catalogues of their works.[6] Jerome confirmed instances of authentic authorship (authentic in the sense of 'proceeding from its stated source') and discredited pseudonymous attempts to pass off works as that of more illustrious writers, but he did not pick out Ambrosiaster's writings from the œuvre of Augustine and Ambrose as pseudonymous. Ambrosiaster's works exercised an important influence on his contemporaries and immediate successors, as I examine in Chapter 1. But his works also had a long afterlife in the Middle Ages and beyond: his commentaries on Paul became a monastic favourite and his writings were deployed by a range of medieval theologians and canonists.[7]

[5] H. Inglebert, *Les Romains chrétiens face à l'histoire de Rome: histoire, christianisme et romanités en Occident dans l'antiquité tardive, III^e–V^e siècles* (Paris, 1996), pt. II.

[6] Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*, ed. E. C. Richardson (Leipzig, 1986).

[7] Ambrosiaster has been cited as a possible influence on Bede, Alcuin, and Aelfric by D. A. Bankert, J. Wegmann, and C. D. Wright (eds.), 'Ambrose in Anglo-Saxon England with Pseudo-Ambrose and Ambrosiaster', *Old English Newsletter Subsidia*, 25 (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1997); on Cathwulf, by E. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, N.J., 1957); on the Norman Anonymous, by G. H. Williams, 'The Norman Anonymous of 1100 AD', *HTS* 18 (1951); and on Abelard, by R. V. Turner, 'Descendit ad inferos: medieval views on Christ's descent into hell and the salvation of the ancient just', *JHI* 27. 2 (1966), 173–94. Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, 91 n. 12 says that 'Ambrosiaster in canonical literature would deserve a special investigation.' He cites some borrowings in the *Decretum Gratiani* and adds that 'Friedberg's annotations to these passages show that Ivo of Chartres, Anselm of Lucca, the *Collectio Caesaraugustana*, the *Collectio trium partium*, as well as Peter the Lombard, quoted from Ambrosiaster, directly or indirectly.' Vogels, in his preface to the CSEL edition of the commentaries, notes the use of

The distinctive and influential nature of Ambrosiaster's high political theology has been overshadowed by the obsession of scholars from the late nineteenth century onwards with solving the problem of Ambrosiaster's identity by establishing a name and a biography for him. There has been little work on the content of Ambrosiaster's works, as if his lack of a personal history makes his œuvre impossible to approach. It is over 100 years since Souter wrote: 'The real reason why the author has been neglected is the uncertainty as to his identity. I trust the present attempt to make the study of his works easier will cause more attention to be paid to them in the future.'[8] Little has changed.

Some fifteen years ago Robert Markus suggested that there was a need for an assessment of Ambrosiaster's '"incomplete" political theory' but I have chosen to explore Ambrosiaster's 'political theology' in Part II of this book.[9] The terms 'political philosophy', 'political thought', and 'political theory' are problematic when used of Christian writers in late antiquity because they imply a degree of modern secular rigour necessarily absent from Christian work, and they foreground the political at the expense of the theological. There was for some time a tradition of talking about Christian 'political philosophy', epitomized by the work of Baynes and Dvornik.[10] However, there has in recent years been a shift away from favouring

Ambrosiaster by Claudius of Turin, which is confirmed by S. Wemple, 'Claudius of Turin's organic metaphor of the Carolingian doctrine of corporations', *Speculum*, 49. 2 (1974), 222–37 and M. Gorman, 'The commentary on Genesis of Claudius of Turin and biblical studies under Louis the Pious', *Speculum*, 72. 2 (1997), 279–329. On Ambrosiaster in the *Glossa Ordinaria*, see E. A. Matter, 'The church fathers and the Glossa Ordinaria', in I. Backus (ed.), *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1997), i. 83–111 at 107.

[8] A. Souter, *A Study of Ambrosiaster*, Texts and Studies, 4 (Cambridge, 1905), p. viii.

[9] R. A. Markus, 'The Latin Fathers', in J. H. Burns (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1988), 101.

[10] See N. H. Baynes, 'Eusebius and the Christian Empire', *Annuaire de l'institut de philologie et d'histoire orientale* (Brussels, 1933–4), ii. 1318, which analyses the influence of Hellenistic political philosophy on Eusebius' works, and F. Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy: Origins and Background* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies, 9), 2 vols. (Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C., 1966). Dvornik may have entitled his work 'political philosophy' but he also makes use of 'political theory' (see e.g. ii. 611).

classical philosophy as the determining context for educated early Christians, to stressing the importance of scriptural language, models, and themes.[11] In this book I also seek to demonstrate the great influence which scriptural language, ideas, and examples exerted over Ambrosiaster's political thinking, over and beyond any adherence to, or transformation of, a particular ancient philosophical school; he was not, for instance, a Christian Neoplatonist in the mould of Ambrose and Augustine.[12] Where Ambrosiaster did tap into ancient philosophical ideas, it was in vague terms, referring to widely used language (such as that of natural law) rather than borrowing from a particular philosophical text or dogma. I trust that 'political theology' expresses the primary purpose of Ambrosiaster's writings as theological and exegetical, while preserving the richness of their political expression. I hope also to have avoided the misleading dogmatism of terms such as 'doctrine' and 'theory' in preference for the more flexible concepts of 'thought', 'attitude', and 'thinking.'[13]

Political theology has a complicated pedigree. Carl Schmitt, who published his treatise *Politische Theologie* in 1922, sought to appropriate 'political theology' (used critically by his intellectual opponent Bakunin) as a positive self-description. Schmitt's political theology was a critique of liberalism; he was writing about the situation of the Catholic church and contemporary Germany. By contrast, Ernst Kantorowicz's 1957 book, *The King's Two Bodies*, was subtitled 'A study in medieval political theology', and was not theologically programmatic but historically descriptive. Barraclough, in his review of the book, argued against reading back into history the 'artificial

[11] See S. Calderone, 'Il pensiero politico di Eusebio di Cesarea', in G. Bonamente and A. Nestori (eds.), *I cristiani e l'impero nel IV secolo: colloquio sul cristianesimo nel mondo antico* (Macerata, 1998), 48–54; M. J. Hollerich, 'Religion and politics in the writings of Eusebius: reassessing the first court theologian', *CH* 59. 3 (1990), 309–25; and C. Rapp, 'Imperial ideology in the making: Eusebius of Caesarea on Constantine as "bishop"', *JTS* NS 49 (1998), 685–95.

[12] On Christian Neoplatonism, see A. H. Armstrong (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1967) and P. Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers and their Greek Sources* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969).

[13] Brown, hostile to erecting 'attitude' into 'doctrine' when dealing with Augustine's thought, uses such circumlocutions as Febvre's 'outillage moral', which he translates as 'moral equipment.' See P. Brown, 'St Augustine's attitude to religion coercion', *JRS* 54 (1964), 107–16.

continuity of political theory, reaching back through converging channels to Greek antiquity', and supported Kantorowicz's choice of subtitle as closer to medieval reality. He wrote: 'Much that is commonly treated as political, including not only the conception of transcendental unity but also the problem of authority and obligation, was seen by medieval man as religious . . .'[14] Finally, political theology has been appropriated by a contemporary school as a way of doing theology in the modern world, often self-consciously shunning old-fashioned conservative political theology in return for a left-wing, even revolutionary, agenda epitomized by liberation theology.[15]

I do not use the term as derived from either the Schmitt 'school' or contemporary theology, but as a way of describing the interaction of political and theological thinking in Ambrosiaster. 'Political theology' is also commonly used to characterize Eusebius' writings, work on whom can provide a model for work on Ambrosiaster. Oliver O'Donovan has recently provided a bridge between contemporary political theology and historical political theology in *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology*. He seeks to rehabilitate political theology (which itself reacts against the attempt to insulate theology from political theory) by reaching behind the modern tradition and learning from an older politico-theological discourse, beginning in the patristic period. His opening definition of political theology is one which is particularly apt for our purposes: 'It postulates an analogy—not a rhetorical metaphor only, or a poetic image, but an analogy grounded in reality—between the acts of God and human acts, both of them taking place within the one public history . . .'[16]

I use 'political theology' of Ambrosiaster's writings to describe a reflexive relationship: earthly politics informed by heavenly reality, and a construction of a heavenly polity on the model of the Roman imperial one. This is a rare, late expression in Latin of a moderated sort of Eusebian political theology, which exalts the earthly ruler

[14] G. Barraclough, 'The sovereign state', *Spectator*, no. 6788 (1 Aug. 1958), 171.

[15] See A. Kee, *A Reader in Political Theology* (London, 1974) and id., *The Scope of Political Theology* (London, 1978).

[16] O. O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge, 1996), 2.

because of his imitation of God. Before analysing these specifically political concerns in Chapter 6, I explore the social and ecclesiastical framework for these themes in Chapters 4 and 5; political thinking in this period should be understood broadly as 'the way society is organized', encompassing such basic themes as the relation of man to woman, and of both to the beasts.

In Chapter 7 of this book, on the Devil, I widen the scope of traditional histories of political theology. As etymology might suggest, these have generally been concerned with the holy. Yet patristic theology necessarily involves a diabology; the story of the fall of man was placed by many after the fall of the Devil. One of the most pressing theological questions of the fourth century was that of the origin of evil: '*unde malum*?.' Although this was a favourite question of the Manichees, Ambrosiaster, a vehement opponent of the Manichees, also pondered on it.[17] Ambrosiaster was very concerned, like most early Christians, with Satan. But he considered the Devil under many aspects: as a key player in the history of God's creation, as a distinctively political figure, and as a malign role model for men on earth. The range and inventiveness of Ambrosiaster's diabology is notable and has tended to be ignored by scholars working on him.

Brown explains that 'it is one thing to see a man's thought as a whole; and quite another to attempt to make it seem consistent. The historian must risk a task of integration if he is to understand any attitude, and especially an attitude to a subject such as this [coercion].'[18] The attitude which I examine in Part II of this book is much broader, being that towards 'the political'; none the less, I hope to provide one way of seeing Ambrosiaster's 'thought as a whole', even if I risk what Brown dismisses as 'the temptation to impose an academic consistency.'[19]

[17] See Ambrosiaster *Q.* 1. 3: 'And so everything that the good God made is good: whence, then, evil?' On the Manichees' use of this question, see R. Lim, *Public Disputation, Power and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Calif., and London, 1995), 89.

[18] Brown, 'Augustine's attitude', 108. [19] Ibid.

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Part I

Ambrosiaster's Writings and Identity

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1

The Emergence of Ambrosiaster

How has the name 'Ambrosiaster' come to be attached to the author of two major Latin works, a set of *Commentaries* on all the Pauline epistles save Hebrews, and *127 Quaestiones* on the Old and New Testaments?[1] These works are now known to us as the work of a single author, an anonymous who has for over 300 years been referred to as Ambrosiaster, but there have been several distinct stages in the emergence of an Ambrosiaster. In the earliest phase of their circulation, portions of the *Quaestiones* and *Commentaries* were attributed by their readers to various different authors or were anonymous. This confusion over the authorship of Ambrosiaster's works is further reflected in the manuscript tradition. The *Commentaries* survive in over seventy manuscripts of differing attributions; many attribute the work to Ambrose, but some are anonymous and

[1] Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, ed. A. Souter, CSEL 50 (Vienna, 1908) and Ambrosiaster, *Commentarius in xiii Epistulas Paulinas*, ed. H. I. Vogels, CSEL 81 (Vienna, 1966–9). Two other texts have also been proposed as Ambrosiastrian. One is a fragment of a commentary on Matthew, edited by G. Mercati, *Anonymi Chiliastae in Matthaeum XXIV Fragmenta*, in Varia Sacra, Studi e Testi, 11 (Rome, 1911). See also A. Souter, 'Reasons for regarding Hilarius (Ambrosiaster) as the author of the Mercati-Turner anecdoton', *JTS* 5 (1904), 608–21, and C. H. Turner, 'An exegetical fragment of the third century', ibid., 218–41. The other is a juxtaposition of various Roman and Mosaic laws, *Lex Dei sive Mosaicarum et Romanarum Legum Collatio* (edited by T. Mommsen, *Collectio librorum iuris anteiustiniani* (Berlin, 1890), iii. 136–98). The *Collatio*, 15. 3, shares a reference to a lost rescript of Diocletian against the Manichees with Ambrosiaster, *Comm. II Tim.* 3: 6. There has been a lengthy debate as to whether the *Collatio* was written by a Jew or a Christian, and indeed whether Ambrosiaster could be identified as its author. This debate is summarized well in L. Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome: Evidence of Cultural Interaction in the Roman Diaspora* (Leiden, 1995), ch. 6. He concludes that the *Collatio* is a Jewish, not a Christian, production.

one may have been attributed to Hilary.[2] Almost all of the forty surviving manuscripts of Ambrosiaster's *Quaestiones* are attributed to Augustine, although intriguingly Souter has identified three occasions on which portions of the collection have been transmitted as Ambrosian.[3]

The attribution of the *Commentaries* to Ambrose and of the *Quaestiones* to Augustine stabilized in the Middle Ages and endured until the sixteenth century when scholars started to question whether these were genuine works. In this second phase of the emergence of Ambrosiaster, not only were the attributions of portions of his works to Ambrose and Augustine rejected but it was first suggested that their real author had deliberately concealed his identity and assumed another; that is, the idea of our author as a pseudonymous developed. Finally, the suggestion that the *Commentaries* and *Quaestiones* might have a common author, which was mooted as early as the seventeenth century, was conclusively and minutely demonstrated in the early twentieth century.

DATE AND PLACE OF COMPOSITION

Before tracing how and when Ambrosiaster's works were first circulated, quoted, and misattributed by his near-contemporaries, it is necessary to establish how far we can date and place the composition of Ambrosiaster's works from internal references. In his *Commentary on I Timothy* Ambrosiaster referred to 'the church . . . whose ruler today is Damasus.'[4] This establishes that his *floruit* at least overlapped with Damasus' reign of 366–84; there may also be an allusion to the anti-Pope elected during Damasus' reign at *Quaestio* 110. 7. There are various other historical pointers to be found within the texts themselves. The reign of Julian was past but still in memory ('most recently,

[2] For the most complete description and analysis of the manuscripts of Ambrosiaster's *Commentaries*, see A. Souter, *The Earliest Latin Commentaries on the Epistles of St Paul* (Oxford, 1927), 39–59. See also Vogels' preface to his edition of the *Commentaries*, CSEL 81, pp. xviii–lvi.

[3] See Souter, *Earliest Latin Commentaries*, 41.

[4] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Tim.*, 3: 15. 1: 'ecclesia . . . cuius hodie rector est Damasus.'

Julian . . .').[5] The post-Julianic dating is confirmed by a reference to a law of Julian.[6] No emperors after Julian were mentioned, but this was common practice in an era when comment on living emperors was generally restricted. The concatenation of crimes mentioned in his *Commentary on I Timothy* appears to tally with those targeted by the magic and treason trials of the mid-360s to 370s:[7] 'And so [avarice] is the root of all evils, because, in order that they might satisfy their desires, which is impossible, it commits sorcery, murder and adultery and whatsoever there is which is criminal . . .'[8] This particular combination of crimes recurred elsewhere, as in a passing reference to 'homicide, magic, adultery, and disreputable conduct.'[9]

Quaestio 44 referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, since which 'about 300 years' had elapsed, which suggests a date of about 370.[10] *Quaestio* 114 has received a variety of interpretations for its reference to the open worship at Rome of the oriental mystery cults of Isis, Mithras, and Bacchus.[11] It should either be placed before 382, when Gratian closed the temples, or after 382 and before Theodosius' attempts to suppress pagan religion.[12] *Quaestio* 115 contains a range

[5] Id., *Comm. II Thess.*, 2: 7: 'novissime Julianum.'

[6] Id., *Q.* 115. 12: 'ante Juliani edictum mulieres viros suos dimittere nequibant.'

[7] On the magic and treason trials, see J. Matthews, *The Roman World of Ammianus* (London, 1989), 209–17. He explains that men and women 'were executed and exiled . . . on accusations of magic arts and, especially in the later years of the prosecutions, for sexual offences' (p. 213). Ammianus describes the course of these years at *Res Gestae* 28.1, and contemporary laws give some idea of the charges being levelled—see *CTh* 9. 16. 7–10.

[8] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Tim.*, 6: 9. 2: 'ideo radix omnium malorum est, quia, ut desideria sua expleant, quod inpossibile est, et maleficia et homicidia et obscenitatem et quicquid sceleris est perpetrat . . .'

[9] Id., *Q.* 127. 26: 'et homicidae enim et malefico et adultero et infami congruit haec sententia.' There are other contextual explanations for connecting these offences: the second passage is explaining appropriate sentences for crimes in the Bible, and in contemporary legal terms they were considered to be so severe that none of them could be amnestied (see J. Harries, *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1999), 151).

[10] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 44. 14 on the 'excidium Hierusalem', followed by 15: 'Et quis ambigat de hoc numero, cum trecenti circiter anni nunc super hunc numerum inveniantur?'

[11] Id., *Q.* 114. 11 on Isis, followed by a description of Mithraic rites; *Q.* 114. 12 on Bacchic worship.

[12] Those supporting a pre-382 date are Cumont, 'La Polémique de l'Ambrosiaster contre les païens', *RHL* 8 (1903), 417–40 and Souter, *A Study*, 169; L. Speller, 'Conflict

of clues to date it. Ambrosiaster stated: 'We know that Italy and Africa, Sicily and Sardinia have been afflicted with famine',[13] and then mentioned Pannonia, 'which was so devastated that there can be no relief.'[14] It is difficult to date this Western famine, but Cracco Ruggini has settled on the date of 383 for a *carestia generale* from a series of references by Symmachus to famine.[15] She has also established that the reference to the devastation of Pannonia in the same *Quaestio* probably referred to the barbarian invasions of 383–4, although the region had suffered a series of disasters which make it difficult to settle on a specific date.[16] In this *Quaestio* Ambrosiaster also referred to a woman with eleven husbands and a man with twelve wives, of which we find a version in Jerome, datable to the period 382–4.[17] All the evidence points to *Quaestio* 115 being composed around 384.

and Controversy in Ambrosiaster' (unpub. D.Phil. thesis: Oxford, 1980), 22, outlines an argument for a post-382 date.

[13] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 115. 49: 'Ecce scimus fame laborasse Italiam et Africam, Siciliam et Sardiniam.'

[14] Ibid.: 'quid dicemus de Pannonia, quae sic erasa est, ut remedium habere non possit?'

[15] L. Cracco Ruggini, '"Fame laborasse Italiam": una nuova testimonianza sulla carestia del 383 d.c.', *Athenaeum fasciolo speciale: Convegno in memoria di P. Fraccaro* (Pavia, 1976), 83–98. She cites Symmachus, *Letter*, 4. 74 (describing *inopia* in Africa in 382), and id., *Relatio* 3. 15–17 (describing the ill effects in 383 of the anti-pagan measures adopted by Gratian in 382).

[16] Earlier problems in Pannonia are attested by Ammianus, *Res Gestae* 30. 5, detailing the devastation of Pannonia under Valentinian in 375. Jerome, in his *Chronicle* for 376, wrote of the devastation wrought in Illyricum (which coincided with Pannonia) by excessive taxation in a province already devastated by barbarians: 'Equitius comes Illyrici inquissimis tributorum exactionibus ante provincias quas regebat, quam a barbaris vastarentur, erasit.' Both he and Ambrosiaster chose *eradere* to describe what had happened. Jerome then wrote in his *Chronicle* entry for 378 of the devastation of Pannonia by the Sarmatians which had occurred the previous year, i.e. 377: 'Quia superiore anno Sarmatae Pannonias vastaverant . . .'

[17] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 115. 72: 'quaedam fuit mulier in urbe Roma, quam constat undecim maritos habuisse, et alius vir, qui duodecim habuit uxores.' See Jerome, *Letter*, 123. 10: 'when I was helping Damasus with his ecclesiastical correspondence . . . I saw a married couple . . . the man had already buried twenty wives, and the woman had twenty-two husbands.' Although the numbers involved are different, the story is substantially the same. Jerome was referring to the period after his return to Rome in 382 when he was working for Damasus, whose death in 384 provides the *terminus ante quem* for this story.

These pointers do not allow us to assign dates to the composition of any but one of the Pauline *Commentaries* (that on Timothy); this leaves dangling the question whether the *Commentaries* were composed sequentially, and over what sort of period of time. Furthermore, Ambrosiaster's *Commentary on Romans* exists in three different recensions, distinguished in the CSEL edition as α, β, and γ, and there are two recensions of his *Commentaries* on the letters to the Corinthians; it is likely that these are all authorial editions.[18] As far as the three recensions of the *Commentary on Romans* are concerned, α is the shortest text, lacking portions found in β and γ; this suggests that either α is an abridged version of β or β an expanded version of α. It would appear that γ is a later edition than α and β as it changes perspective with regard to the city of Rome, specifying 'Rome' where α and β had 'city', possibly implying a later recension for a broader audience.[19] However, there are no clues in the later recension to how long had elapsed between the time of composition and the time of revision and this further hinders our understanding of the process, time-scale, and motivation of authorial revision.

Some individual *Quaestiones* contain clues to the date of their composition, but there are still plenty that are not anchored to any date and the difficulty of establishing a date for their compilation into a collection remains. Furthermore, there are three different classes of manuscripts of Ambrosiaster's *Quaestiones*, containing different numbers and selections of *Quaestiones*.[20] It is likely that at least the first two classes are authorial or at least near-contemporary collections, and that only the third class is a later production; again, determining the reasons for producing, and the different date of, these different editions, is difficult.[21]

If dating Ambrosiaster's works is difficult, locating their place of composition from internal references to the writer's context is slightly

[18] See Vogels, preface to CSEL 81, pp. xxi ff. On the phenomenon of early Christian writers editing and reissuing their own works, see G. Bardy, 'Éditions et rééditions d'ouvrages patristiques', *RBén* 47 (1935), 356–80.

[19] First suggested by Vogels, preface to CSEL 81, p. xv. The relevant references are: Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Rom.*, 1: 10. 4 and 1: 13. 1.

[20] The three classes are: i. 15 MSS of 127 *Qq*, ii. 3 MSS of 151 *Qq*, and iii. 5 MSS of 94 *Qq*. See Souter, *A Study*, 17–19.

[21] See ibid., 189.

more straightforward. In the *Quaestio* 'On Fate', he wrote: 'here then in the city of Rome and within her boundaries.'[22] In the *Commentary on Romans* he also stated that he was writing in Rome: 'For one understands that all the people whom Paul greets as a way of giving the Romans stability, were present here, that is, at Rome.'[23] His *Commentary on Romans* has further traits which imply a Roman location. Recensions α and β generally have *urbs* where γ has *Roma*, a casual reference which assumes that the local audience will understand that he is referring to their city—*the* city.[24] Ambrosiaster appears to have added *Roma* to the later recension γ as a clarification for a wider, extra-Roman audience. Secondly, the verbs he used to describe the journeying of people to Rome are *venire* or *advenire*, suggesting the author visualized people 'coming to' the place where he was writing.[25] Finally, Ambrosiaster alluded to current events in Rome, ranging from the arrogance of the Roman deacons,[26] the scandalous behaviour of Roman women,[27] the behaviour and customs of senators and consuls,[28] and the survival of a range of pagan practices.[29] Souter suggested that Ambrosiaster may have resided elsewhere during his lifetime, in Northern Italy, Spain, and Egypt,[30] but these writings appear to have been produced in Rome.

Overall, the scant conclusions which we can draw from internal references in the texts are that none of Ambrosiaster's works can be positively dated to later than the mid-380s; that the cluster of dating clues indicate that our writer certainly wrote after Julian's reign; and that the majority of his work should be placed in the 370s and 380s. However, by looking at instances when contemporary and slightly later writers borrowed Ambrosiaster, we can establish with greater

[22] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 115. 16: 'hic enim in urbe Roma et finibus eius.'

[23] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 16: 4.1: 'nam ad confirmationem Romanorum hi omnes quos salutat, hic, id est Romae, fuisse intelleguntur.'

[24] Ibid. 1: 10. 4: versions α and β have 'ut veniret ad urbem', γ has 'ut Romam veniret'; *Comm. Rom.*, 1: 13. 1: versions α and β have 'ad urbem veniebant', γ has 'Romam veniebant.'

[25] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, *argumentum*, 3: 'Romam advenientibus'; ibid. 1: 10.4: 'ut Romam veniret'; ibid. 1: 13.1: 'Romam veniebant.'

[26] Id., *Q.* 101.

[27] Id., *Q.* 115 *passim*, esp. paras. 26–7 and 72.

[28] Id., *Qq.* 107. 6, 81, 102. 5.

[29] Id., *Q.* 114. See Cumont, 'La Polémique de l'Ambrosiaster.'

[30] Souter, *Earliest Latin Commentaries*, 43–4.

certainty when and where his works were being circulated and under what name, if any. Examining the identifiable ideas and exegetical arguments with which Ambrosiaster apparently engaged further serves to place him and his texts in an intellectual context. Admittedly, it is often difficult to establish where writers were engaging with one another's work or ideas, since intertextuality extends beyond the mere borrowing or citation of phrases to the more elusive interpenetration of attitudes and ideas. Here I shall confine myself to the most obvious instances of interchange.

THE EARLY CIRCULATION OF AMBROSIASTER'S WORKS

The *Commentaries* and *Quaestiones* were quoted by writers as diverse as Augustine, Jerome, and Pelagius, establishing that they were certainly in circulation by the beginning of the fifth century, and in some cases, earlier still. However, these writers either ascribe their borrowings to some more famous contemporary—to Ambrose or Hilary—or fail to attribute them at all.

Augustine

Ambrosiaster and Augustine's intellectual relationship appears to have been one-way: Ambrosiaster did not cite Augustine, which also fits in with a dating of his works to the period before and around Augustine's conversion to Catholic Christianity in 384. Augustine was in Rome 383–4, when he had a miserable year teaching and being cheated by his pupils.[31] He was still a Manichee in this period, and was teaching rhetoric, so he was likely to have been moving in secular circles. He attracted the attention of Symmachus, an imperial official and a pagan, who in 384 appointed him to the professorship of rhetoric at Milan where he met Ambrose and eventually converted to Christianity. Whether or not Augustine came across Ambrosiaster

[31] See Augustine, *Confessions*, 5. 8–12.

during his time in Rome (and if so, probably via secular, official contacts rather than in any ecclesiastical context, given Augustine's religious status at the time), he appears to have drawn on Ambrosiastrian texts in the early fifth century.

Augustine apparently cited Ambrosiaster's work in his support in debate with Jerome over the interpretation of Galatians 2: 11. Jerome argued that the disagreement between Peter and Paul reported in this passage was simulated, Augustine that it was real. Augustine suggested that: 'if you seek or consider what our Ambrose understood by this, what our Cyprian similarly understood by it, you will perhaps find that we too were not short of authorities to follow in what we are asserting.'[32] But the view that the apostolic quarrel was real, not simulated, is not found in any of Ambrose's extant works, while it is found in Ambrosiaster's commentary on Galatians. Augustine appears to have unknowingly cited Ambrosiaster, meaning that Ambrosiaster's *Commentaries* (or part of them) were circulating under Ambrose's name as early as 405.[33]

However, Augustine ascribed an Ambrosiastrian comment on Romans 5: 12 to Hilary (presumably of Poitiers) in a work of *c.*420 addressed against the Pelagians:

> So this is how saint Hilary understood that which is written, 'in whom all sinned': for he said: 'in whom, that is in Adam, all sinned.' Then he added: 'it is manifest that all sinned in Adam as if in a lump: for he himself was corrupted through sin, and all those whom he begot were born under sin.' Hilary, writing thus, unambiguously impressed upon us how 'in whom all sinned' should be understood.[34]

[32] Augustine, *Letter*, 82. 24: 'Porro si quaeras vel recolas quid hinc senserit noster Ambrosius, quid noster itidem Cyprianus, invenies fortasse nec nobis defuisse, quos in eo, quod adserimus, sequeremur.'

[33] See J. H. Baxter, 'Ambrosiaster cited as "Ambrose" in 405', *JTS* 24 (1922–3), 187. E. Plumer, *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians* (Oxford, 2003), 54–5 picks up a misreading of scripture shared by Ambrosiaster and Augustine in their comments on Gal. 2: 9. However, he concludes that the direct influence of Ambrosiaster over Augustine is impossible to demonstrate.

[34] Augustine, *Contra Duas Epistulas Pelagianorum*, 4. 4. 7: 'nam sic et sanctus Hilarius intellexit quod scriptum est, "in quo omnes peccaverunt": ait enim: "in quo, id est in Adam, omnes peccaverunt". Deinde addidit: "manifestum in Adam omnes peccasse quasi in massa: ipse enim per peccatum corruptus, omnes quos genuit nati sunt sub peccato". haec scribens Hilarius sine ambiguitate commonuit, quomodo intellegendum esset "in quo omnes peccaverunt".'

Now this reading appears in Ambrosiaster's *Commentary on Romans* 5: 12,[35] and nowhere in (what survives of) Hilary's corpus. It is thus possible, though not certain, that Augustine derived his interpretation from Ambrosiaster.[36] It is an important borrowing on Augustine's part. The interpretation here cited by Augustine takes the *quo* of *in quo* to refer back to Adam and thus identifies man as sinning *in* Adam, rather than *like*, *in so far as*, or *in that* Adam sinned. The distinction between these two readings is crucial; the first implicates all men directly in Adam's sin and allows for the development of a concept of original sin and the culpable *massa perditionis*, whereas the latter possibilities do not so explicitly spread Adam's guilt to all men.

There are other instances where Augustine may have drawn on Ambrosiaster's works, both the *Quaestiones* and the *Commentaries*, but in these cases he did not attribute his borrowings.[37] Whatever the extent of the influence, it seems clear that Augustine did not have Ambrosiaster's complete *Commentaries* and *Quaestiones* at hand, identified as the work of a single author. His two confident misattributions are best ascribed to the works having reached him piecemeal, perhaps anonymously, requiring him to guess their authorship.

Jerome

Jerome and Ambrosiaster appear to have been acquainted with various aspects of each other's writings and ideas, but it is difficult to establish whether the two actually encountered each other during Jerome's sojourn in Rome from 382 to 385. Ambrosiaster, even when apparently referring to Jerome's work, never named him. Jerome did not include Ambrosiaster's *Commentaries* and *Quaestiones* in his *De*

[35] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Rom.*, 5: 12. 3: 'manifestum est itaque omnes in Adam peccasse quasi in massa. ipse enim per peccatum corruptus quos genuit, omnes nati sunt sub peccato.'

[36] See B. Leeming, 'Augustine, Ambrosiaster and the massa perditionis', *Greg* 11 (1930), 58–91; Souter, *A Study*, 3–4; and A. Bastiaensen, 'Augustin et ses prédécesseurs latins chrétiens', in J. den Boeft and J. van Oort (eds.), *Augustiniana Traiectana* (Paris, 1987), 29–30.

[37] For a summary of Augustine's other possible borrowings from Ambrosiaster, see Bastiaensen, 'Les prédécesseurs', 27–30.

Viris Illustribus (a list of the great achievements of literary men) and although he seems to have referred to parts of Ambrosiaster's works elsewhere, he never attributed his references to a named author. This could have been a deliberate *damnatio memoriae* in response to Ambrosiaster's opinions, which provoked Jerome personally as well as theologically.[38] But there could be a less sinister explanation for the silence. Christian writers in this period rarely acknowledged their borrowings or attributed their sources.[39] Jerome's failure to name his sources could reflect the contemporary laissez-faire attitude to ransacking others' works without acknowledgement, or perhaps he was simply unable to identify the author of these works because they circulated anonymously.

A letter of Jerome to Evangelus,[40] 146 (of unknown date), tackled the same issue as Ambrosiaster's *Quaestio* 101: the arrogance of the Roman deacons. It has been described as an instance of Jerome's relying substantially on Ambrosiaster.[41] Jerome began by saying: 'I hear that someone has broken into such madness, that he puts deacons *before* presbyters, that is bishops.'[42] Jerome had learnt of this

[38] H. Vogels (1956), 'Ambrosiaster und Hieronymus', *RBén* 66 (1956), 15 suggests *damnatio memoriae* to explain Jerome's concerted suppression of Ambrosiaster. Souter, *A Study*, 185 deals with Jerome's silence thus: 'If he did [know Ambrosiaster's Pauline commentaries], he had some strong reason for ignoring it . . . Perhaps its anonymity was the cause of its omission; or Jerome hated the author, who may have been a rival for Damasus' favour . . .' See also J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome* (London, 1975), 149, who suggests that for Jerome, provoked over Ambrosiaster's hostility to the Vulgate project, 'his opponent amply merited relegation to oblivion.'

[39] Souter, *A Study*, 7: 'Ancient authors . . . were so skilful in interweaving the work of their predecessors with their own, that the "sutures" are difficult to detect. Moreover, with them the matter was the important thing, the ascription of particular opinions to their authors quite a secondary consideration.' It is ironic that Souter here excuses Ambrosiaster's non-attribution of his sources, but seeks a rather different explanation for why Jerome does not cite Ambrosiaster by name.

[40] It is a tantalizing coincidence that Jerome's only two letters to Evangelus, a presbyter, are both on matters which involve Ambrosiastrian material. On Evangelus, see C. Pietri and L. Pietri (eds.), *Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire*, 3 vols. (Rome, 1999), i. 662.

[41] See Souter, *A Study*, 171: 'There is enough originality in Jerome's letter to save his credit, but he has clearly borrowed argument and illustration from his predecessor.' I follow Vallarsi, who in his 1734–42 edition of Jerome's works stated (i. 1076): 'certe ex hac Hieronymi epistola tota expressa est Quaestio CI ex his . . .' He, however, gives no reasons for dating the *Quaestio* after the letter.

[42] Jerome, *Letter*, 146. 1: 'audio quendam in tantam erupisse vaecordiam, ut diacones presbyteris, id est episcopis, anteferret.' Pietri and Pietri, *Prosopographie*

through hearsay (*audio*), whereas Ambrosiaster appears to have been more involved or at least acquainted with the individual whom he coyly failed to identify by name.[43] This would suggest that Jerome was using Ambrosiaster as his source. However, there are two indications that Ambrosiaster was aware of Jerome's stance on the situation (as expressed in this letter), and was explicitly distancing himself from it.

The first is in Ambrosiaster's statement that: 'a certain man . . . contends to make levites equal with priests, deacons with presbyters, *not I would say prefer them* [deacons], because that would be even more stupid and would perhaps seem incredible, and we would be held to be not correctors but slanderers.'[44] The claim he dismissed, that this troublesome deacon was claiming precedence over presbyters, was precisely that with which Jerome opened his letter, stating that someone had preferred deacons to presbyters. Jerome used *anteferre*, and Ambrosiaster *praeferre*, to indicate the deacon's promoting himself above presbyters. The fact that Ambrosiaster used a similar verb to Jerome to express the claim which he then dismissed as vicious and untrue, suggests strongly that Ambrosiaster had come across Jerome's letter and was distancing himself from the attack in it which he said overstated the case.

Secondly, Jerome described a deacon as 'a mere server of tables and of widows', a phrase from Acts 6: 1–2 which Ambrosiaster took pains to distance himself from, writing: 'For we read that Peter the apostle said to the people: "Choose from among yourselves those whom we will constitute to serve ministers of the church", I do not want to say

chrétienne, write (i. 662) that the conviction of Jerome (*Letter*, 146) 'suggère chez l'interlocuteur de Jérôme une certaine sympathie pour la thèse favorable au diaconat.' However, the fact that Evangelus was himself a presbyter renders this speculation a little empty.

[43] Ambrosiaster gives us a clue to this anonymous individual's identity (*Q.* 101. 2): 'Quidam igitur, qui nomen habet falsi dei.' Souter, *A Study*, 169–70, first amended the text from *Falcidii* (Falcidius, supposedly the name of the deacon in question) to *falsi dei*, and proposed Concordius, a deacon mentioned in the *Liber Pontificalis*. C. H. Turner, 'Ambrosiaster and Damasus', *JTS* 7 (1906), 281–4, proposed the deacon Mercurius, commemorated in an epigram of Damasus (*ICUR*, NS 2, 4098) as his clerk of works.

[44] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 101. 2: 'Quidam igitur . . . levitas sacerdotibus et diaconos presbiteris coaequare contendit, non dicam praeferre, quia stultius est et forte incredibile videatur et nos non emendatores, sed calumniatores habeamur.'

"tables".'[45] Was this a subtle rebuttal of Jerome's demeaning description? Finally, Ambrosiaster and Jerome chose almost entirely different biblical proof texts to shore up their argument. Rather than one appearing to borrow from the other, there seems to have been a deliberate avoidance of reusing material. It is more likely that Ambrosiaster was reacting to Jerome's letter, than vice versa.

There are two instances in which Ambrosiaster and Jerome appear to have engaged in some intellectual mud-slinging, although always anonymously. Ambrosiaster was in conflict with Jerome in the period 382–5 over Jerome's revision of the Old Latin versions of scripture in his production of the Vulgate, requested by Damasus.[46] Jerome's *Letter* 27 (addressed to Marcella in 384) referred to reports of 'two-legged asses' (*bipedes asellos*) who were criticizing his attempt to correct passages in the gospels:

> A report suddenly reached me that certain contemptible creatures were demanding to know why I had tried to emend passages in the gospels, against the authority of the ancients and the opinion of the whole world . . . but the Latin manuscripts of the Scriptures are proved to be faulty by the variations which all of them exhibit, and my object has been to restore them to the form of the Greek original, from which my detractors do not deny that they have been translated.[47]

This tallies with Ambrosiaster's fulminations against corrupt Greek biblical manuscripts, and against those who gave them credence:

> And yet people want to write the text thus for us from Greek manuscripts, as if these did not themselves disagree with each other . . . Now it is agreed

[45] Id., *Q.* 101. 9: 'legimus enim ad plebem dixisse Petrum apostolum: "eligite" inquit "ex vobis quos constituamus deservire ministeriis ecclesiae", nolo dicere "mensis".'

[46] See Vogels, 'Ambrosiaster und Hieronymus', 17 ff. Jerome outlined his project in his preface to the Vulgate version of the New Testament: 'You [Damasus] urge me to revise the old Latin version, and, as it were, to sit in judgment on the copies of the scriptures which are now scattered throughout the whole world; and inasmuch as they differ from one another, you would have me decide which of them agree with the Greek original.'

[47] Jerome, *Letter*, 27. 1: 'ad me repente perlatum est quosdam homunculos mihi studiose detrahere, cur adversus auctoritatem veterum et totius mundi opinionem aliqua in evangeliis emendare temptaverim. . . . sed Latinorum codicum vitiositatem, quae ex diversitate librorum omnium conprobatur, ad Graecam originem, unde et ipsi translata non denegant, voluisse revocare.'

that a long time ago certain Latin manuscripts were translated from old Greek ones. The simplicity of the times preserved these uncorrupt, and guarantees them. But afterwards, with souls being separated from unity and with heretics stirring up trouble, questions for dispute came to be examined, and subsequently many things were changed to conform with human thinking, with the result that what was contained in the scriptures was what appealed to man. Thus even the Greeks themselves have divergent manuscripts. I consider the correct reading to be the one which reason, history, and authority all retain.[48]

Jerome's examples of disputed readings are also found in the Old Latin version of the Pauline letters preserved in Ambrosiaster's commentaries, which further confirms that he may have had Ambrosiaster in mind. Although neither man named his opponent, it seems clear that they were aware of each other's existence; indeed, it would surely have been impossible for a Christian living and working in Rome not to have known about Jerome's Damasan commission, or indeed not to have known about Jerome. It was more possible that Jerome could have received a report of his detractors' objections to the Vulgate project, without knowing precisely who they were.

A second context for conflict between the two was the debate in Rome among Christians over the relative validity of marriage and of chastity.[49] Ambrosiaster's defence of marriage and his undermining of lay asceticism, albeit qualified by a simultaneous defence of clerical celibacy, would have pitted him against Jerome and his ascetic enthusiasts. His *Quaestio* on the sin of Adam and Eve should be read as attacking those of Jerome's tendency. In it, he accused nameless opponents of heresy: 'But who are you to forbid marriage?

[48] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Rom.*, 5: 14. 4e–5a: 'et tamen sic praescribere nobis volunt de Graecis codicibus, quasi non ipsi ab invicem discrepent . . . constat autem quosdam Latinos porro olim de veteribus Graecis translatos codicibus, quos incorruptos simplicitas temporum servavit et probat. postquam autem a concordia animis dissidentibus et hereticis perturbantibus torqueri quaestiones coeperunt, multa inmutata sunt ad sensum humanum, ut hoc contineretur [in] litteris, quod homini videretur. unde etiam ipsi Graeci diversos codices habent. hoc autem verum arbitror, quando et ratio et historia et auctoritas conservatur.'

[49] See D. G. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy* (Oxford, 2007); id., 'Resistance to the virginal idea of late fourth century Rome: the case of Jovinian', *TS* 48. 1 (1987), 45–64; id., 'On the sin of Adam and Eve: a little-known defence of marriage and child-bearing by Ambrosiaster', *HTR* 82 (1989), 283–99.

Perhaps Marcion, as you think that the body was not made by God, but by the Devil . . .'[50] Charges of heresy were notably laid against Jerome's female ascetic protégées, and perhaps contributed to his hasty departure from Rome in 385.[51] Ambrosiaster also accused his enemies of crypto-Manicheism, and portrayed them as dupes of Satan.[52] In this context, Jerome and Ambrosiaster were fiercely at odds, but both fitted into broader parties debating this subject in Rome, and it would have been possible for them to have heard of each other without necessarily meeting.[53]

A clue that they had, in fact, encountered each other is found in Jerome's *Commentary on Titus*, 3: 9, where he reported that he had heard someone 'raise a question' (*facere quaestionem*) on the subject of gospel genealogies which sounds very like Ambrosiaster's *Quaestio* 56.[54] Jerome identified his source as a Jew feigning Christianity at Rome. Although the evidence for Ambrosiaster being a convert from Judaism is inconclusive, it is just possible that Jerome was referring to Ambrosiaster here. It is also a plausible chronological sequence since Jerome's *Commentaries* on Paul were written after his arrival in Bethlehem in *c.*386, and Ambrosiaster's *Quaestiones* are broadly datable to the mid-370s to 380s.

Next, we must consider the five problems (*quaestiunculis*) from Genesis which Damasus sent to Jerome to answer in 384, which take almost exactly the same form as the questions posed by Ambrosiaster at the head of his *Quaestiones* 6, 9, 10, 11, and 12.[55] Was Damasus the original questioner who inspired Ambrosiaster's answers, or had he

[50] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 127. 17: 'Sed quis tu es, qui nuptias prohibes? forte Marcion, quia corpus non a deo fabricatum putas, sed a diabolo . . .'

[51] See Jerome, *Letter*, 22. 13: 'When they see a woman with a pale sad face, they call her "a miserable Manichean nun": and quite logically too, for on their principles fasting is heresy.' See also Hunter, 'On the sin of Adam and Eve', 298.

[52] Hunter, 'On the sin of Adam and Eve', 296–7, quoting Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 127. 11 and Jerome, *Letter*, 45. The specific language of Ambrosiaster's accusations (that opponents of marriage 'employ the dupes of Satan') tallies with Jerome's complaints of just such accusations (that he 'lies and deceives other by Satanic arts').

[53] See J. Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital: Rome in the Fourth Century* (Oxford, 2000), ch. 7.

[54] Jerome, *Commentary on Titus*, 3: 9: 'Audivi ego quemdam de Hebraeis, qui se Romae in Christum credidisse simulabat, de genealogiis Domini nostri Jesu Christi, quae scripta sunt in Mattheo, et Luca facere quaestionem . . .' On this text, see C. H. Turner, 'Niceta and Ambrosiaster', *JTS* 7 (1906), 366 ff.

[55] Damasus, *Letters*, 35 and 36 in CSEL 54 (ed. I. Hilberg) (Vienna, 1996).

received Ambrosiaster's unsolicited *Quaestiones* and then sought a second opinion from Jerome? Damasus did not appear to be worried about having received potentially heretical answers to these questions, and Jerome did not appear to be responding to Ambrosiaster's answers either;[56] the only previous attempts to solve these problems which he mentioned were by Tertullian, Novatian, Origen, Didymus, and Hippolytus, and there were no echoes of, or challenges to, Ambrosiaster's answers in Jerome's responses. It is thus difficult to use this correspondence between Damasus and Jerome as a means to date Ambrosiaster's *Quaestiones*.

Finally, Jerome dealt directly with Ambrosiaster's work in his *Letter* 73, written in 398, over a decade after his departure from Rome. This was a reply to Evangelus, who had sent him an anonymous treatise which Jerome describes as a 'most infamous *quaestio*' on Melchizedek.[57] His summary of the contents of the treatise suggests it was in fact Ambrosiaster's *Quaestio* 109, which presented Melchizedek as the Holy Spirit (a view notably common in Egypt in the fourth century).[58] Jerome rebutted this suggestion, and argued that Melchizedek was merely a type of Christ.[59] In this instance, Jerome stated that the treatise he had received was anonymous and reflected on why this might be; that is, although he appears to have received an Ambrosiastrian work, he was unable, rather than reluctant, to identify its author.

We must conclude that Jerome, like Augustine, never had the Ambrosiastrian œuvre in front of him as the named work of one writer, otherwise he would surely have taken a more consistent approach towards it, even naming and shaming the author of more problematic texts. Indeed, we know that he received the individual *Quaestio* 109 on Melchizedek as an anonymous copy and it is likely that the more controversial of Ambrosiaster's texts were deliberately circulated without attribution. It is possible that in Rome Ambrosiaster blended in to the background of the range of Jerome's

[56] See A. Volgers, 'Damasus' Request: why Jerome needed to (re-)answer Ambrosiaster's *Quaestiones*' (unpub. paper given at the Oxford Patristics Conference, 2003).

[57] Jerome, *Letter*, 73.1: 'quod cum legissem, intellexi famosissimam quaestionem super pontifice Melchisdech . . .'

[58] See ibid.: 'et ad extremum ausus est dicere spiritum sanctum occurrisse Abrahae et ipsum esse, qui sub hominis figura visus sit.'

[59] See G. Bardy, 'Melchisédech dans la tradition patristique', *RBibl* 35 (1927), 496–509 and 36 (1928), 25–45.

opponents, and preserved his anonymity altogether. It is more certain that Ambrosiaster was well aware of Jerome and his production of the Vulgate, and that Ambrosiaster's *Quaestio* 127 on the sin of Adam and Eve was aimed at those of Jerome's party, if not at Jerome himself. Once Jerome had left Rome, however, it would have been increasingly difficult for him to match the author of controversial works to a known individual in Rome.

Pelagius

The other identifiable influence exerted by Ambrosiaster on the work of a near-contemporary is on Pelagius, who spent time in Rome 396–409, and must have had access to Ambrosiaster's *Commentaries* when he was writing his commentary on Romans in the first decade of the fifth century. Pelagius' views on predestination and original sin built on Ambrosiaster's exegesis, and his *Commentary on Romans* was close to Ambrosiaster in its brevity and style.[60] The contact appears to have been one-way, which fits with a dating of Ambrosiaster's *floruit* to the 360s–380s.

ANONYMITY

There was clearly confusion over the provenance of Ambrosiaster's works from an early date, reflected both in his contemporaries' citation of or reaction to his works and in the manuscript tradition. Why did Ambrosiaster's works circulate anonymously, or ascribed incorrectly, so early? After all, the efficacy of a Christian text was partly dependent on the orthodoxy and holiness of its author; if the author of a text was unknown, there may have been scepticism about the value of the text itself. Jerome, in his *De Viris Illustribus*, a catalogue of ecclesiastical writers, weeded out apparently pseudonymous texts

[60] See A. J. Smith, 'The Latin sources of the Commentary of Pelagius on the Epistle of St Paul to the Romans', *JTS* 19 (1918), 162–230; Souter, *Earliest Latin Commentaries*; and Pelagius, *Commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (trans. T. De Bruyn) (Oxford, 1993).

and confirmed instances of authentic authorship, demonstrating the importance of matching a work to a named author.[61]

There was, however, a range of reasons why a Christian might decide to conceal his authorship of texts or ideas, either through assuming anonymity, or through pseudonymity—hiding behind the name of another. Jerome cited modesty as the reason for Marcella's concealment of the provenance of her skilful responses to scriptural problems: 'She was extremely prudent and always followed the rules of what philosophers call *to prepon*, that is, propriety of conduct. Therefore, even when her answers to questions were her own, she said they came not from her but from me or someone else, admitting herself to be a pupil even when she was teaching . . .'[62] Admittedly, Jerome suggests that Marcella's modesty stemmed from her observation of Paul's injunction at 1 Timothy 2: 12 that a woman should not teach; Jerome explained that she was modest 'so that she might not seem to do a wrong to the male sex, and sometimes even to priests, when they asked questions on obscure and doubtful points.'[63] But modesty was a laudable quality in any Christian, and intellectual humility a virtue to be encouraged in any Christian writer.[64]

Authors sometimes chose anonymity to avoid controversy, and there are several instances in which Ambrosiaster's works may have been deliberately circulated anonymously, either because he attacked contemporaries (such as *Quaestio* 101 on the arrogance of the Roman deacons) or because he took an unpopular theological or intellectual stance (such as *Quaestio* 109 on Melchizedek, or in his *Commentary*

[61] e.g. Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*, 5, confirms Paul as the author of the Epistle to Hebrews, despite the fact that generally 'it is not considered his, on account of its difference from the others in style and language'; ibid. 25: 'I have read, under [Theophilus'] name, commentaries *On the Gospel* and *On the Proverbs of Solomon* which do not appear to me to correspond in style and language with the elegance and expressiveness of the above works'; ibid. 32: 'Some other compositions pass under [Modestus'] name but are regarded by scholars as spurious.'

[62] Jerome, *Letter*, 127. 7: 'et quia valde prudens erat et noverat illud, quod appellant philosophi '*τὸ πρέπον*', id est decere, quod facias, sic interrogata respondebat, ut etiam sua non sua diceret, sed vel mea vel cuiuslibet alterius, ut et in ipso, quod docebat, se discipulam fateretur . . .'

[63] Ibid.: 'ne virili sexui et interdum sacerdotibus de obscuris et ambiguis sciscitantibus facere videretur iniuriam.'

[64] Souter, *Earliest Latin Commentaries*, 40, even suggests it as the reason for the anonymous issue later of the commentaries of Pelagius and Cassiodorus: 'It would appear that these early commentators desired no personal glory, but only to be useful.'

on Romans 5: 14. 4e–5a on the revision of the Old Latin Bible). Jerome, referring to the anonymous tract which he had received from Evangelus, suggested that its anonymity might stem from its author's desire to avoid confrontation: 'You have sent me an anonymous work, and I don't know whether you have removed the name from the label, or whether he who wrote it refused to admit to its authorship, in order to avoid the danger of confrontation.'[65] The work which he went on to analyse was substantially similar to Ambrosiaster's *Quaestio* 109, which contained a reading of Melchizedek as the incarnation of the Holy Spirit. Jerome proposed that either his correspondent had removed the label (presumably deliberately, to protect his source) or that the author himself was struck with shyness. Although Jerome was in this case suspicious that the label identifying the author had been deliberately removed, it was also possible that this could have happened accidentally.[66]

Ambrosiaster's works appear to have circulated at first anonymously, not pseudonymously, as manuscript and anecdotal evidence show that they were variously identified. Furthermore, Ambrosiaster appears not to have deliberately impersonated another author; the style, content, context, and preoccupations of the *Commentaries* and *Quaestiones* are very different from the works of respectively Ambrose and Augustine. More blatant and successful attempts at literary fraud can be identified in this period.[67] Ambrosiaster not only fails to impersonate other authors in his works, he also melts away from us in the texts themselves, giving us little to place, date, let alone identify him. Compared with much other patristic writing, this is unusual. Even if it was not deliberate self-concealment, through modesty, fear, or connivance, it is certainly striking.

[65] Jerome, *Letter*, 73. 1: 'Misisti mihi volumen ἀδέσποτον et nescio, utrum tu de titulo nomen subtraxeris an ille, qui scripsit, ut periculum fugeret disputandi, auctorem noluerit confiteri.'

[66] On the *titulus* see Souter, *A Study*, 161: 'the fact that the title of a work written on papyrus was usually inscribed on a slip pasted to the edge of the roll, and therefore easily detached, has contributed to our ignorance of the actual or complete names of many early writers.' See also E. J. Kenney, 'Books and readers in the ancient world', in E. J. Kenney and W. Clausen (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature* (Cambridge, 1983), ii. 16.

[67] R. Syme, *Historia Augusta Papers* (Oxford, 1983), 1–11, deals with the phenomenon of literary fraud and imposture in this period, of which the *Historia Augusta* is now believed to be a key example.

One has to surmise that the incorrect ascriptions of Ambrosiaster's work were generally informed (but incorrect) guesses made by recipients of his work. The common manuscript misattribution of the *Quaestiones* to Augustine may reflect some sensible guesswork on the part of readers, given that Augustine himself produced several sets of *Quaestiones*, including the loose collection of writings known as the *Eighty-three Quaestiones* which Ambrosiaster's collection most closely resembles in diversity of subject matter and style.[68] We should bear in mind that our anonymous author may have maintained anonymity in order to benefit from such learned guesswork; after all, the popularity of one's work was guaranteed if it circulated under the name of an illustrious writer. Not all readers hazarded guesses at the identity of these anonymous works, however; Cassiodorus wrote in the mid-sixth century that he had heard of the existence of a commentary on Paul by Ambrose but had not been able to lay his hands on it. Despite this, he appears to quote from Ambrosiaster's *Commentaries*, suggesting that he had in fact received them but that they were attributed to someone other than Ambrose or were anonymous.[69]

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PSEUDONYMOUS IDENTITY

The common ascription of the *Commentaries* to Ambrose and of the *Quaestiones* to Augustine stabilized and endured during the Middle Ages.[70] It was not until the sixteenth century, when humanist scholars

[68] Augustine's œuvre includes *Quaestiones Evangeliorum libri II*, *Quaestiones Expositae Contra Paganos VI*, *Quaestionum in Heptateuchum libri VII*, *Quaestionum Septemdecim in Evangelium Secundum Matthaeum*, *De Diversis Quaestionibus ad Simplicianum*, and *De Diversis Quaestionibus Octoginta Tribus Liber*.

[69] See Cassiodorus, *Institutiones*, 1. 8. 10: 'It is also said that the blessed Ambrose has left an annotated book of all the letters of St Paul, complete with the most pleasing commentary; however, I have not yet been able to find it, but I search with great care.' See C. H. Turner, 'Niceta and Ambrosiaster', *JTS* 7 (1906), 359 and Souter, *Earliest Latin Commentaries*, 52–3 on Cassiodorus' apparent possession of the Ambrosiastrian *Commentaries*.

[70] For one example of the medieval attribution of Ambrosiaster's *Commentaries* to Ambrose (in the *Glossa Ordinaria*), see Matter, 'The church fathers and the Glossa Ordinaria', 107.

took to the task of producing critical editions of various patristic works, that the Ambrosian ascription of the *Commentaries* and later the Augustinian ascription of the *Quaestiones* were called into question. A new phase in the history of 'Ambrosiaster' began, as there emerged a consensus that these texts had been passed off as genuine works of two of the most respected, indeed beloved, fathers of the church, but were in fact spurious. It was in this period that the term 'Ambrosiaster', which means 'pseudo-Ambrose' and has more than a tinge of the pejorative, was invented to describe the author of the *Commentaries*.[71]

It is often stated that Erasmus was the first to challenge the Ambrosian authorship of the *Commentaries* in his 1527 edition of Ambrose's works, and also invented the name 'Ambrosiaster' for our author.[72] However, he did neither. In the preface to Volume IV, in his address to the reader, he stated:

> I have found nothing foreign introduced into the volumes of [Ambrose's commentaries on] the New Testament, except that someone—I don't know who—has added prefaces to individual letters of Paul under Ambrose's name, or has at least tampered with what Ambrose wrote, principally in the letters to the Romans, the Corinthians and the Galatians; and in the commentaries themselves it is apparent that in places some things have been inserted, in places excised . . .[73]

And in a textual intervention after the preface to Romans:

> Know, reader, that the prefaces which precede the letters are not by Ambrose, but by some inept cobbler-together. For in this preface [to the commentary on Romans] there was a great variety of copies, so it is plain to see this made it possible for the scribes to play around according to their own judgment, as though in their own playground. If anyone should read the prefaces which

[71] See *OED* on the suffix 'aster': 'expressing poor quality or incomplete resemblance.'

[72] e.g. Cumont, 'La Polémique de l'Ambrosiaster', 417; Souter, *A Study*, 4; C. Martini, *Ambrosiaster: de auctore, operibus, theologia* (Rome, 1944), 3; Vogels, preface to CSEL 81, p. ix; Hunter, 'On the sin of Adam and Eve', 284. On Erasmus' patristic scholarship more generally, see J. den Boeft, 'Erasmus and the church fathers', in Backus, *Reception of the Church Fathers*, ii. 537–72.

[73] Erasmus (ed.), *Divi Ambrosii Episcopi Mediolanensis omnia opera* (Basle, 1527), iv. 4: 'In novi testamenti voluminibus nihil admixtum alienum comperi, nisi quod in singulas Pauli epistolas adiecit argumenta, nescioquis, Ambrosii titulo, aut certe quae posuerat Ambrosius, contaminavit, praesertim in epistolas ad Romanos, ad Corinthios, & ad Galatas: & in ipsis commentariis alicubi videntur adiecta quaedam, alicubi decurtata.'

are found in bibles under Jerome's name, he will soon discover a number of patchworks by this rhapsode. If only he had not similarly played around in the commentaries themselves![74]

So Erasmus judged the prefaces alone to be interpolations, but the rest of the *Commentaries* as genuine, albeit corrupted, works of Ambrose.

The first serious suggestion that Ambrose was not the author of any portion of the *Commentaries* was made by the Jesuit Franciscus Turrianus, who wrote in 1569: 'It will easily be doubted whether the commentaries on the letters of Paul, which are said to be by Ambrose, are really his.'[75] The invention of the name 'Ambrosiaster' should be attributed to the Benedictines of St Maur, in their 1686–90 edition of Ambrose's works.[76] Confusion apparently arose because the Maurists implied that Erasmus and Turrianus had recognized that the *Commentaries* were not by Ambrose, but were vague as to their exact role in this process.[77] This reference has been appropriated by generations of scholars without question, including Migne in his edition of Ambrose.[78] This mis-attribution of the origin of 'Ambrosiaster' was

[74] Ibid., 762: 'Scito lector, argumenta quae praeferuntur epistolis, non esse Ambrosii, sed inepti cuiuspiam consarcinatoris. In hoc autem argumento prodigiosa erat exemplariorum varietas, ut facile liqueret hic scribas suo arbitratu lusisse, velut in suo campo, si quis legat argumenta, quae feruntur in Bibliis Hieronymi titulo, mox deprehendet aliquot huius rhapsodi centones. Qui utinam non similiter lusisset in ipsis commentariis.'

[75] Franciscus Turrianus, *Adversus Magdeburgenses Centuriatores pro Canonibus Apostolorum et Epistolis Decretalibus Pontificum Apostolicorum Libri Quinque* (Florence, 1572), 491–2: 'commentariis epistolarum Pauli, qui Ambrosii feruntur esse, contulerit, facile dubitabit, utrum eius sint.' See R. Hoven, 'Notes sur Érasme et les auteurs anciens', *AC* 38 (1969), 169–74, and J. Stüben, 'Erasmus von Rotterdam und der Ambrosiaster. Zur Identifikationsgeschichte einer wichtigen Quelle Augustins', *Wissenschaft und Weisheit*, 60. 1 (1997), 3–22. On Jesuit patristic scholarship more generally, see D. Bertrand, 'The Society of Jesus and the church fathers in the sixteenth and seventeenth century', in Backus, *Reception of the Church Fathers*, ii. 889–950.

[76] *Sancti Ambrosii Mediolanensis Episcopi Opera, Studio et Labore Monachorum Ordinis S. Benedicti, e Congregatione S. Mauri* (Paris, 1690), ii, append. 21–2: 'quippe in Ambrosiastro . . .', 'quam huius Ambrosiastri.' On the Maurists' patristic scholarship more generally, see D.-O. Hurel, 'The Benedictines of the congregation of St. Maur and the church fathers', in Backus, *Reception of the Church Fathers*, ii. 1009–38.

[77] *Studio et Labore*, 39–40: 'Verumtamen cum tam universalis opinio Erasmo, Turriano, aliisque non usque adeo certa visa esset, illam deinceps, re peritius examinata, uno calculo omnes proscripsere.'

[78] Migne, PL 17, 39–40, repeats the Maurists' assertion verbatim.

probably helped by the fact that Erasmus coined 'poetaster', giving Ambrosi*aster* a plausibly Erasmian ring.[79]

The authorship of the *Quaestiones* had come under scrutiny by the later seventeenth century. The Maurists, in their 1680 edition of Augustine, stated that: 'Learned men declare that this work does not belong to Augustine, and clearly that is not an injustice, seeing that the content and method of the teaching are far from the talent and faith of the holy doctor—and let us say nothing of the difference of style.'[80] That is, there was already some scholarly consensus that Augustine was not the author of the *Quaestiones*, as well as a developing argument for the common authorship of the *Quaestiones* and *Commentaries*: 'It remains for us to append for the examination and judgment of our readers the opinion approved by very many learned men today, that these questions are by the same author to whom commentaries on the Apostle published under the name of Ambrose are attributed . . .'[81] Disputed at length by German scholars in the nineteenth century,[82] it was not until the twentieth century that Souter exhaustively demonstrated this common authorship on the grounds of philological minutiae, community of allusions, and shared exegesis.[83] Finally, scholars could treat the *Quaestiones* and the *Commentaries* alike as the product of a single author, still, and unfortunately, known as Ambrosiaster.[84]

[79] See *OED* entry for 'poetaster', citing Erasmus, *Letter*, 25, March 1521.

[80] *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Hipponensis Episcopi Operum*, iii, append. 33–4: 'Hoc opus Augustino abiudicant eruditi quique, nec iniuria sane, quandoquidem res ratioque docendi, ut de stili distantia nihil dicamus, procul abhorret a S. Doctoris ingenio & fide.'

[81] Ibid., 35–6: 'Superest ut examini judicioque lectorum subjiciamus opinionem eruditis hodie quamplurimis probatam, quae hasce quaestiones eidem auctori, cui Commentariis in Apostolum Ambrosii nomine vulgatos adtribuit.'

[82] Those in favour of a common authorship included Joseph Langen, *De commentariorum in epistolas paulinas, qui Ambrosii, et questionum biblicarum, quae Augustini nomini feruntur scriptore dissertatio* (Bonn, 1880); Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 5. 38 n. 4, and Jülicher Pauly-Wissowa, s.v. Ambrosiaster. Marold, 'Der Ambrosiaster nach Inhalt und Ursprung', *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie*, 27 (1883), 415–70, was against.

[83] See Souter, *A Study*, pt. I (in his own words): 'a new and elaborate argument' for common authorship.

[84] The idea that our author had deliberately impersonated Augustine in his *Quaestiones* is reflected in the 1908 CSEL edition of the *Quaestiones*, issued under the name of 'pseudo-Augustinus' to separate it from the corpus of Augustine.

2

Ambrosiaster's Background

AMBROSIASTER'S RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

Foucault wrote in his seminal article 'What is an author': 'if a text should be discovered in a state of anonymity... the game becomes one of rediscovering the author. Since literary anonymity is not tolerable, we can accept it only in the guise of an enigma.'[1] Never has this seemed more apt than of the history of scholarship of Ambrosiaster. Once it had been established that the author of the *Commentaries* was not Ambrose and that the author of the *Quaestiones* was not Augustine, scholars from the eighteenth century to the early twentieth century attempted to establish an identity for their nameless author. Numerous attempts were made to pin the *Commentaries* and *Quaestiones* to a named individual in late-fourth-century Rome, for, as we have seen, there is internal evidence to narrow the field in terms of location and date.

The earliest 'solutions' to the problem of Ambrosiaster's identity were the moderate Donatist, Tyconius, and Ursinus' supporter, the presbyter Faustinus.[2] There followed three different identifications

[1] M. Foucault, 'What is an author', in P. Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader* (New York, 1984), 101–20. Foucault explains (p. 110) how 'to "rediscover" an author in a work, modern criticism uses methods similar to those that Christian exegesis employed when trying to prove the value of a text by its author's saintliness.' He discusses how Jerome does this in his *De Viris Illustribus.*

[2] Tyconius the Donatist was proposed by J.-B. Morel, *Dissertation sur le véritable Auteur des commentaires sur les épîtres de S. Paul faussement attribués à S. Ambroise et sur l'Auteur de deux autres Ouvrages qui sont dans l'Appendice du troisième tome de S. Augustin* (Paris, 1762). Faustinus was proposed by J. Langen, *De commentariorum in epistolas paulinas, qui Ambrosii, et questionum biblicarum, quae Augustini nomini feruntur scriptore dissertatio* (Bonn, 1880).

made by Dom Morin, demonstrating the apparent ease with which Ambrosiaster's works could be matched to very different individuals. One of these suggestions was a Hilary,[3] inspired by Augustine's misascription of a passage of Ambrosiaster to *sanctus Hilarius*.[4] Decimus Hilarianus Hilarius, a Roman statesman of rank, was governor of Africa 377, prefect of the city 388, and praetorian prefect 396. The African background might explain Ambrosiaster's Egyptian knowledge. However, would Augustine have dubbed this aristocrat *sanctus*?

A decade after this identification, Morin proposed another candidate for Ambrosiaster: Evagrius of Antioch.[5] Evagrius' career closely parallels what we might conclude from Ambrosiaster's texts about his life (he was an aristocrat, with a good knowledge of Roman law, and had travelled, especially in Egypt). Morin shows that Evagrius' translation of Athanasius' *Life of St Antony* bears striking resemblances in style to Ambrosiaster, and concludes that Ambrosiaster's first language was Greek, a conclusion which we will see later in this chapter is problematic. Furthermore, Ambrosiaster's complete lack of interest in monasticism and his hostility to lay celibacy make it difficult to accept him as Evagrius, best known for his spiritual and ascetic writings.[6]

Interestingly, it was the first of Morin's three identifications for Ambrosiaster, Isaac the Jew, which has proved to be the most provocative and productive, even though he himself rejected it.[7] It also raises two important questions: where were Ambrosiaster's sympathies in the

[3] G. Morin, 'Hilarius l'Ambrosiaster', *RBén* 20 (1903), 113–31.

[4] Augustine, *Contra Duas Epistulas Pelagianorum*, 4. 4. 7, citing Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Rom.*, 5: 12. Various scholars before Morin had searched for an appropriate Hilary. Hilary of Poitiers, most likely to be dubbed *sanctus* by Augustine, is inappropriate on stylistic as well as dating grounds. Hilary the Luciferian deacon, mentioned by Jerome (*Dialogue Against the Luciferians*, 21), had rabid views on rebaptism nowhere found in Ambrosiaster, and it also seems unlikely that a Roman deacon would have written *Quaestio* 101 'on the arrogance of the Roman deacons', or that Augustine would have dubbed a schismatic *sanctus*. Wittig proposed that *Hilarius* could also be a Latin translation of *Isaac* (Hebrew for 'laughter'), which feeds into Morin's initial identification of Ambrosiaster as Isaac the Jew, discussed below.

[5] G. Morin, 'Qui est l'Ambrosiaster? Solution nouvelle', *RBén* 31 (1914), 1–34.

[6] On Souter's objection to the Evagrius identification, see his *Earliest Latin Commentaries*, 48–9. On Ambrosiaster's hostility to lay celibacy, see D. G. Hunter, 'On the sin of Adam and Eve: a little-known defence of marriage and child-bearing by Ambrosiaster', *HTR* 82 (1989), 283–99.

[7] See G. Morin, 'L'Ambrosiaster et le Juif converti Isaac', *RHL* 4. 2 (1899), 97–121.

late-fourth-century dispute between Damasus and Ursinus over the papacy, and from what religion ('paganism' or Judaism) did he convert to Christianity, if convert he was?

Isaac the Jew and Damasus

Isaac was a member of the party which had disputed Damasus' election to the bishopric of Rome in 366, and consecrated its own candidate for the see, Ursinus. The origins of this dispute lay in the conflict during Constantius II's reign between Liberius and Felix, Pope and 'anti-Pope' respectively;[8] supporters of Liberius perceived Damasus to be a clandestine Felician, and consecrated Ursinus as a preferable successor to Liberius.[9] Violent clashes between supporters of the rival bishops continued until 368, with repeated interventions made by the emperor to secure peace in Rome.[10] After a lull in the conflict, Isaac proceeded to prosecute Damasus in the civil courts in 374 on a capital charge: 'And finally Ursinus' faction went as far as to suborn Isaac the Jew—who by making his retreat back to the synagogue profaned the heavenly mysteries—and to seek the capital charge against our holy brother Damasus . . .'[11]

We do not know what the charge was. The *Liber Pontificalis* says that Damasus was prosecuted on the charge of adultery, but this may confuse Damasus with the later Pope Symmachus, who was certainly charged with adultery.[12] Damasus undoubtedly had a reputation as *auriscalpius matronarum*.[13] Accusations of avarice and the misuse of money were also levelled at Damasus. The (anti-Damasan) preface to

[8] On Liberius and Felix, see J. Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital: Rome in the Fourth Century* (Oxford, 2000), 129–37.

[9] Information on Isaac the Jew in the Damasus affair is derived from the *Collectio Avellana*, 13, ed. O. Guenther, CSEL 35 (Vienna, 1895) and synodal letters in the collection of PL 13, 575–84.

[10] See J. Curran, *Pagan City*, 138–42 and C. Pietri, *Roma Christiana: Recherches sur l'Église de Rome, son organisation, sa politique, son idéologie de Miltiade à Sixte III (311–440)*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1976), i. 408 ff.

[11] *Hoc Gloriae Vestrae*, 8, PL 13, 580 ff. (letter of the council of the Romans to Gratian and Valentinian, 378): 'Sic denique factio profecit Ursini, ut Isaac Judaeo subornato, qui facto ad synagogam recursu coelestia mysteria profanavit, sancti fratris nostri Damasi peteretur caput . . .'

[12] *Liber Pontificalis*, 39. [13] *Collectio Avellana*, 1. 9.

the *Collectio Avellana* accuses him in particular of bribing his violent gang of supporters, and there is other evidence that the Roman clergy had earnt their reputation as money-grubbers.[14] Sexual and financial misdeeds might have been sufficient to merit a capital charge, but a possible charge of murder would certainly have been so.[15] This would tally with the bloody siege of the Liberian basilica which resulted in many deaths and, if we believe it, none of them from Damasus' party.[16] Whatever the charge, the emperor intervened and banished Isaac to Spain in 378: 'a remote corner of Spain confined Isaac, by a notice of condemnation.'[17]

Isaac's opposition to Damasus would have alienated members of Damasus' party like Jerome. As we have seen, it is difficult to establish the reason behind Jerome's silence on Ambrosiaster; it could have been a concerted *damnatio memoriae* or a more innocent failure to attribute all Ambrosiaster's works to a single named author. If the former, then the identification of Ambrosiaster as Isaac could explain the *damnatio memoriae*; Jerome may have been trying to suppress the memory of a troublesome Jewish convert (and then apostate) who had opposed his beloved Damasus. This is one argument, albeit from silence, for the Isaac identification; but there remain many problems with it.

Isaac's reversion to Judaism, which is mentioned in the synodal letter of 378 above ('having effected a return to the synagogue')

[14] On Damasus' alleged bribery, see *Collectio Avellana*, 1. 5–6: 'omnes quadrigarios et imperitam multitudinem pretio concitat . . . post dies septem cum omnibus periuris et arenariis, quos ingenti corrupit pretio . . .' On Roman clerical greed and corruption, see *CTh* 16. 2. 20 (an edict of Valentinian given at Rome in 370 which alludes grimly to Roman ecclesiastics seizing the inheritances of Christian women); Ammianus, *Res Gestae*, 27. 3. 14, which rebuked Roman bishops for ostentation, ambition, and accepting gifts from matrons; and Jerome, *Letter*, 52, in which he inveighs against wealthy clergymen who love gold and pursue money (although this can hardly be taken as a comment on his beloved Damasus).

[15] See J. Harries, *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1999), ch. 7.

[16] Ammianus, *Res Gestae*, 27. 3. 12–13, says that 137 were killed in the siege, and *Collectio Avellana*, 1. 5–8 puts the figure at 160 and comments drily that 'indeed there were no dead among Damasus' party.'

[17] *Collectio Avellana*, 13. 5: 'Hisacem remotus Hispaniae angulus titulo damnationis inclusit . . .' See also petition of a Roman council to Gratian and Valentinian, 378 AD, *Hoc Gloriae Vestrae*, 9, PL 13, 581: 'while Isaac in his turn, since he could not prove his charges, has had sentence passed upon him in accordance with his deserts.' Banishment was a punishment consistently imposed upon Ursinus and his followers; see *Collectio Avellana*, 1. 6, 7, 11, 12, 13. 4.

creates a dating problem. It is unlikely that he would have written any Christian theology after 378, yet, as we saw in Chapter 1, the *Quaestiones* contain several references to events after this period and are therefore incompatible with an Isaacian authorship. Ambrosiaster's single reference to Damasus as *rector* of the church also seems to be incompatible with an Isaacian authorship.[18] The only contemporary besides Ambrosiaster who used *rector* to mean bishop was Damasus himself.[19] If *rector* was a word used insistently by Damasus to talk about himself or his predecessors, then Ambrosiaster was echoing, recognizing, and even legitimizing that terminology in referring to him as such; it seems unlikely that Isaac would have colluded in Damasus' own self-description.

In his comment on a passage in 1 Timothy which condemned avarice generally, Ambrosiaster intriguingly brought the subject round specifically to the avarice of clerics: 'There is nothing as harsh or dangerous as a cleric, especially one of the highest station [a bishop] who strives for the riches of this world, because this injures not just himself, but also everyone else.'[20] This could, at a stretch, be taken to refer to the charge brought against Damasus, but such a comment also fits with Ammianus' and Jerome's descriptions of the Roman church in this period as being corrupted by worldly clerics. More tantalizing is Ambrosiaster's comment on Paul's injunction that an accusation only be heard against a presbyter before two or three witnesses:

> Since the honour of this rank is so great—for in this way they are vicars of Christ—thus an accusation against this person should not be easily admitted. For it should seem incredible that this man, who is a representative of God, is criminally involved, in the same way that it is credible that an actor should be base.[21]

[18] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Tim.*, 3: 15. 1: 'ut cum totus mundus dei sit, ecclesia tamen domus eius dicatur, cuius hodie rector est Damasus.'

[19] See C. H. Turner, 'Ambrosiaster and Damasus', *JTS* 7 (1906), 281–4. The only earlier example I can find of *rector* used to mean bishop was from an epistle of the synod of Sardica (*c.*342/3) preserved in Hilary's *Collectanea Antiariana Parisiana*, 4. 1. 21: 'non enim secundum nos, qui ecclesiis sanctissimis praesedemus populisque rectores sumus . . .'

[20] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Tim.*, 6: 9: 'nihil tam asperum tamque periculosum est, quam si ecclesiasticus, maxime qui sublimis loci est, divitiis huius saeculi studeat, quia non solum sibi ipsi, sed et ceteris obest.'

[21] Ibid., 5: 19: 'quoniam huius ordinis sublimis honor est—huiusmodi enim vicarii Christi sunt—idcirco non facile de hac persona accusatio debet admitti.

In referring to 'vicars of Christ', a term used of bishops in their enactment of the eucharist, Ambrosiaster appears to have applied Paul's comment to bishops more than presbyters. This exegetical twist may have been a veiled reference to current church politics; a pro-Damasan Roman council had appealed to the emperor in 378 to rule that the bishop of Rome should not be subject to a secular court, using precisely this text (1 Tim. 5: 19).[22]

Finally, lengthy comment in *Quaestio* 110 on the *cathedra pestilentiae* of Psalm 1: 1 refers to those who 'take upon themselves seats either outside the church or against the church',[23] and then alludes to the usurpation of bishoprics:

> For he who takes to himself things that have not been conceded to him, is guilty; how much more if he also corrupts the tradition of him whose seat he usurps. For they disturb the order begun with the apostle Peter and preserved up to this time through the vine-branch of successive bishops, laying claim to the order for themselves without source, that is, professing to be the body without the head; whence it is appropriate to call their seat the chair of pestilence.[24]

Given that the dispute over the rightful election of Damasus and Ursinus hinged on the question of whether or not the Petrine succession was disrupted or preserved by Damasus, this observation probably refers to the tumultuous election(s) of 366.[25] The charge of usurpation was most effective when made against an individual

incredibile enim debet videri istum, qui dei antistes est, criminose versatum, sicut credibile est scenicum esse turpissimum.'

[22] *Hoc Gloriae Vestrae*, 10–11, PL 13, 584: 'Ita enim fiet, ut nulli perdito vel infami aut accusandi summi sacerdotis, aut testificandi in eum facultas pateat illicita: si quidem non modo in episcopum, sed ne in presbyterum quidem, accusationem facile suscipiendam, nisi idoneis testibus, lectio sancta praescribat [1 Tim. 5: 19].' Gratian sidestepped the issue in his reply of 380 to Aquilinus, *vicarius urbis* (see PL 13, 587–8).

[23] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 110. 7: 'qui extra ecclesiam vel contra ecclesiam sedes sibi instituerunt.'

[24] Ibid.: 'qui enim inconcessa praesumit, reus est: quanto magis si et corrumpat traditionem eius, cuius sedem usurpat! nam et ordinem ab apostolo Petro coeptum et usque ad hoc tempus per traducem succedentium episcoporum servatum perturbant ordinem sibi sine origine vindicantes, hoc est corpus sine capite profitentes; unde congruit etiam eorum sedem catedram pestilentiae appellare.'

[25] It could also conceivably refer to the Donatists' claim to an episcopal succession at Rome; see Optatus, *Contra Parmenianum*, 2. 3–4, and W. H. C. Frend, *The Donatist Church* (Oxford, 1985), 195.

consecrated to a see already occupied by a bishop, but it is difficult to establish whether Ursinus or Damasus was consecrated first, which would make it easier to determine whether Ambrosiaster's reference to usurpation was levelled against Ursinus or Damasus.[26] It is only when juxtaposed with his non-committal acknowledgement of Damasus' status as *rector* of the church that we can surmise that Ambrosiaster was here referring to Ursinus' usurpation. But there is little else to determine Ambrosiaster's sympathies in the affair, and there is no evidence in his writings that he was committed to, or even interested in, Damasus' Roman programme of commemorating saints and martyrs in poetry and indeed church buildings. He was probably, if anything, a lukewarm sympathizer rather than a committed follower of Damasus.

Isaac the Jew would probably have written in Greek,[27] so if the identification is correct, Ambrosiaster's works were either his own translations, or were made by a second party. At this point we should consider the vexed question of Ambrosiaster's linguistic competence. Philologists have been quick to criticize his Latin style, and adduce its lack of polish as evidence for his being a Greek-speaker writing in a second language, or for the texts having been translated into Latin.[28] However, quite apart from his distance from Greek as an ecclesiastical language at Rome,[29] Ambrosiaster never directly cited Greek texts and used Greek loan-words only very occasionally, compared to his more

[26] On the evidence for the timing of Damasus' and Ursinus' election and consecration, see Pietri, *Roma Christiana*, i. 410 ff. Both pro- and anti-Ursinian sources appear to agree that Ursinus was consecrated first, which suggests that Damasus, although nominated by Liberius, was in fact the second to be 'made' bishop.

[27] On the language spoken by Jews at Rome, see S. Cohen, 'Crossing the boundary and becoming a Jew', in *HTR* 82. 1 (1989), 13–33. See also the evidence for language in L. Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome: Evidence of Cultural Interaction in the Roman Diaspora* (Leiden, 1995), ch. 5.

[28] See E. W. Watson, Review of Souter's edition of Ambrosiaster's *Quaestiones*, *CR* 23 (1909), 236–7: 'A Roman of education was so trained in rhetorical expression that his sentences inevitably fell, without thought on his part, into rhythmical cadences. This the periods of our author never do. There is no sign whatever in him of a technical training in Latin composition . . . Isaac must have been of Greek speech and known Latin as a foreign language; and this . . . seems decisive in his favour.'

[29] See Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Cor.*, 14: 14: 'our soul does not understand if it speaks in a tongue which it does not know' and: 'similarly, Latin-speaking people sing in Greek, enjoying the sound of the words but not knowing what they are saying.'

learned contemporaries like Jerome.[30] This is consistent with the model of an educated Roman who was mono-lingual in Latin but was also able to deploy Greek words and even phrases, so pervasive was Hellenism.[31] Ambrosiaster displayed no interest in looking to the Greek scriptures to clear up exegetical problems, as evinced by his hostility to Jerome's Vulgate project (discussed in Chapter 1), and a comment on Romans 12: 11 ('In the Greek, *it is said that the text has* "being servants of the Lord" ')[32] implies that he was relying on transmitted knowledge of the Greek Bible. It seems near impossible, given the weight of evidence for the author's mono-lingual Latin competence, to conclude that Greek was in fact his first language. The way in which his work evinces a Greek character is much more general: in the character of his theology of the Trinity and in his monarchical and hierarchical political theology, to be explored in Part II of this book.

Ambrosiaster: Converted Jew or Pagan?

One of the major justifications for the identification of Ambrosiaster with Isaac the Jew is his supposedly unusual interest in and knowledge of Jewish law and custom, in, for example, allusions to seating customs in the synagogue;[33] the arcane insistence on the weasel as a prohibited food;[34] and the derivation of the custom of teaching children in church from the practice of the synagogue.[35] A similar connection between Jewish and Christian practice was made in *Quaestio* 127, where Ambrosiaster explained how the tradition that marriage is blessed by God 'has remained in the synagogue and now

[30] e.g. See Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Cor.*, 4: 8. 1: 'this is, as they say, irony [*ironia est sicut dicunt*].' On Jerome, however, see P. Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers and their Greek Sources* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), ch. 2, who concludes that although he had a command of the Greek language, his Greek studies were in fact superficial.

[31] See F. Biville, 'The Graeco-Romans and Graeco–Latin: a terminological framework for cases of bilingualism', in J. N. Adams, M. Janse, and S. Swain (eds.), *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Text* (Oxford, 2003), 83–4.

[32] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Rom.*, 12: 11. 1b: 'in Graeco dicitur sic habere: "domino servientes"…'

[33] Id., *Comm. I Cor.*, 14: 31.

[34] Id., *Q.* 69. 2, and *Comm. Rom.*, 4: 15.

[35] Id., *Comm. Eph.*, 4: 11–12 and *Comm. I Cor.*, 12: 28.

is celebrated in the church.'[36] Ambrosiaster may even have had a passing knowledge of Hebrew, or contact with those who did. For instance, he discussed the origin of the word *manna*, and suggested that it derived from the Hebrew question 'what is this?', 'which in the Hebrew language is called "manni?".'[37] He also wrote an entire *Quaestio* on the Hebrew language in which he knowledgeably dismisses variant pronunciations of *Hebrei*.[38]

However, an interest in Judaism does not prove that Ambrosiaster was once Jewish, nor specifically indeed Isaac the Jew.[39] The context for Ambrosiaster's citation of Jewish custom is all-important: he used examples from the old law to defend clerical hierarchy, and this proves more his willingness to accept the validity of the Old Testament against those (like the Manichees) who rejected it, than it does his Jewishness. Nor did his knowledge of Jewish custom exceed that of, for example, Jerome.[40] It would also be wrong to paint Ambrosiaster as always sympathetic to the Jews; he made blanket condemnations of them as 'rebels against God and insolent' and criticized contemporary Christians who continued to observe the Mosaic Law in line with Paul's denunciation of Judaizers in Galatians.[41] Anti-Jewish sentiment is not absent from Ambrosiaster's work but it is more muted than that found in, for example, John of Chrysostom's writing.[42]

Ambrosiastrian scholarship has tended to present strict boundaries between paganism, Judaism, and Christianity, requiring Ambrosiaster to be either a pagan convert or a Jewish convert to Christianity. However, the actual boundaries between paganism, Judaism, and Christianity were more blurred than the rhetoric of difference, encouraged by works such as Ambrosiaster's *Quaestio* 44, 'Against the Jews', might suggest. First, Christian attitudes to Judaism

[36] Id., *Q.* 127. 3: 'cuius rei traditio et in sinagoga mansit et nunc in ecclesia celebratur…'

[37] Id., *Q.* 20. 1: '"quid est hoc?" quod in Hebrea lingua dicitur "manni?"'

[38] Id., *Q.* 108. 5.

[39] Lydia Speller, 'Ambrosiaster and the Jews', *StP* 17 (1982), 72.

[40] See e.g. J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome* (London, 1975), 84, on Jerome's interest in Judaism and Jewish writings.

[41] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 44. 9: 'semper enim contra deum rebelles et contumeliosi fuerunt'; id., *Comm. Gal. argumentum.*

[42] On John Chrysostom and the Jews, see J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom, Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (London, 1995), 62–6.

in late antiquity ranged from the hostile to the sympathetic; at the latter end, there were even Christians known as Judaizers who continued to observe Jewish law.[43] Ambrosiaster refers to (and condemns) one such sect, the Symmachians, in the preface to his *Commentary on Galatians*.[44] Secondly, some pagans were sympathetic to, and even converted to, Judaism;[45] indeed, Ambrosiaster explicitly referred to this, admittedly rare, phenomenon: 'And why is that, although there is such a great number of Jews throughout the world, no one among them is converted to become a pagan, although we see that some pagans, admittedly rarely, become Jews?'[46]

The single piece of evidence for Ambrosiaster having converted to Christianity from paganism has been located in the opening words of this passage from his *Quaestio* 114, 'Against the pagans':

> When we lived in the error in which the pagans now persist, we were attracted not by signs of power, but by bare words which they call sacred. We perceived [paganism] to be beneficial, thinking that not because God commended it, but because old custom handed it down, in which—and this is no secret—we were deluded by different trifles but perceived no hope of salvation. For what thing devised by man could possibly be beneficial? But we were persuaded not by words but by deeds to accede to faith in God and believe in his incarnate Son and the crucifixion. For we see the dead roused, the leprous made clean, sight restored to those born blind, demons exorcized and at the same time all sicknesses healed.[47]

[43] See S. Cohen, '"Those who say they are Jews and are not": how do you know a Jew in antiquity when you seen one?', in S. Cohen and E. Frerichs (eds.), *Diasporas in Antiquity* (Atlanta, Ga., 1993), 2, citing Augustine, *Letter*, 196, in which Augustine refers to Christians who still call themselves *Iudaei*. P. Schäfer (trans. D. Chowcat), *The History of the Jews in Antiquity: The Jews of Palestine from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest* (Luxemburg, 1995), 178 cites Constantinian laws providing for both Christian converts to Judaism and Jewish converts to Christianity.

[44] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Gal. argumentum*. Stephen Cooper discusses this passage in his *Marius Victorinus' Commentary on Galatians* (Oxford, 2005), 190–2.

[45] On pagan interest in Judaism, see M. Williams, *The Jews among the Greeks and Romans: A Diaspora Sourcebook* (London, 1998); S. Cohen, 'Crossing the boundary', 13–33; and R. Kraemer, 'On the meaning of the term "Jew", in Greco-Roman inscriptions', *HTR* 82. 1 (1989), 35–53.

[46] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 115. 14: 'Et quid illud est, ut, cum tanta multitudo Iudaeorum sit per totum mundum, nemo inmutetur ex his ut fiat gentilis, cum videamus ex paganis, licet raro, fieri Iudaeos?'

[47] Id., *Q.* 114. 16: 'cum in errore degeremus, in quo nunc manent pagani, nullis virtutum signis adtracti, sed nudis verbis quae sacra vocant percepimus prodesse

It is hard to tell whether Ambrosiaster was using the first person plural in this passage to allude grandly to himself, or to embrace an audience that included some pagan converts to Christianity. The passage as a whole is neatly divided between the pagans (attracted by words) and the Christians (converted by deeds). Furthermore, the deeds that he listed as converting pagans have the ring of the biblically general rather than the personally observed. This is not an isolated problem; it is difficult to tell when a Christian account of the conversion of pagans is personally based and when merely observed, or indeed constructed, in generalized observations like the following, located towards the end of the same *Quaestio*: 'But I propose, since this is the truth, that every day, at all hours and without interruption, [pagans] deserting Jupiter—among whom are sophists and the nobles of the world—flee to Christ, confessing him to be God, to whom is honour and glory for ever and ever.'[48]

There is some debate over the extent to which Jews were integrated into or separated from pagan and Christian life in late antique Rome, but the mystery of Ambrosiaster's own religious background suggests that it is difficult to pigeon-hole all individuals into distinct, mutually exclusive, religious categories.[49] After all, his muted sympathy for Judaism appears to coexist with a background in paganism. It would be misleading to suggest that Jews in fourth-century Rome were completely assimilated and integrated, but anti-Jewish legislation

putantes, non quod divinitas commandaverat, sed quod vetus consuetudo tradiderat, in qua—quod non latet—diversis inlusi vanitatibus nullam spem salutis agnouimus. quid enim poterat prodesse res ab hominibus inventa? ut autem ad fidem dei accederemus et filium eius incarnatum et cruci fixum crederemus, non verbis suasum est nobis, sed rebus. vidimus enim mortuos excitatos, leprosos mundatos, caeco nato oculos restitutos, demonia eiecta et simul omnes infirmitates curatas.' See C. Martini, *Ambrosiaster: de auctore, operibus, theologia* (Rome, 1944), 147 ff. and 154–60.

[48] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 114. 31: 'porro autem, quoniam haec est veritas, cottidie omni hora sine intermissione deserentes Iovem, inter quos sofistae et nobiles mundi, qui eum deum confinxerant, confugiunt ad Christum, cui est honor et gloria in saecula saeculorum.'

[49] L. Rutgers, 'Archaeological evidence for the interaction of Jews and non-Jews in late antiquity', *AJA* 96 (1992), 101–18, sums up the debate and proposes a model of interaction between Jews and non-Jews rather than pure disengagement. See also C. E. Fonrobert, 'Jewish Christians, Judaizers, and Christian anti-Judaism', in V. Burrus (ed.), *Late Ancient Christianity: A People's History of Christianity* (Minneapolis, Minn., 2005), ii. 234–54.

marking them out was not passed until the end of the fourth century,[50] before which time it was possible to be a Jew and a Roman, participating in social and even political life. Ambrosiaster may have been a Jew or a pagan before conversion, but even if he was pagan, it is possible, probable even, that he had a particular interest in Judaism as well.

AMBROSIASTER'S SECULAR BACKGROUND

If Ambrosiaster's religious background is somewhat opaque, then his secular background is a little easier to place. He makes copious references to administration and imperial government (especially in the *Quaestiones*), almost always in the process of drawing analogies between earthly imperial government and the heavenly government of God.[51] These analogies often function as a way of illustrating the unfamiliar, the mysteries of heaven, with the familiar, the workings of Roman government and law.[52] Ambrosiaster's knowledge of and interest in the workings of imperial government may well have reflected his own personal experience, perhaps as a functionary in the administration or even as a higher official in provincial government. If, as seems likely, he was a cleric, he would have given up any such worldly job on ordination,[53] and some of these illustrations

[50] See *CTh* 3. 7. 2 prohibiting marriage between Jews and Gentiles, AD 388 and *CTh* 16. 8. 24, prohibiting Jews from entering public service, AD 418.

[51] This was first appreciated by Souter, who collected references to government and the law in his *A Study of Ambrosiaster* (Cambridge, 1905). The purpose of this exercise was to prove the common authorship of the *Quaestiones* and *Commentaries* through their community of allusions, however, and Souter did not analyse the references he had collected.

[52] C. Kelly, in the epilogue to his *Ruling the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 2004), proffers several examples of similar transcendent descriptions or comparisons of heavenly government and suggests (244) that 'These parallels lent a present and comprehensible reality to a divine mystery. They also lent heavenly sanction to standard administrative procedures.'

[53] See Ambrosiaster, *Comm. II Tim.*, 2: 4, where he expounds on Paul's exhortation to Timothy not to tangle with worldly affairs, writing that a cleric (*ecclesiasticus*) should hold himself aloof from business, for it is not appropriate for a man to have a double profession.

must have been mere remembrances. It is more probable that his choice of earthly–heavenly governmental analogies was tailored to members of his audience who had an interest in government and law, in turn suggesting that they may have been well-off and well-born individuals. The general texture of his illustrations reveals something of what Ambrosiaster saw and knew in Rome at the time of writing.

Emperors and Officials in Rome

What familiarity would an educated Roman of the late fourth century have had with the emperor and his court? The emperor only visited Rome twice in the second half of the fourth century (Constantius in 357 and Theodosius in 389), and moved his court frequently between cities in the West.[54] Although imperial delegations did visit Rome to represent the emperor's will (during, for example, the magic and treason trials of the 370s),[55] the populace would have been more familiar with the emperor's widely disseminated images, customarily treated as if they bore something of the essence of the emperor himself, than with his actual person.[56]

Ambrosiaster addressed the theory rather than the practice of rule, the absence rather than the presence of the emperor, and the paradoxes of presence and image, all from a theological perspective. He described how no man saw God, Father or Son, and that God was seen 'as if in a likeness' (*velut in imagine*). He went on to write: 'Similarly, since we do not know emperors, we see them in a statue [*figura*], not in truth, as God also is seen, as God is understood to be he who appears not in substance but through reason, because God cannot be seen in his own nature.'[57] This was a clever way of blending the theological difficulty of approaching God indirectly through

[54] See O. Seeck, *Regesten der Kaiser und Päpste für die Jahre 311 bis 476 n. Chr.* (Stuttgart, 1919), 204 and 275.

[55] See Ammianus, *Res Gestae*, 28. 1.

[56] The infamous example of the confounding of image and archetype is the savage retribution visited on the citizens of Antioch after imperial statues were desecrated there in 387.

[57] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 71. 1: 'veluti nos, cum imperatores nesciamus, videmus eos in figura, non in veritate, ita et deus visus est, ut intellegeretur deus esse qui apparebat, per rationem, non per substantiam, quia in natura sua videri deus non potest.'

likeness and reason (and not through a statue, which had idolatrous connotations), with the practical reality of the emperor being present in his likeness, in this case a statue. Ambrosiaster carefully distinguished between the two sorts of likeness by using different words to underline the difference between spiritual likeness (*imago*) and physical effigy (*figura*). He also implicated himself and his audience in writing 'since we do not know emperors', suggesting that neither had direct experience of an emperor. This impression is sustained when we consider that Ambrosiaster was well aware of the practice of conflating imperial images with the emperor himself:[58] 'when an emperor is absent, his image has authority, but does not have it when he is present . . .'[59] This fits with our picture of Ambrosiaster writing in late-fourth-century Rome, a city abandoned by emperors.

Frequent references to consuls and senators could be adduced as further evidence that Ambrosiaster wrote in Rome: 'That consul is named first who is elected first.'[60] As in his treatment of the Roman deacons, his linkage of consuls with vanity could indicate some personal knowledge of their behaviour: 'Those who are consuls, or those who are honoured by statues, delight in emptiness.'[61] Indeed, the reference to jumped-up consuls striving for statues tallies with Ammianus' scathing comment on senators doing exactly the same thing.[62] Ambrosiaster's reference to the suitability and connotations of certain types of clothing for particular ranks suggests that he had seen these people, and also understood the significance of dress: 'Senators and officials are recognized to be such by their dress.'[63] A disapproving acquaintance with senatorial behaviour is

[58] Kelly, *Ruling the Later Roman Empire*, 174.

[59] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Col.*, 2: 17. 3: 'sicut enim absente imperatore imago eius habet auctoritatem, praesente non habet . . .'

[60] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 107. 6: 'et si de consulibus coniciamus, videbimus illum primo nominari qui prior eligitur.'

[61] Id., *Q.* 81. 2: 'hi, qui consules sunt aut statuis honestantur, gaudent in vano.' Ambrosiaster's language is reminiscent of the condemnation of those rejoicing in graven images found at Isa. 44: 9.

[62] Ammianus, *Res Gestae*, 14. 6. 7.

[63] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 47. 4: 'denique senatores vel officiales ex vestibus intelleguntur quid sint.' See also *CTh* 14. 10. 1 on proper senatorial dress. On dress, see R. MacMullen, 'Some pictures in Ammianus Marcellinus', in id., *Changes in the Roman Empire: Essays in the Ordinary* (Princeton, N.J., 1990), 78–106.

suggested by a reference to the stigma on senators being involved in usury: 'usury is disgraceful for senators.'[64] However, in general, Ambrosiaster's criticisms were muted compared to Ammianus' more protracted denunciation of the ostentation, gluttony, and indolence of the Roman elite.[65] He reserved his greatest scorn for clerics, not secular men, in his *Quaestio* 101, against the upstart Roman deacons.

Ambrosiaster repeatedly mentioned *comites*. *Comes* referred both to courtiers who accompanied the emperor and to those who were not so close to him but received the title as an honorific.[66] In Ambrosiaster's usage, the term could refer to either class. A recurring theme is the danger and impropriety of *comites* receiving the same honours as the emperor, in comments such as: 'It is an insult to the creator that his servants are courted, while he himself is slighted; just as it is when the *imperator* is contemned, while his *comites* receive worship. How will that go unpunished, which we see even in this life punished, and more bitterly?'[67] and 'No *imperator* allows his *tribuni* and *comites* to be worshipped in his name.'[68] The verb used in both cases is *adorare*, which refers to the ceremony of *adoratio* rather than to the idea of emperor worship, which would have been anathema to Ambrosiaster.[69] He asked elsewhere: 'Is anyone so mad or so unconcerned about his own safety as to arrogate to a *comes* the honorific treatment [*honorificentiam*] due to a king, seeing that, if any people were discovered

[64] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 102. 5: 'senatoribus quoque fenus infamia est.' *Infamia* is used here technically; see A. Berger, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law*, *TAPS* NS 43, pt. II (Philadelphia, Pa., 1953), 500. Laws dealing with senatorial usury can be found at *CTh* 2. 33. 3–4.

[65] Ammianus' criticism of senators is to be found at *Res Gestae*, 14. 6 and 28. 4.

[66] On *comites*, see A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1964), i. 104: 'Those who accompanied the emperor on his journeys had always been semi-officially styled his *comites*, but Constantine was the first to bestow the title by official codicil, and to classify the *comites* into three grades.'

[67] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 114. 2: 'quia ad contumeliam pertinet conditoris, ut contempto domino colantur servi et spreto imperatore adorentur comites. quo modo istud inpunitum erit, quod etiam in hac vita vindicari, et quidem acerbius, videamus?'

[68] Id., *Q.* 114. 9: 'quia nullus imperator permittit ut nomine eius tribuni et comites adorentur.'

[69] See W. T. Avery, 'The *adoratio purpurae* and the importance of the imperial purple in the fourth century of the Christian era', *MAAR* 17 (1940), 67 n. 11, where he shows that *adorare* must stand for *adorare purpuram imperatoris*.

even discussing this, they would be justly condemned as guilty of treason?'[70] This *honorificentia* probably also evoked the ceremony of *adoratio*. We have ample evidence to demonstrate that anyone possessing the paraphernalia of the emperor, especially purple clothing, was liable to be convicted of *lèse-majesté*.[71] Although Ambrosiaster acknowledged that *comites* who received imperial honour should be condemned, he unwittingly gave officials some grounds for their ambitions when he explained elsewhere that human emperors shared the same image, honour, and nature with consuls as they were all men made in God's image. This was in stark contrast to God and his angels, who clearly could not be said to share the same image.[72]

As we shall see in Chapter 7, there is an insistent sense of threat and danger in Ambrosiaster's description of the emperor's retinue and its frequently rebellious, usurping ambitions, however distant it may have been from Rome. This encompassed the army as well as *comites*. According to Ambrosiaster, the *imperator* was not an *imperator* if he had no one to command: 'For rank comes from holding office. So it is if an emperor has no army. However great an emperor he may be, it is nevertheless necessary for him to have an army, for it is a member of his body . . .'[73] Similarly: 'For an emperor, to appear as an emperor, is appointed with a military retinue, but the army is not better than, or equal to, the emperor',[74] although here again we sense that Ambrosiaster may have been combatting the army's own sense of self-importance. How exalted the emperor was over his army is made clear when Ambrosiaster presents God himself as an *imperator*,

[70] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Rom.*, 1: 22: 'numquid tam demens est aliquis aut salutis suae inmemor, ut honorificentiam regis vindicet comiti, cum de hac re si qui etiam tractare fuerint inventi, iure ut rei damnentur maiestatis?'

[71] See e.g. references in Ammianus, *Res Gestae*, 16. 8. 4 and 20. 10, to charges of *lèse-majesté* levelled against usurpers of the imperial purple.

[72] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 45. 1: 'nam cum dicit: "faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram" [Gen. 11: 7], non potest dici angelis locutus, quia non potest dici una esse imago dei et angelorum, sicut imperatoris et comitum, quia quorum imago una est, non potest dissimilis esse dignitas vel natura.'

[73] Id., *Comm. I Cor.* 12: 22: 'officium est enim, per quod dignitas constat. tale est, si imperatori desit exercitus. quamvis ergo magnus sit imperator, necessarium tamen habet exercitum; membrum est enim corporis eius . . .'

[74] Id., *Q.* 101. 10: 'nam et imperator, ut imperator appareat, ordinatur obsequio militari; non tamen melior nec par exercitus imperatori.'

with all the title suggests about his military responsibilities: 'God can be seen to have addressed his angels as the *imperator* of his army.'[75]

Ambrosiaster provides insight into the traits and duties of other officials and governors, but these tend to be offset by their context, which is a comparison or explanation by metaphor of the logistics of heavenly government: 'Certain people, when oppressed by the *rectores* of the provinces, have recourse to the *imperatores* to have their wrongs set right, just as men, if they see that current events are against them, present themselves as supplicants to God, in whose power are all things.'[76] Again, a point about prefects and law-making illustrates a wider point about the equal authority of the persons of the Godhead: 'For if in the proclamation of one praetorian prefect the other prefects are also said to command on the authority of a single power, how much the more in the empire of the one God, if one out of the three has spoken, will the three not inappropriately be said to have spoken!'[77] However, these references may also demonstrate some personal experience of either provincial government or the work of prefects.

An Egyptian Past?

Although Ambrosiaster's works suggest a Roman location for his writing and demonstrate a concern to communicate with an elite Roman audience in meaningful images and analogies, it is quite possible that he was not born in Rome and that he had lived and worked elsewhere in the empire before he came to write there. Souter suggests that Ambrosiaster had worked in high administrative posts, possibly as a governor. He adduces a number of countries and regions mentioned by Ambrosiaster as possible evidence that he had travelled through them, but singles out Africa and Egypt as

[75] Id., *Q.* 45. 1: 'unde ad angelos potest videri locutus deus, quasi imperator ad exercitum.'

[76] Id., *Q.* 115. 40: 'quo modo enim quidam pressi a rectoribus provinciarum ad auxilium imperatorum decurrunt ut erigantur, ita et homines, si adversa sibi viderint tempora, supplices se praebeant deo, in cuius potestate sunt omnia.'

[77] Id., *Q.* 97. 16: 'nam si in unius praefecti praetorio programmate etiam ceteri praefecti iubere dicuntur propter auctoritatem unius potestatis, quanto magis in unius dei imperio, si locutus unus e tribus fuerit, non incongrue dicentur tres locuti!'

the places to which most frequent reference is made, and suggests that Ambrosiaster had held office there, perhaps as *dux* or *comes Aegypti*.[78]

It is obviously dangerous to assume that Ambrosiaster had personal familiarity with a place from a passing reference to it; the desire to show off esoteric erudition and an acquaintance with the wider world were common traits of late Roman writers. However, the Egyptian connection deserves some further attention. He made two references to a peculiarity of church government in Egypt, and two to an Egyptian belief in the angel Saclas.[79] There is also a reference to the worship of Apis and birds in Egypt, as well as references to Egyptian gods worshipped in Rome in the catalogue of pagan gods.[80] The context of Ambrosiaster's writing may go some way to explaining his Egyptian interests. Augustine attested to a craze for Egyptian gods among pagans in late-fourth-century Rome,[81] and Ambrosiaster may have just been referring to what was widely known, or trying to satisfy an aristocratic appetite for such exotica. Overall, the connection is impossible to prove, but tantalizing; for example, if Ambrosiaster had spent time in Alexandria, where there was a large and long-established Jewish community, this might explain his special interest in Judaism.

Law

The extent of Ambrosiaster's legal interest and expertise has been debated over the years, but his interest in law was demonstrably scriptural and theological, not secular or practical.[82] He showed

[78] Souter, *A Study*, 36–8 and 180, comments on Ambrosiaster's Egyptian connections.

[79] On Egyptian church government, see Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 101. 5 and *Comm. Eph.*, 4: 12. 5; on Saclas, see id. *Q.* 3. 1 and *Q.* 106. 1.

[80] On the worship of Apis, see id., *Comm. Rom.*, 1.24; on Egyptian gods, see id. *Q.* 114. 9, 11.

[81] See Augustine, *Confessions*, 8. 3, reporting that in Victorinus' day (in the mid-fourth century) almost all the Roman nobility were enthusiastic worshippers of Egyptian gods.

[82] Morin, 'Qui est l'Ambrosiaster?', 2 characterizes Ambrosiaster as 'jurisconsulte et théologien', but Souter, *A Study*, 178, suggests his legal terminology was typical of an experienced administrator. On Ambrosiaster's legal thinking, see O. Heggelbacher,

a keen interest in law in its broadest, most cosmic sense: in natural law, God's law written in creation. Although natural law was a key Roman legal and philosophical concept,[83] Ambrosiaster had a biblically generated understanding of the place assigned to it in creation by God: 'It is no secret that the whole life of man is under the law of nature, which has been given to the world. This is the general law.'[84] This Judaeo–Christian attitude was rather different from the Roman juristic treatment of natural law. On the rare occasions when natural law was understood to be in conflict with *ius gentium* or *ius civile*—most famously in the case of slavery—jurists did not take the fact that slavery was against nature as an argument that it should not be enshrined in the law of peoples and Roman law.[85]

Ambrosiaster defined the tenets of natural law as follows:

> Originally, law did not have to be given formed in letters, because it was somehow sown in nature itself, and knowledge of the creator did not lie hidden from the generations of men. For who does not know what is appropriate to the good life, or who is ignorant of the fact that what he does not want done to himself, should not be done to another?[86]

Natural law entailed, then, an instinct for 'the good life', and a desire to abide by the principle to 'do as you would be done by'; God is said to have sown the 'seeds of justice' in nature.[87] The awareness of the existence of a divine creator, mentioned frequently by Ambrosiaster, is not, however, intrinsic to natural law: 'Therefore nature itself acknowledges its creator by its own judgment, not by the law but

Vom römischen zum christlichen Recht: Iuristische Elementen in den Schriften des sog. Ambrosiaster (Freiburg, 1959).

[83] On Roman ideas of law, see D. Johnston, 'The jurists', in C. Rowe and M. Schofield (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought* (Cambridge, 2000), 616–34.

[84] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Rom.*, 7: 1. 2: 'non est occultum omnem vitam hominis esse sub lege naturae, quae data est mundo. haec lex generalis est.'

[85] See *Digest* 1. 5. 4, citing Florentinus: 'Slavery is an institution of the *ius gentium*, whereby someone is against nature made subject to the ownership of another.'

[86] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 4. 1: 'Primum lex formata in litteris dari non debuit, quia in natura ipsa inserta quodam modo est et creatoris notitia ex traduce non latebat. nam quis nesciat, quid bonae vitae conveniat, aut ignoret, quia quod sibi fieri non vult alii minime debeat fieri?'

[87] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 5: 20. 2b.

by the reason of nature; for the creature recognizes its creator in itself.'[88]

In Ambrosiaster's history of law, however, this unwritten, natural law and instinctive justice was not strong enough by itself to prevent man, endowed by God with free will and 'fragile', from sinning.[89] He also suggested that man's obliteration of natural law was a reaction to the apparent lack of punishment for sinners' transgression, and stemmed from the disconnection between offending against natural law and against God.[90] He assessed written Mosaic law as a tangible demonstration by God that he did care about the human race and that he would judge them according to their earthly conduct.[91] The connection between Mosaic law and natural law was, for Ambrosiaster, smooth; he characterized the ten commandments as 'natural law which—being partly reformed by Moses, partly confirmed by his authority—brought about the recognition of sin through its restriction of vices.'[92] Altogether, the written law made clear what man could and could not do: '[the Jews] were judged worthy to receive the law by which they learned to distinguish right from wrong, so that, following this principle, they are able to make an informed evaluation of other things.'[93] Ambrosiaster also judged pragmatically that the delivery of a written law galvanized sinful man into action through fear.[94]

However, Mosaic law also proved ineffectual.[95] It gave man little opportunity for saving himself if he sinned; if he flouted the law, he was condemned. Hence the need for Christ to deliver a new law to mankind; in this new dispensation, the apostles and their episcopal successors were given the capacity to forgive man's sins on God's behalf.[96] According to Ambrosiaster, the contrast between the old

[88] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 2: 14: 'ipsa ergo natura proprio iudicio creatorem suum agnoscit, non per legem, sed per rationem naturae; opus enim opificem cernit in sese.' See also ibid., 1: 20.

[89] Ibid., 1: 20.

[90] Ibid., 5: 13. 1–2.

[91] Ibid., 5: 13. 2.

[92] Ibid., 3: 20. 4: 'haec est ergo lex naturalis, quae per Moysen partim reformata, partim auctoritate eius firmata in vitiis cohibendis cognitum fecit peccatum . . .'

[93] Ibid., 3: 1: 'ut legem, per quam addiscerent rectum a perverso distinguere, digni iudicarentur accipere, ut post hoc primum cetera qualia sint possint intellegi.'

[94] See Ibid., 11: 33. 2, and 5: 17.

[95] See Ibid., 5: 20.

[96] See Ibid., 4: 15.

and new laws was substantial because the former 'could not make provision for sinners', and so 'there came the law of faith, to bring salvation to them, not only forgiving them but also justifying them.'[97] But he also presented the two as fundamentally different in the way they have been laid before humankind; the old law had been given in letters, the new law was a law of the Spirit, 'not written in letters, but intimated to souls through faith, not [a law] which teaches visible things, but one which persuades belief in invisible things, which our reasoning deduces spiritually, not things which the eye discerns.'[98] The new law was less onerous than the Mosaic law and entailed a return to the simplicity of natural law coupled with the ancient, Abrahamic trait of faith: 'Now, the reason why God's mercy was granted was so that the burdens of the law should cease, as I have often said, because God, in consideration of human fragility, decreed that the human race should be saved by faith alone, along with natural law.'[99] Ambrosiaster's attitude to the relationship between the old law of Moses and the new law of the Spirit is summarized by his statement that 'the Gospel is as far removed from the law as a master is removed from his servant; not because the law is unpleasing, but because the Gospel is better.'[100] For Ambrosiaster, the old law had a significant part in human history, and was one of God's (several) attempts to help man live righteously; he stressed that natural law was man's instinctive sense of the existence of a Divine creator, his ability to distinguish between right and wrong, and the idea to 'do as you would be done by', on which both Mosaic law and the law of faith were predicated.

Ambrosiaster's description of the genesis of Roman law was relatively detached from his scriptural and spiritual understanding of the

[97] Id., *Comm. II Cor.*, 3: 7–8: 'ergo quia peccatoribus providere non potuit, venit lex fidei, quae hos salvaret, non solum ignoscens, sed et iustificans eos.'

[98] Ibid., 3: 17: 'non litteris utique scriptam, sed per fidem animis intimatam, non quae visibilia doceat, sed invisibilia credi suadeat, quae animus spiritaliter conligat, non quae oculus cernat.'

[99] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 1: 11. 2: 'nam ad hoc data est misericordia dei, ut cessarent onera legis, quod saepe iam dixi, quia consulens deus infirmitati humanae fide sola, addita lege naturali, hominum genus salvari decrevit.' See also id., *Comm. Rom., argumentum*, 5. On Abraham as *pater fidei*, see id., *Comm. Gal.*, 3: 6.

[100] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 1: 9–10: 1: 'quantum enim distat servus a domino, tantum distat a lege evangelium, non quod displiceat lex, sed quia melius est evangelium.'

overarching categories of natural, Mosaic, and Christian law. He wrote: 'The Romans therefore know the law because they are not themselves barbarians, but understand natural justice, partly from themselves, partly from the Greeks, partly from the Hebrews. For although the law was not hidden before Moses, yet there existed neither organization nor authority. The organization of law, you see, was brought to the Romans from Athens.'[101] Besides his interest in the general relationship between the different sorts of law given to man to help him live righteously, Ambrosiaster was consonant with some particular Roman laws. However, the edicts which he cites would have been of particular interest to a Christian and should not be taken to suggest an intimate or expert acquaintance with the vast body of Roman law. They comprise edicts against the Manicheans, edicts dealing with divorce, eunuchs, and the expulsion of the *mathematici*, and an edict forbidding crucifixion.[102]

Ambrosiaster's interest in courtroom practice and *mores* is also striking.[103] Again, however, the particular examples he used were always deployed to make a theological or exegetical point. In this respect he was explicitly following Paul's example of using Roman law as a metaphorical framework for humans to understand divine law. As he explained:

In order to strengthen their minds in God's teaching, [Paul] uses the example of human law in order, once again, to persuade them of heavenly

[101] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 7: 1: 'sciunt ergo legem Romani, quia non sunt barbari, sed conprehenderunt naturalem iustitiam, partim ex se, partim ex Graecis, partim ex Hebraeis. quamvis enim ante Moysen non latuerit lex, sed ordo non erat neque auctoritas. nam ordo legis Romanis ex Athenis perlatus est.' See also the possibly Ambrosiastrian *Quaestio* in the appendix to Vogels' edition (p. 468): 'nam utique in lege erant Romani, quam utique de Athenis decem viri missi et post alii duo adtulerant, quae in duabus tabulis scripta erat, quae in Capitolio obrutae sunt.'

[102] See Souter, *A Study*, 27–9. Ambrosiaster, *Comm. II Tim.*, 3: 6 refers to a rescript of Diocletian against the Manichees, preserved also in the *Collatio* 15. 3; *Q.* 127 refers to *edictis* with reference to the Manicheans; *Q.* 115 refers to Julian's edict permitting women to divorce their husbands, the prohibition of eunuchs in the Roman Empire, the expulsion of the *mathematici* from Rome, and Constantine's edict forbidding crucifixion; *Q.* 83 refers to Gaius 3.189. *Q.* 115. 69 refers to *quodam iuris libello*, implying a casual acquaintance with legal writing.

[103] e.g. Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 102. 25 (judges cannot also be prosecutors) and *Q.* 115. 45 (judges cannot revoke sentences; only the emperor can do this, and can even revoke capital sentences).

things by means of things which are earthly, just as God also is recognized by the creation of the world. For because the universe belongs to the one, entities, even if diverse, are nevertheless to some extent similar to each other.[104]

A good example of Ambrosiaster's sliding between earthly legal example and a broader spiritual point can be found in a lengthy excursus on the asymmetry of advocate and bishop in his *Quaestio* 102 on Novatian. In this passage he used the analogy of the relationship between a client and his advocate to explain that between the bishop and those who wish to be admitted to the church:

Accept bishops in the manner of advocates. If an advocate is of poor character, can judgment be given against his client? This is the duty of the advocate, that according to the order of the law he plead the case of his client; surely his life cannot, if it is disgraceful, be of disadvantage for his client's case? The *persona* of the advocate can neither harm nor benefit; the response will depend on the merits of the case. It is the same for those who want to become Christians. They approach the bishop, they make their vows to him, he pronounces the words of ecclesiastical law. If their vows are true, they are taken up by the judge [God]. In this matter how can he [the bishop] either harm or benefit, since he does not [even] know the case of his client? Only God the judge knows who is approaching him and what they are thinking. Therefore it is for the bishop to perform the office delegated to him, but it is for the judge [God] either to take up or refuse the case of a client.[105]

In this example the use of *iudex* to mean both God and an earthly judge in the same passage required the reader or listener to tease out

[104] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 7: 1: 'ut animos illorum firmet in doctrina divina, exemplo humanae legis utitur, ut iterum per terrena suadeat caelestia, sicut et a mundi creatura deus agnoscitur. quia enim unius est totum, licet diversae sint res, ex aliqua tamen parte sibi invicem similes sunt.'

[105] Id., *Q.* 102. 31: 'advocatorum enim more accipe antistites. numquid si malae vitae sit advocatus, contra susceptum eius pronuntiabitur? hoc est officium advocati, ut secundum iuris ordinem suscepti sui causam peroret: numquid poterit vita eius, si turpis est, obesse causae suscepti? persona enim advocati nec obesse nec prodesse poterit; qualis enim fuerit causa, sic et respondebitur ei. sic sunt et qui volunt fieri Christiani. accedunt ad antistitem, dicunt ei vota sua, ille facit verba iuris ecclesiastici. si vera vota sunt, suscipiuntur a iudice. in quo ille aut obesse poterit aut prodesse, quippe cum nec causam suscepti sui norit? deo enim iudici soli cognitum est, quis qua mente accedat. antistitis ergo est delegato sibi fungi officio, iudicis autem aut suscipere aut rennuere causam suscepti.'

references to earthly legal procedure from those to God the judge. The point Ambrosiaster was making was common to both examples: the character of the advocate, the intermediary between petitioner and judge, was irrelevant, as his client's case would be judged on its own merits.

A further example of legal exemplification can be found at *Quaestio* 88, answering a pernickety question juxtaposing (and asking for a reconciliation of) two scriptural texts, one presenting the Lord of Hosts (Christ) as *sitting* on a throne, the other describing Christ as *standing* at the right hand of God. Ambrosiaster's answer included the following phrase: 'therefore Christ appeared standing with God the judge sitting, as if he were about to plead a case, and because his case is good, he was at the right hand of the judge. For it is necessary for everyone who pleads a case to stand.'[106] That is, he explained Christ's standing in God's presence explicitly according to earthly legal procedure (whereby the advocate stood in the presence of the judge), but then shifted the context by explaining that Christ was at the right hand of the (now heavenly) judge, God, because his case was a good one. This latter explanation derived from the imagery of the Last Judgment where the blessed and saved appeared at the right hand of God, which was obviously Christ's natural place.

There are also tantalizing references in Ambrosiaster's work to *ius ecclesiasticum*. It is in this period that we see the first tentative attempts to create ecclesiastical law.[107] However, in his usage the phrase referred to clerical duties. These encompassed the remission of sins ('this is granted from the author [of law] by ecclesiastical law, that he may give penance, and after his penance that he might receive [communion]')[108] and baptizing the faithful (as in the *Quaestio* quoted above where the bishop 'performs the words of ecclesiastical

[106] Id., *Q.* 88: 'ideo sedente iudice deo stans apparuit, quasi qui causam diceret, et quia bona causa eius est, ad dexteram iudicis erat. omnis enim qui causam dicit, stet necesse est.'

[107] See C. Humfress, 'Forensic Practice in the Development of Roman and Ecclesiastical Law in Late Antiquity, with Special Reference to the Prosecution of Heresy' (unpub. D.Phil. thesis: Oxford, 1998), 171.

[108] See Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 102. 24: 'hoc enim concessum est iuri ecclesiastico ab auctore, ut et paenitentiam det et post paenitentiam recipiat.' See also id., *Q.* 93. 2: 'et quia vere ad ius ecclesiasticum pertinet, statim subiecit, dicens: "cuius tenueritis peccata, tenebuntur; si cuius remiseritis, remittentur eis."'

law' in welcoming new Christians to the faith, and elsewhere he talks of the first of the threefold gifts of the Holy Spirit, 'which pertains to ecclesiastical law in baptizing or other duties . . .').[109]

What, if anything, can we deduce from Ambrosiaster's smattering of legal references? A knowledge of and interest in law are not sure evidence of a writer's having been a *iurisconsultus* or an advocate. The prominence of legal language and argumentation in the writings of ecclesiastics in this period is testimony to the fact that many had benefited from a career-oriented education in forensic rhetoric.[110] Not all who went through this system entered the law; some became bureaucrats or officials. That is, evidence of training in forensic oratory cannot be taken as proof that the writer ever actually practised law, but it explains the prominence of legal techniques of argument present in so many Christian writings. Few historians would now suggest that Ambrosiaster had actually practised as a jurist or an advocate,[111] but he almost certainly received an education befitting one, and this explains the remnants of legal language and argumentation in his works.[112]

Ambrosiaster's Learning and 'Library'

If Ambrosiaster's legal references betray nothing more than a particular sort of education, what else can be gleaned about his learning and 'library'? Ambrosiaster's education would have been in the pagan

[109] Id., *Q.* 93. 3: 'prima haec est, quae ad ius ecclesiasticum pertinet in regenerandis vel ceteris officiis . . .'

[110] See Humfress, 'Forensic Practice', 6: 'Most "ecclesiastical" writers were themselves trained as advocates. Many also went on to receive the education of *iurisperiti*.'

[111] Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome*, 215 declared that Ambrosiaster's 'capacities as a jurist are far from impressive . . .' and it seems 'rather unlikely that he was a jurist at all.' Although Rutgers assumes that a certain degree of education and sophistication were prerequisites for jurists, contemporary evidence suggests that advocates had little need of either. Ammianus, *Res Gestae*, 30. 4, memorably satirized a class of greedy, dangerous, and ignorant advocates thus: 'Some of them are so totally uneducated that they cannot remember ever having possessed a law book, and if the name of an early writer is mentioned in cultivated company they think it is a foreign name for a fish or some other comestible.'

[112] On the legal character of another Ambrosiastrian *Quaestio*, see S. Lunn-Rockliffe, 'A pragmatic approach to poverty and riches: Ambrosiaster's *Quaestio* 124', in M. Atkins and R. Osborne (eds.), *Poverty in the Roman World* (Cambridge, 2006), 115–29.

classics; there was as yet no rival Christian education system.[113] His familiarity with the Bible and other Christian writings would have been acquired separately from and later than his learning of texts from the classical canon, and his interest in reading, expounding, and citing Christian literature appears to have eclipsed his desire or ability to deploy classical learning. Ambrosiaster very occasionally inserted a story or indeed a phrase gleaned from a pagan Latin author into a *Quaestio*. Those featured were Cicero, Claudius Mamertinus, Justin, Livy, Lucretius, Sallust, Valerius Maximus, and Virgil.[114] It is striking that of the eleven instances where borrowing is clear, seven occur in the *Quaestio* on Fate.[115] This *Quaestio* is particularly bold in its use of the ethnographic and historical excursus,[116] and departs from Ambrosiaster's usual concentration on scriptural exegesis. The audience for this *Quaestio* was probably overwhelmingly Christian, since Ambrosiaster referred repeatedly in the second person plural to those who share the faith, and in the third person plural to the pagans who call the Christians 'stupid.' However, it is possible that such a piece would potentially have been heard or read by the pagans whom it attacks so directly, who would have been more impressed by a text studded with classical tags than by one dense with unfamiliar scriptural allusions. Ambrosiaster may have been forestalling any pagan accusations of 'stupidity' by parading his secular learning, but

[113] See H. I. Marrou (trans. G. Lamb), *A History of Education in Antiquity* (London, 1956); E. Auerbach (trans. R. Manheim), *Literary Language and its Public in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (London, 1965); and R. A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Calif.; Los Angeles, Calif.; London, 1988).

[114] For specific references see CSEL 50, *index scriptorum*, 501–2.

[115] The borrowings in *Q.* 115 are as follows, by paragraph number: 27 echoes Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae*, 7 on the virtue of the ancient Romans (with a specific echo in the juxtaposition of *divitias* and *bonam famam*); 47 recalls Justin, *History*, 1. 1 on Ninus; 68 on a virtuous and handsome Etruscan mirrors Valerius Maximus 4. 5a and Claudius Mamertinus, *Gratiarum actio Juliano* 3. 5; 74 has an excursus on Scythia and Amazons distilled from Justin, *History*, 2. 4; 75 lists explanations of the derivations of Crassus' name 'Agelatus' (derived from Cicero, *De Finibus*, 5. 30. 92) and Brutus' name (derived from Livy, 1. 56).

[116] These include *Q.* 115. 18–19 on Persia; 20 refers to Solon and Lycurgus; 23 discusses kingly practices among different nations. Throughout there is an emphasis on the history and law of Rome, backing up the premise that the *Quaestiones* were written in Rome, for Romans.

we should not take passing citations of classical works to indicate intimate familiarity with the entire text.[117]

Ambrosiaster had some passing acquaintance with other Christian writers, but, in keeping with contemporary practice, rarely cited them by name.[118] He named only Tertullian,[119] Eusebius (of Vercelli),[120] Cyprian, and Victorinus (presumably of Pettau).[121] Other Christian works identified as sources alluded to or quoted by Ambrosiaster are Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, Lactantius, and Hilary of Poitiers, as well as liturgical sources, such as the Nicene creed, baptismal formula, and canon of the mass.[122] Throughout Part II of this book, telling parallels with earlier writers' peculiar examples and images will be investigated, and from this we will acquire a better sense of the possible range of Ambrosiaster's reading of Christian texts, but even this is difficult to pin down. We have already seen that Ambrosiaster appears to have encountered parts of Jerome's œuvre, and there are echoes in his work of other authors. Where thematic similarities emerge, such as a common concern with Cyprian's promotion of a monarchical episcopacy and a particular sort of sacramental theology, and with Clement of Alexandria's use of the Pauline image of the *paedagogus*, it is difficult to establish whether these were deliberate echoes or unintentional parallels driven by a shared concern to read scripture and apply it to the present. Most important of all as a source

[117] Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers*, 58–89 demonstrates convincingly that (the more learned) Jerome, although given to citation of pagan Greek texts, often had a superficial or indirect knowledge of them.

[118] Cooper, *Victorinus' Commentary*, 242 establishes that it was common practice among Latin commentators on Paul not to name other exegetes.

[119] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 44. 14, citing Tertullian, *Adversus Iudaeos*, 8: 'quo modo etiam a Tertulliano conputatum invenitur in libro . . .' Ambrosiaster also paraphrases, closely enough to be doing so with the text at hand, Tertullian, *Apology*, 1 at *Q.* 114. 31 and, more loosely, ibid., 18 at *Q.* 114. 25. However, he condemned Tertullian, alongside Novatian, as a heretic in his *Comm. 1 Cor.*, 13: 2. 3.

[120] Id., *Q.* 125. 1: 'Memini me in quodam libello Eusebii, quondam egregii in reliquis viri, legisse . . .'

[121] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 5: 14. 5a: 'nam hodie quae in Latinis reprehenduntur codicibus, sic inveniuntur a veteribus posita, Tertulliano et Victorino et Cypriano.' Souter, *A Study*, 7 n. 3, suggests that Marius Victorinus could not have been classified among the *veteres* Tertullian and Cyprian, and that Ambrosiaster must here mean Victorinus of Pettau.

[122] For specific references, see CSEL 50, *index scriptorum*, 500–1.

and inspiration was the Old Latin Bible, which exercised a constant and obtrusive influence on his writing.

Ambrosiaster may well have been better read than his scattered allusions, explicit and more veiled, would imply, but he certainly did not promote his secular learning. This fits with his insistent promotion of the importance of simple speech and people. In *Quaestio* 100, 'On the Gospel of Matthew', he stressed that the kingdom of God was preached not to the lettered, but to the faithful. He repeated a topos of the New Testament, writing: 'And so the Lord chose fishermen to be our apostles, simple, unlettered men, who demonstrated the truth of God in themselves without any slyness, by keeping the faith and living well.'[123] He told his audience that the simple were not to think that they were unworthy of the grace of God because they were little learned in law-court speeches (*litteris forensibus*).[124]

Although tracing the influence of particular texts on Ambrosiaster's thought and writing is difficult, it is possible to place his production of a set of Pauline commentaries in a distinct intellectual context: the surge of interest in Paul in later-fourth-century Rome.[125] This is demonstrated not just by the sheer number of Pauline commentaries being produced (by, in chronological order, Marius Victorinus, Ambrosiaster, the Anonymous Commentator, Jerome, and Pelagius),[126] but also in Damasus' erection of a vast new church,

[123] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 100. 2: 'ideoque piscatores elegit dominus nostros apostolos, homines simplices et sine litteris, qui sine aliqua versutia fidem servando et bene vivendo dei in se ostenderent veritatem.' The *sermo piscatorius* is an early Christian trope: see Auerbach, *Literary Language*, ch. 1.

[124] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 100. 3: 'Itaque haec idcirco praemissa sunt, fratres carissimi, ut consuleretur simplicioribus, ne se forte indignos putarent gratia dei, quia minime sunt litteris forensibus eruditi . . .' *Litteris forensibus* might refer either specifically to law-court speeches, made in the *forum*, or more generally to the eloquence taught by a Roman rhetorical education. On this, see C. Conybeare, *Paulinus Noster: Self and Symbols in the Letters of Paulinus of Nola* (Oxford, 2000), 22.

[125] On the surge of interest in Paul's writings in this period, see T. F. Martin, 'Vox Pauli: Augustine and the claims to speak for Paul. An explanation of rhetoric at the service of exegesis', *JECS* 8. 2 (2000), 237–72.

[126] Marius Victorinus, *Commentari alle Epistole di Paolo agli Efesini, ai Galati, ai Filippesi* (ed. and trans. F. Gori) (Turin, 1981); Anonymous, *Commentaria in epistulas apostoli Pauli, ad Romanos* (etc.), ed. H. J. Frede, *Ein neuer Paulustext und Kommentar*, 2 vols. (Freiburg, 1973–4); Jerome, *Commentarii in iv Epistulas Paulinas*, PL 26; Pelagius, *Commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (trans. T. De Bruyn) (Oxford, 1993).

St-Paul's-without-the-Walls, to his memory.[127] Paul, an educated man, was the intellectuals' choice of chief apostle, as opposed to Peter, the simple fisherman.[128] There was a polemical angle to the production of many of these commentaries. Paul's letters contained much that was pertinent to current disputes on the merits of the ascetic life, the proper relationship between pagans and Christians, and between Christians and Jews, and they were consequently mined for justification by Christians on both sides of such debates.[129] Ambrosiaster was not, then, working in a vacuum. Indeed, it has been convincingly demonstrated that he had read, and was influenced by, Marius Victorinus' Pauline *Commentaries*.[130] These had been produced in Rome in the early 360s, some little time before Ambrosiaster's *floruit*.[131]

There have been many attempts to 'identify' Ambrosiaster, but this is ultimately a futile endeavour. There is no certainty that the historical identity of Ambrosiaster is to be found by matching the small number of known facts about our author to one of a limited number of later Romans for whom we have names and some sketchy biographical details. It is difficult enough from internal evidence to establish whether Ambrosiaster was a convert from paganism or Judaism. Even if the specific identification of Ambrosiaster with Isaac the Jew can be discounted, there is a good deal of evidence for Ambrosiaster having an interest in Judaism that was not only hostile but sometimes positive. There is but one, far from secure, piece of evidence that Ambrosiaster was a pagan convert. Altogether,

[127] For the text of Damasus' commission of the new church, see *Collectio Avellana*, 3.

[128] The idea that Paul was *the* apostle can be found earlier, in, for instance, Cyprian. R. Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City 312–1308* (Princeton, N.J., 980), 42 charts the ebb and flow in popularity of Peter and Paul at Rome, and concludes that Paul was in pole position in the later fourth century.

[129] De Bruyn, *Pelagius' Commentary*, 15–16, argues that the renaissance in Pauline studies was provoked specifically by conflict with the Manicheans, and shows that Ambrosiaster's *Commentaries* and *Quaestiones* fit into this tradition, showing a distinctly anti-Manichean thrust.

[130] On Victorinus' influence on Ambrosiaster, see Cooper, *Victorinus' Commentary*, ch. 6. See also I. Sluiter, 'Commentaries and the didactic tradition', in G. Most (ed.), *Commentaries—Kommentare* (Göttingen, 1999), 173–205.

[131] On Marius Victorinus, see P. Hadot, *Marius Victorinus. Recherches sur sa vie et ses œuvres* (Paris, 1971).

it would seem that religious identity in late-fourth-century Rome was not as monolithic, exclusive, and clear-cut as scholars have sometimes assumed.

If ascertaining the nature of Ambrosiaster's religious background is tricky, establishing his likely secular background is easier. Having benefited from an education in the classics and forensic rhetoric, Ambrosiaster appears to have been involved in, or at least in a position to observe, aristocratic and official life in Rome. Although the bulk of evidence for placing Ambrosiaster's work suggests that he was writing in the city of Rome, historians have suggested that he had spent time elsewhere, particularly Egypt, from his references to Egyptian customs. Although he was acquainted with classical texts, it was Christian works which exercised the more obtrusive intellectual and literary influence on his writing.

3

Ambrosiaster's Ecclesiastical Context

Where aspects of Ambrosiaster's religious and secular background are rather mysterious, his writings contain more suggestive evidence about his position in, and attitude to, the Roman church in the 370s and 380s. Some of the *Quaestiones* in particular yield clues to their origins as sermons or lectures, and the possibility that Ambrosiaster wrote homiletic texts suggests he was in fact a cleric. It is natural to give precedence to the *Quaestiones* in this analysis, because they are less uniform in nature than the *Commentaries* and contain more clues to the circumstances of their composition and delivery. None the less, both sorts of texts were produced in response to a common demand. In this period there were growing numbers of educated converts who sought guidance from learned Christians; clerics also sought advice from each other and their inferiors, as seen in the correspondence between Jerome and Damasus examined in Chapter 1. This is not to say that all the *Quaestiones* were responses to the demand from Christians for exegetical or doctrinal clarification; Ambrosiaster also reported exegetical criticisms and anti-Christian arguments from pagans and Jews.[1] That is, the dialogue was not just one held within the church, but also with those outside.

[1] P. Courcelle, 'Critiques exégétiques et arguments antichrétiens rapportés par Ambrosiaster', *VC* 13 (1959), 169. P. de Labriolle, *La Réaction païenne: étude sur la polémique antichrétienne du I^er^ au VI^e^ siècle* (Paris, 1934), 496–8, identifies Porphyry as Ambrosiaster's source and opponent in *Qq.* 56, 57, 60, 65, 83. Cumont, 'La Polémique de l'Ambrosiaster contre les païens', *RHL* 8 (1903), 427–31 suggests that Ambrosiaster was refuting Julian's anti-Christian polemic in *Q.* 124.

THE GENRE OF THE *QUAESTIO*

The *Quaestiones* which Ambrosiaster produced had their roots in the ancient Greek tradition of criticizing and defending particular texts such as the Homeric poems, giving rise to sets of problems and solutions.[2] There was also a tradition of asking and answering questions about ideas, beliefs, and practices, rather than texts (as in Plutarch's *Greek and Roman Questions*, which provide an open-ended series of possible answers to each question).[3] The tradition of debate, of asking and solving problems, either of texts or more generally, was widespread in the late Roman world, in the classroom, and more generally in public places.[4] It should also be noted that *quaestio* was a word with a very broad remit, encompassing didactic, rhetorical, and legal meanings, and a range of forms and styles.[5] Couching arguments in question form was one of the most ancient and persuasive rhetorical practices, stemming back from the Greek philosophical practice of teaching through dialectic. If a single author was responsible for choosing what questions to pose, and how to answer them, then even an apparently dialogic form was unlikely to produce a genuinely open-ended debate. That is, we should not see the *quaestio* as so very different from other, apparently more univocal genres of exposition such as the commentary.

The *quaestio* was first adapted to didactic religious purposes by Philo, an Alexandrian Jew, who produced sets on Genesis and Exodus. These took the form of virtually verse-by-verse expositions of the books concerned, couched in question form; again, the form of asking a question and answering it was more a didactic tool than

[2] See A. Gudeman, '*Λυσεις*', *PRE* i. 13. 2 (1927), 2511–29.

[3] Plutarch, *Greek and Roman Questions* (trans. F. C. Babbitt) (Harvard, Mass., 1936).

[4] For an example of questions in the late antique classroom, see R. A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Calif.; Los Angeles, Calif.; London, 1988), 160. For public combative questioning, see e.g. Augustine's disputation with Fortunatus in the baths of Sossius in Hippo Regius, discussed by R. Lim, *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Calif., and London, 1995), 94 ff.

[5] *Quaestiones* were a popular genre among jurists; see T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford, 1985), 23.

an indication of open-ended irresolution. We know that a Latin translation of some of Philo's *Quaestiones* was produced in Italy in the last quarter of the fourth century, and that Ambrose and possibly Augustine were familiar with it; this introduces the tantalizing possibility that Ambrosiaster himself may have had access to Philo's *Quaestiones*.[6] The style and range of Ambrosiaster's *Quaestiones* is rather different from Philo's, but there is some fleeting coincidence of preoccupations, such as Lamech's murder of Cain.[7]

The *quaestio* was a popular didactic tool among Christians: Eusebius composed *Gospel Questions and Solutions*, Jerome, *Questions on the Hebrew text of Genesis*, and Augustine, a set of 83 *Questions*.[8] Augustine provides us with some useful comparative insights into the circumstances of and purposes for the production of Christian *Quaestiones*, when he wrote of his 83 *Questions* in his later *Retractationes*:

> Among the things we have written, there is also a long work which, nonetheless, is thought of as a single book, and its title is *Eighty-three Different Questions*. However, the questions had been scattered through many leaves of paper, because, from the very beginning of my conversion and after our return from Africa, the questions were dictated, without any order having been preserved, in response to the brothers who were ever asking me about things when they would see me unoccupied. When I became bishop, I ordered that the questions be gathered together and made up into a single book, and that numbers be added so that anyone could easily find what he wanted to read.[9]

[6] See E. Hilgert, 'The *quaestiones*: texts and translation', in D. M. Hay (ed.), *Both Literal and Allegorical: Studies in Philo of Alexandria's Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus* (Atlanta, Ga., 1991), 6 and D. T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey* (Assen, 1993), 25–6.

[7] See Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 6 ('Did Lamech kill Cain?') and Philo, *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, 1. 77 ('Why Lamech, after the fifth generation, blames himself for the fratricide of his elder Cain?').

[8] On Christian *Quaestiones*, see A. Volgers and C. Zamagni (eds.), *Erotapokriseis: Early Christian Question-and-Answer Literature in Context. Proceedings of the Utrecht Colloquium, 13–14 October 2003* (Leuven, 2004).

[9] Augustine, *Retractationes* 1. 26: 'Est etiam inter illa quae scripsimus quoddam prolixum opus, qui tamen unus deputatur liber, cuius titulus est *De Diversis Quaestionibus Octoginta Tribus*. cum autem dispersae fuissent per chartulas multas, quoniam ab ipso primo tempore conversionis meae, posteaquam in Africam venimus, sicut interrogabar a fratribus, quando me vacantem videbant, nulla servata ordinatione dictatae sunt, iussi eas iam episcopus colligi et unum ex eis librum fieri adhibitis numeris, ut quod quisque legere voluerit facile inveniat.'

In this passage, Augustine explained that the questions were composed *ad hoc* during the period between his return to North Africa from Italy and his selection as bishop of Hippo, that is between 388 and 396, when he was living in a sort of monastic community. The brothers to whom he referred were part of this community. In Augustine's *Confessions* we find that one of the major burdens on the time and energy of a Christian intellectual was the constant pestering for answers to questions.[10] However, although questions may have been produced *ad hoc*, they were often tidied up for circulation. In the prologue to his *Quaestiones Evangeliorum ex Mattheo et Luca*, Augustine explained that these were initially responses to a man with whom he was reading the gospels and reflect this particular questioner's own interests.[11] The order of passages discussed was initially confused as the reader's haste meant some passages were considered out of order. Augustine therefore made the task for subsequent readers easier by editing the questions and prefacing titles to them. The production of such literary *Quaestiones* was, then, stimulated by demand. They tended only to receive a wider audience when the questions were being asked and answered by correspondence, rather than in person, as we saw in the Jerome–Damasus communication in Chapter 1, or when they were collected, polished, and published as a set later.

A different, oral, context for the production of Christian *Quaestiones* can be found in contemporary descriptions of questions being

[10] See id., *Confessions*, 6. 4, commenting on Ambrose's habit of reading silently: 'When he was reading, his eyes ran over the page and his heart perceived the sense, but his voice and tongue were silent . . . We wondered if he read silently perhaps to protect himself in case he had a hearer interested and intent on the matter, to whom he might have to expound the text being read if it contained difficulties, or who might wish to debate some difficult questions. If his time were used up in that way, he would get through fewer books . . . Besides, the need to preserve his voice . . . could have been a very fair reason for silent reading. Whatever motive he had for his habit, this man had a good reason for what he did.' Paul Saenger deals with silent reading in antiquity in his *Space between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford, Calif., 1997), 1–17; he takes a traditional line, suggesting that Ambrose's silent reading was a novelty. This is convincingly rebutted by A. K. Gavrilov, 'Techniques of reading in classical antiquity', *CQ* 47. 1 (1997), 56–73, who suggests that Augustine was merely subtly reproaching Ambrose's refusal to engage with potential questioners.

[11] Augustine, *Quaestiones Evangeliorum libri II*, ed. A. Mutzenbecher, CCSL 44B (Turnhout, 1980).

posed in public. We saw in Chapter 1 that Jerome had heard a Jewish convert to Christianity asking a tricky question about gospel genealogies in Rome, which resembled a *Quaestio* of Ambrosiaster's.[12] We do not know the context in which this questioning took place. However, other near-contemporary evidence shows that the process of questioning and answering was not just conducted privately between intimates of a similar theological persuasion, but could also be public and highly combative. The Manichees in North Africa, for example, were much given to posing and answering challenging questions in public, and in Constantinople in the 380s, Gregory of Nazianzus railed against loquacious trouble-makers whose questioning spilled into every square and affected every party in the city, even women.[13]

THE COLLECTION OF AMBROSIASTER'S *QUAESTIONES*

Ambrosiaster's collection of *Quaestiones* contains answers to scriptural or theological questions, verse-by-verse exegeses, sermons, and diatribes against heretics, pagans, Jews, and even arrogant deacons. Some are pieces setting hostile critics right and others are designed for a more friendly audience. The collection of such diverse texts into one volume gives a misleadingly unified identity to what is really a miscellany.[14] Furthermore, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish sharply between different genres; detailed verse-by-verse exegesis may be embedded in a sermon and an answer to a scriptural conundrum may entail an ethical digression. None the less, their arrangement has

[12] Jerome, *Commentary on Titus*, 3: 9; the question he reports resembles Ambrosiaster's *Quaestio* 56.

[13] See Lim, *Public Disputation*, 88 ff. on the Manichees and 158 ff. on Gregory Nazianzus.

[14] See A. Kamesar, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship and the Hebrew Bible: A Study of the Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim* (Oxford, 1993), 92–3, who explains that the *Quaestiones* of, for example, Philo and Theodoret, are 'a sort of mixed genre', including questions which resemble commentaries. Jerome's *Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim* also develop the 'what' question, which does not raise objections but asks broad questions.

some coherence. The *Quaestiones* can be divided into small, cohesive groups within the whole collection, both chronologically (such as the 'Easter sequence' of *Quaestiones* 116–21) and thematically (such as *Quaestiones* 110–12 on the psalms).

Not only the content but the style of different *Quaestiones* varies widely; in fact, the two were connected because the content of a text affected the style in which it was composed. In classical rhetoric, correspondence between subject matter and form was paramount; lowly subjects were to be treated in the lowly style, lofty in the lofty style, and so on.[15] But in the new Christian rhetoric (Cameron's 'rhetoric of paradox') it was standard practice to express simple matters in elevated language and to celebrate the mysteries of important themes in simple language.[16] As we saw in Chapter 1, Ambrosiaster stressed the importance of simple speech and people but often expressed this in high-flown language. The different styles which Ambrosiaster employed in different *Quaestiones* were not just driven by the text itself; he also composed texts with a particular audience in mind. Christian preachers often selected a level of rhetoric according to the purpose, not the subject matter of their preaching (all of which, being Christian revelation, was sublime).[17] Thus Augustine identified different sorts of rhetoric for different occasions, namely for teaching, condemnation or praise, and persuasion:

> But although our teacher must be a speaker on important matters, he should not always speak of them in the grand style, but rather use the restrained style when teaching and the intermediate style when censuring or praising something. But when action must be taken and we are addressing those who ought to take it but are unwilling, then we must speak of what is important in the grand style, the style suitable for moving minds to action.[18]

[15] See E. Auerbach (trans. R. Manheim), *Literary Language and its Public in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (London, 1965).

[16] See A. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley, Calif., 1991).

[17] See Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, 4. 12 ff.

[18] Ibid., 4. 19. 38: 'Et tamen cum doctor iste debeat rerum dictor esse magnarum, non semper eas debet granditer dicere, sed submisse, cum aliquid docetur; temperate, cum aliquid vituperatur sive laudatur; cum vero aliquid agendum est et ad eos loquimur, qui hoc agere debent nec tamen volunt, tunc ea quae magna sunt, dicenda sunt granditer, et ad flectendos animos congruenter.'

Although the three different styles were sometimes mingled in one piece, and it would be impossible to ascribe all of Ambrosiaster's work to one genre or another, it is clear that the restrained exegesis of a psalm was fitting as it was a 'teaching' piece, whereas the censure of pieces such as *Quaestiones* 97, against Arius, and 102, against Novatian, necessarily involved a step 'up' in rhetorical tone.

Quaestiones as Answers to Questions

The *quaestio* was sometimes a response to a question from someone else, rather than artificially posed by the author to himself. This would apply to many of Ambrosiaster's *Quaestiones*, which sometimes referred to a questioner, and often did so pejoratively, accusing him of being tiresome or ill-informed; this tallies with the fact that theological debate in Rome in this period was conducted as much between, as within, different sects. Thus *Quaestiones* 74 and 75 begin with attacks on the questioner. In the first, the questioner was accused of 'always hiding the sense in an abbreviated proposition',[19] and in the second of having another agenda: 'For the case is different from that proposed; for it is not that sense of this question which you allege.'[20] Elsewhere Ambrosiaster attacked a questioner who had called into doubt the infinite goodness of a God who visits the sins of fathers on their sons, saying that: 'whoever suppresses the words of this question is either unskilled or else a twister, who studies trickery more than doctrine.'[21]

Ambrosiaster also singled out individuals from his audience in personal terms in *Quaestio* 46: 'There are certain men among us, who, partly occupied by worldly business, and partly less studious of holy scripture, have fallen into error, thinking that Samuel was a priest…'[22] The slightly menacing introduction implicated his

[19] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 74. 1: 'Semper breviata propositione sensum occultas.'

[20] Id., *Q.* 75. 1: 'Aliter causa se habet quam proposita est; non enim hic quaestionis huius sensus est quem obtendis.'

[21] Id., *Q.* 14. 1: 'qui enim verba subprimit quaestionis aut inperitus est aut tergiversator, qui calumniae magis studet quam doctrinae.'

[22] Id., *Q.* 46. 1: 'Sunt quidam inter nos, qui partim negotiis saecularibus occupati, partim minus studiosi circa sacras scripturas, errorem patiuntur putantes Samuhelem sacerdotem fuisse…' *Q.* 123. 1 also singles out 'certain from among our brothers' who have not 'fully investigated the scriptures.'

audience ('There are certain men among us') and the descriptions of his targets would probably have identified them to his audience. He continued by saying that: 'Among these, some, erring yet more, deny that Samuel was from Aaron's stock . . .',[23] and concluded: 'we must respond to these first.'[24] He did not explicitly state that he had been asked a question, but the fact remains that he was responding to a schism within his own community, and a question of interpretation was the pivot of the problem.

Ambrosiaster was inventive in his composition of speeches for opponents which he then rebutted; the questions he was asked may have been genuine, but his dialogues (especially ones hostile in tone) with his questioner were necessarily invented. This was a classic feature of the diatribe, which was an answer to the question of a student delivered in a dialectical way.[25] In his *Quaestio* 'Against Photinus', Ambrosiaster evoked his opponent by insulting him personally ('How stupid this comment of yours is . . .')[26] and attributed objections to him which he then refuted. Throughout *Quaestio* 46 he referred back to what his opponents asserted, and even attributed small speeches to them: ' "But with Elias' death" they say, "Samuel his son began to administer the priesthood to the priests" . . .'[27] The tone of this *Quaestio* is overwhelmingly hostile; his opponents' opinion is dismissed as something 'which neither reading teaches nor reason allows',[28] and they are referred to as, among other things, 'contradictors with their eyes shut.'[29] Ambrosiaster was, however, capable of expressing distaste for the questions posed in a more impersonal

[23] Id., *Q.* 46. 1: 'ex quibus aliqui plus errantes negant quidem Samuhelem de genere fuisse Aaron . . .'

[24] Ibid.: 'quibus prius respondendum est.'

[25] See Auerbach, *Literary Language*, 31: 'At an early date the Christian sermon began to develop on the model of the diatribe, or moralistic declaration, in which the opinions of others are adduced in imaginary speeches to which the speaker replies, the whole thus forming a dialogue.' See also G. A. Kennedy, 'The rhetoric of the early Christian liturgy', in D. Jasper and R. C. D. Jasper (eds.), *Language and the Worship of the Church* (Basingstoke, 1990).

[26] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 91. 11: 'Quam autem illud tuum stultum est, Fotine . . .'

[27] Id., *Q.* 46. 4: ' "Sed Heli", inquiunt, "mortuo et filiis eius sacerdotibus Samuhel coepit agere sacerdotium".'

[28] Id., *Q.* 46. 4: 'quod nec lectio docet nec ratio ammittit.'

[29] Id., *Q.* 46. 6: 'contradictores clausis oculis.'

manner. He began *Quaestio* 32 with a request: 'May this assertion of impiety be far away from the minds of the faithful.'[30]

Some of the *Quaestiones* seem to have been written as homilies, and retain oral tics. Others, however, occasionally demonstrate that Ambrosiaster is writing for a reader rather than a listener. There are two specific instances when Ambrosiaster intruded himself into his text, or drew attention to the very process of composition. The final paragraph of a *Quaestio* on the origin of the observation of Pentecost begins:

> And so that you do not become tired of reading, or give too much attention to the individual parts of the question, I summarize, so that you might be certain of the number of days which are from Easter up to the giving of the law, and from this you might learn the more easily, of how many days of rest Easter is composed.[31]

This shows that Ambrosiaster was providing a written response to an individual, to be received and read; he even provided the reader with a summary of his argument.

In *Quaestio* 125, 'Against Eusebius', Ambrosiaster referred his reader to a *libellus* he had written earlier (*Quaestio* 97 'Against Arius'): 'Let this be the end; for the remaining things (which encompass the undivided unity of the Trinity) are clearly explained in the little book arranged against the Arian blasphemy.'[32] This not only establishes that the order of the collection of *Quaestiones* sometimes preserves the chronology of their composition; it also suggests that Ambrosiaster wrote for an audience acquainted with (or having access to) his other works, and could confidently refer them to earlier treatments. His description of *Quaestio* 97 as a *libellus* is

[30] Id., *Q.* 32. 1: 'Longe absit a fidelium mentibus haec impietatis adsertio.' The assertion he decries is contained in the opposition of two scriptural texts in the title: Solomon's claim that God made both rich and poor, and the statement in Rom. 2: 11 that there is no distinction of persons before God.

[31] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 95. 5: 'Et ne legendi fastidium patiaris aut quaestionis singula membra curiose inspicere, do conpendium, ut et de numero dierum, qui a pascha usque ad datam legem sunt, certus sis et ab ipso facilius discas, quota feria factum est pascha.'

[32] Id., *Q.* 125. 24: 'Hic finis sit; iam enim in libello adversus Arriam inpietatem digesto reliqua plene tractata sunt, quae trinitatis conplexa sunt indiscretam unitatem.'

also interesting; the piece against Arius does not take the traditional *quaestio* form, for its title does not ask a direct question and it is a polemical tract rather than an answer to a scriptural conundrum. It is likely that this *Quaestio*, like others, had the status of an independent pamphlet (*libellus*) which was lost when it was circulated as part of a collection of *Quaestiones*.

AMBROSIASTER'S *QUAESTIONES* AS SERMONS[33]

Returning to the comparative material of Augustine's *Quaestiones*, we find that he makes no reference to any of his *Quaestiones* deriving from, or being recycled into, sermons.[34] However, it appears that some of Ambrosiaster's *Quaestiones* were delivered as sermons, considered broadly.[35] 'Preaching' took various forms in the early church. As an exposition of the scriptural passages read earlier in the service it was an important part of the mass, but worship was not always eucharistic and would sometimes comprise just a 'liturgy of the word' where scriptures were read and explicated.[36] Teaching also took place outside church services in the preparation of catechumens for baptism.[37]

It is always difficult to assess the homiletic origins of a text. Sometimes a preacher wrote down his sermon in advance, but sometimes

[33] I am grateful to Richard Finn OP for illuminating diverse aspects of late antique preaching.

[34] For a definition of 'sermon', I borrow from D. G. Hunter, *Preaching in the Patristic Age: Studies in Honor of Walter J. Burghardt, SJ* (New York, 1989), 36: 'a discourse given on a biblical text for a congregation as part of a service of worship.'

[35] I am not the first to remark on this; see A. Souter, *A Study of Ambrosiaster*, Texts and Studies, 4 (Cambridge, 1905), 10: 'while most of the tractates are addressed to a reader, a few are evidently sermons or homilies'; however, I disagree with Souter that *Qq.* 110, 111, and 112 'have the appearance of sermons', since they exhibit none of the homiletic hallmarks which I shall be examining later. See also Hunter, *Preaching*, 285 and L. Speller, 'Conflict and Controversy in Ambrosiaster' (unpub. D.Phil. thesis: Oxford, 1980), 12.

[36] See R. F. Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West: The Origins of the Divine Office and its Meaning for Today* (Collegeville, Minn., 1986) and Hunter, *Preaching.*

[37] On the teaching of catechumens, see L. D. Folkemer, 'A study of the catechumenate', *CH* 15. 4 (1946), 286–307.

he extemporized and his words were recorded by someone present, which raises obvious doubts as to the accuracy of transcription.[38] They were frequently tidied up for 'publication', and many of the rough edges resulting from spontaneous delivery were removed. The mingling of genres was also common. Sermons were recycled in correspondence, as in a letter of Ambrose to Simplicianus which was based on a sermon on I Corinthians 7: 23.[39] A commentary could also incorporate tidied-up homilies, as we see in John Chrysostom's *Commentaries* on the Pauline epistles. These contain strong traces of their origins as sermons, but also bear scrutiny as a continuous and coherent commentary.

There is, despite this caveat, an essential difference between patristic commentaries, written to be read at leisure, generally favouring a verse-by-verse exposition, and eschewing bolder rhetorical flourishes, and homilies, which use a wider variety of rhetorical techniques to engage with the congregation and sometimes with particular individuals within that group.[40] Ambrosiaster's own work exemplifies the difference between genres; his *Commentaries* on Paul provide an exhaustively detailed verse-by-verse commentary and manifest a uniform style, where his *Quaestiones* are bolder and more freeform. Some of Ambrosiaster's *Quaestiones* are also more likely to have been commentaries to be perused at leisure than homilies. For instance, his *Quaestiones* 110, 111, and 112 (on Psalms 1, 23, and 50) are much simpler verse-by-verse explications which focus exclusively on the psalm in question, contrasting strongly with other pieces which allude to a myriad of scriptural texts.

[38] See R. J. Deferrari, 'St Augustine's method of composing and delivering sermons', *AJP* 43 (1922), 97–123 and 193–219, for a lengthy discussion of Augustine's method of composing sermons. He concludes that these were preached *ex tempore* and transcribed by stenographers, rather than being written in full before being delivered.

[39] Ambrose, *Letter*, 54. It has in fact been adduced that almost all of Ambrose's corpus was sermonic in origin—see S. M. Oberhelman, *Rhetoric and Homiletics in Fourth Century Christian Literature: Prose Rhythm, Oratorical Style and Preaching in the Work of Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine*, American Classical Studies, 26 (Atlanta, Ga., 1991).

[40] See Lienhard in Hunter, *Preaching*, 39–40, contrasting the character of Origen's commentaries and his homilies.

Addresses to the Congregation

There are several tics which are the hallmarks of a work composed or delivered orally, and as such indicate that particular *Quaestiones* may have been sermons or lectures. On several occasions Ambrosiaster addresses what seems to be his congregation, typically addressed as 'most beloved brothers' at the very opening of a *Quaestio*:

You have heard, dearest brothers, to what the Gospel bears witness . . . [41]
Easter, most beloved brothers, was named from 'passion'. . . [42]
Great is the love of the omnipotent God, most beloved brothers, towards the human race . . . [43]
It is fitting, dearest brothers, for a priest of God and overseer of Christ's people faithfully to exhort the people placed under his care in saving doctrine . . . [44]
And so, dearest brothers, we must celebrate and venerate this festival day, devoted to God with modesty of life and joy of spirit, avoiding wickedness and dishonesty . . . [45]

The use of *fratres* to mean 'brothers in Christ' is commonly seen in other Christian literature of the period and did not yet have the exclusively monastic sense it was to acquire. Whether this term was reserved for initiated Christians or was also applied to catechumens is more difficult to determine. If we look at the near-comparative evidence of Augustine's treatise *On the Catechizing of the Instructed* we find in sample addresses to catechumens that the subject is addressed as *frater*, but Augustine also frequently used *fratres* when preaching to his congregation and *frater* to address recipients of letters.[46] Given that advanced catechumens were permitted to listen

[41] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 100. 1: 'Audistis, fratres carissimi, quae contestetur evangelium . . .'
[42] Id., *Q.* 116. 1: 'Pascha, dilectissimi fratres, a passione appellatum est . . .'
[43] Id., *Q.* 118. 1: 'Magna dilectio est, fratres dilectissimi, omnipotentis dei erga genus humanum . . .'
[44] Id., *Q.* 120. 1: 'Congruum est, fratres carissimi, devotissime dei sacerdotem et praepositum plebis Christi exortari populum sub cura sua positum in doctrina sana . . .'
[45] Id., *Q.* 121. 2: 'Itaque, fratres karissimi, hunc diem festum colere ac venerari debemus devoti deo cum modestia vitae et animi laetitia turpia et inhonesta vitantes . . .'
[46] Augustine, *On the Catechizing of the Uninstructed*, 25. 46, 47. The only full collection of catechetical lectures to survive from this period are in Greek, by Cyril of Jerusalem.

to the homily before being dismissed from the performance of the eucharist, there is not a firm distinction between lectures delivered only to catechumens and sermons given only to initiated Christians, and we are left with the possibility that Ambrosiaster may have been addressing one, other, or both groups in his homiletic *Quaestiones*.

It is also difficult to establish the audience implied by Ambrosiaster's addressing his reader more generally, either in the singular (for example, *audi catholice*)[47] or in the plural. The former is a more intimate and popular style of writing, but does not necessarily indicate that the writer had in mind a specific single reader/hearer. Bearing in mind that the prevailing mode of 'publication' and circulation in the ancient world was reading aloud, whether or not Ambrosiaster's *Quaestiones* were first performed as part of a divine service (either the liturgy of the word without mass, or within a mass), they were always aimed at an audience who would hear (rather than read) them; hence the *Quaestiones*' dominant 'oral' traits. The fact that sermons were frequently edited after being delivered means that we cannot know whether they originally contained more clues (such as addresses to *fratres carissimi*) of being performed orally. Similarly, more visual (than oral) phrases such as 'as has been shown above . . .'[48] could have been added later.

Lectio

Lectio can be defined as both a text and the reading of a text, silently or aloud.[49] When Ambrosiaster used *lectio* to mean 'a text', it appears to be a text with which author and audience were familiar, which indicates that the *Quaestio* was homiletic and was delivered after passages of scripture had been read.[50] Sometimes this sense of 'text'

[47] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 127. 19.

[48] Id., *Q.* 61. 2: 'sicut supra ostensum est.'

[49] A. Souter, *A Glossary of Later Latin* (Oxford, 1949), 228: 'A passage (of Holy Writ), chapter, lesson . . . The office of reading scripture in church'; Lewis and Short, 1046: 'A reading, perusal; a reading out, reading aloud.'

[50] J. Doignon, in the introduction to his edition of Hilary, *Tractatus Super Psalmos*, CCSL 61 (Turnhout, 1997), p. xi, argues that *lectio* could also refer to 'une tranche de texte, qui offre matière à une instruction', and p. xiii, states that 'La *praedicatio* d'Hilaire couvre l'enseignement de la vérité, de l'Évangile, de la "doctrine céleste",

is given an extra layer of meaning by its context, transforming it to our 'lesson', namely a passage of scripture read in church (whence 'lectionary'). There are several instances of this usage in the *Quaestiones*. The title of *Quaestio* 5 ('Why was the sacrifice of Abel accepted and that of Cain refused?') refers to Genesis 4, but does not quote from it. Yet this *Quaestio* begins with the phrase 'from the words of this reading it can be understood that this story is not shrouded with the art of words.'[51] 'The words of this reading' seem to refer to a passage from Genesis 4 read earlier, which was fresh in his audience's mind, and much more ample than the fleeting reference contained in the title.

Quaestio 45 begins with a quotation from Genesis 1: 26, continues by saying that 'some people think this must be understood from another part of the reading [*lectio*]',[52] and then refers to Genesis 11: 7. The *lectio* here could have been a reading in church, although eleven chapters of Genesis is perhaps overlong for oral delivery; it could refer merely to the text of Genesis itself. *Quaestio* 47's title begins: 'On the reading [*lectione*] from the prophet Isaiah', and follows with a quotation from Isaiah 4: 1. This could be a reminiscence of a larger chunk of Isaiah read in the service, and indeed the other passages of Isaiah explained in the *Quaestio* are 4: 2 and 4: 4, implying that the passage in the title was part of a larger lesson. *Quaestio* 118 'On Job' begins with an appeal to 'most beloved brothers', implying the presence of an audience, and goes on to state: 'And so because [God] is good and wants all men to be saved, he gave to us an example of justice in Job his servant, as the present reading shows . . .',[53] although no reading has yet been quoted. The *Quaestio* goes on to explicate Job 1 and 2, a sizeable but not impossibly large lesson which could have been read earlier in a service. It concludes

sans impliquer nécessairement une quelconque présentation orale qui aurait précédé la version écrite que nous lisons.'

[51] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 5. 1: 'Ex verbis hoc ipsius lectionis potest colligi, quia non est litterarum arte velata historia.'

[52] Id., *Q.* 45. 1: 'hoc quibusdam ex alia parte lectionis intellegendum esse videtur . . .'

[53] Id., *Q.* 118. 2: 'Igitur quoniam bonus est et omnes homines salvos vult fieri, exemplum nobis iustitiae in Iob famulum suum demonstravit, sicut praesens lectio contestatur . . .'

by saying 'as we have learnt amply from this lesson', a didactic conclusion to an explication of scripture which exemplifies the purpose of the homily. In *Quaestio* 119, 'On Tobias', Ambrosiaster explained how God gave us literature and examples (as to what should be done and what avoided) 'as the present reading shows [*sicut praesens lectio contestatur*].' Again, no passage has yet been quoted, implying the audience had already heard something of the *praesens lectio.*

Lectio sometimes also referred to the very *activity* of reading scripture. As we saw earlier in this chapter, Augustine referred to the unusual sight of Ambrose reading silently, implying that private reading was in fact commonly done 'aloud.' As one read aloud to oneself even when alone, texts almost always received a 'performance.'[54] *Quaestio* 120 'On fasting', itself probably a sermon, contains a metaphor about the effect of reading scripture, using *lectio* to mean the activity rather than the text:

> Such is the disposition of our nature, that it becomes dull if one ceases the habit of reading; just as iron, unless use is made of it, begets rust, so it is with the soul; unless it exercises itself frequently with divine readings, sins will arise in it. Thus it is that the psalm says 'blessed is he, who meditates night and day on the law of the Lord.'[55]

Liturgical Setting

There are at least two homiletic *Quaestiones* which can be pinned down to a certain liturgical period of the year. The first is *Quaestio* 120 'On fasting.' I quote the opening phrases:

> It is fitting, dearest brothers, for a priest of God and overseer of Christ's people faithfully to exhort the people placed under his care in saving doctrine, as the apostle commands, that we perform the work of faith on account of the observation of the [holy] time with all care and diligence and with an eager and devoted spirit. Also we should not pass over—although it

[54] For this use of *lectio*, see also Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Eph.*, 4: 11–12 and id., *Comm . I Cor.*, 12: 28.

[55] Id., *Q.* 120. 1: 'tale est enim ingenium naturae nostrae, ut torpescat, si usus destiterit lectionis, quia sicut ferrum, nisi usum fecerit, eruginem generat, ita et anima, nisi se frequentius divinis exercuerit lectionibus, nascentur illi peccata. hinc est unde in psalmo hunc dicit beatum, qui die noctuque legem domini meditatur.'

does not lie hidden—how fast days benefit us: they are to be celebrated now as the festal day of Easter draws near.[56]

The first pointer to a performative, liturgical context is the opening address to *fratres carissimi*. Secondly, Ambrosiaster identified himself, albeit obliquely, with the impersonal *sacerdos* whose duty it is to teach and preach. This is one of the more powerful indications that our author was a presbyter—*sacerdos* can signify either presbyter or bishop, but never deacon.[57] Thirdly, he explained the rationale behind fasting, giving the *Quaestio* a practical and pastoral rather than a theoretical, exegetical, or expository intent. His ending the sermon on an ethical note (encouraging the practice of prayer and almsgiving) is a sermonic hallmark, much beloved of John Chrysostom.[58] Finally, Ambrosiaster declared that fasting is being practised 'now the festal day of Easter is at hand',[59] which gives this *Quaestio* a specific place in liturgical time: just before Easter, during the Lenten fast.[60] It may also have had a specific audience in advanced catechumens who were prepared during Lent for baptism at Easter by a rigorous ascetic regime of silence, continence, fasting, and prayer.[61]

The second piece which only makes sense in a liturgical setting is *Quaestio* 121, 'The praise and glory of Easter.' This *Quaestio* comes naturally after a Lenten *Quaestio*, again suggesting that the arrangement of *Quaestiones* is far from arbitrary. However, this is one of the more startling pieces for inclusion in a set of *Quaestiones*, as it is quite obviously a prayer, rather than an argument. It begins with an apostrophe to Easter: 'O holy and saving day of Easter, to be

[56] Id., *Q.* 120. 1: 'Congruum est, fratres carissimi, devotissime dei sacerdotem et praepositum plebis Christi exortari populum sub cura sua positum in doctrina sana, sicut mandat apostolus [cf. Tit. 1: 9], ut opus fidei pro temporis observatione omni cura diligentiaque alacri et devoto animo faciamus. ieiunia etenim, quae nunc inminente die festo paschae celebranda sunt, quid proficiant, quamvis non lateat, taceri tamen non debet.' There follows a section on the habit of reading—implied as private devotion—see above.

[57] M. Bévenot, '"Sacerdos" as understood by Cyprian', *JTS* 30 (1979), 413–29.

[58] See Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 120. 5 which recommends *oratio*, *misericordia* (or *elemosyna* [sic]), and *ieiunia*.

[59] Id., *Q.* 120. 1: 'nunc inminente die festo paschae.'

[60] See A. Chavasse, 'La Préparation de la Pâque, à Rome, avant le V[e] siècle. Jeûne et organisation liturgique', in *Mémorial J. Chaine* (Lyon, 1950), 61–80.

[61] On the preparation of catechumens for baptism over Lent, see Folkemer, 'A study of the catechumenate', 294–6.

preached with all praise . . .'[62] There follows a crescendo of brief phrases describing the defeat of death, sin and the Devil, and the conquest of Christ and his kingdom. Ambrosiaster ended the litany with an appeal to *fratres karissimi* (again, supposing the presence of a congregation), and urged them to celebrate Easter: 'so that we may deserve to come to the fruit of Easter through Christ our Lord, to whom is honour and glory for now and forever. Amen.'[63] The ending 'per Christum dominum nostrum . . . Amen' is a formula of prayer found at the end of other Ambrosiastrian *Quaestiones* and was a typical way of ending a sermon.[64]

Ethical Dimension

A distinguishing feature of homilies was their ethical dimension, which can be found in the three 'hagiographical' *Quaestiones* framed by the Easter and Lenten *Quaestiones* examined above. These are discourses on the virtues of three important biblical figures: Abraham, Job, and Tobias. Abraham is presented as a model of faith: 'Let us now look at what this faith believed, that he arrived at such honour and glory by divine judgment.'[65] Ambrosiaster urged his audience to imitation: 'For if the most faithful Abraham was found to be obedient in so terrible and harsh a matter, how much more should we, for whom are things prescribed that are bearable!'[66] In the *Quaestio* on Job, Ambrosiaster explained that God gave us an *exemplum* of justice in his servant Job, and concluded by saying that this *lectio* taught us how a trial (*temptatio*) could be of benefit to the servants of God, yet harm the Devil.[67] The lesson of Tobias is similar: God allows us to be tempted, that we might receive a greater prize

[62] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 121. 1: 'O sanctum et salutarem diem paschae et omni laude praedicandum.'

[63] Id., *Q.* 121. 2: 'ut ad fructum paschae venire mereamur per Christum dominum nostrum, cui est honor et gloria in saecula saeculorum. Amen.'

[64] See e.g. id. *Q.* 100: 'per Iesum Christum dominum nostrum.' On ending sermons with a prayer, see Deferrari, 'St Augustine's method', 216.

[65] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 117.2: 'Videamus nunc quid credidit fides haec, ut ad tantum honorem et gloriam divino iudicio perveniret.'

[66] Ibid. 7: 'Si enim fidelissimus Abraham in re tam gravi et aspera oboediens invenitur, quanto magis nos, quibus illa praecipiuntur quae possunt portari!'

[67] Id., *Q.* 118. 10.

after our labour is over.[68] Ambrosiaster stated his hagiographical purpose clearly ('The examples of holy men teach us')[69] and linked the faith of *sancti viri* with that of their imitators. The holy man as *exemplum* was more commonly found in saints' lives in this period, especially in monastic literature, but the hagiographical treatment of a biblical character was also appropriate for a sermon. Finally, he sounded a strong ethical note in *Quaestio* 120, promoting fasting and commending almsgiving. His recommendation of practical altruism was the complement to his promotion of the more introspective practices of prayer and fasting, and was a typical ending for a sermon.

WHO PREACHED?

It has been suggested that Ambrosiaster's homiletic *Quaestiones* were exercises not intended for delivery.[70] This seems unlikely, since the homiletic touches I have noted are unlikely to be later interpolations; it was the custom to tidy up texts for publication, but this involved the removal of oral traits rather than their addition.[71] It has also been suggested that Ambrosiaster may have written these works, but did not himself deliver them in church; that they were composed for another person to deliver.[72] It is certainly true that sermons were often recycled in this period. They were sometimes ransacked by less able preachers, as Augustine explained (and excused):

> There are indeed some people who can give a good speech, but are not able to compose what they deliver. If they borrow from others something composed with eloquence and wisdom and commit it to memory and then bring that to their audience, they are not doing anything wrong, providing they adhere to that role.[73]

[68] Id., *Q.* 119. 2.

[69] Ibid. 3: 'exempla nos docent sanctorum virorum.'

[70] Souter, *A Study*, 177: 'exercises not actually intended for delivery.'

[71] See Oberhelman, *Rhetoric and Homiletics*, 55 ff. on Ambrose's revision of his sermons and the removal from them of none, some, or all traces of oral delivery.

[72] See G. Morin, 'Hilarius l'Ambrosiaster', *RBén* 20 (1903), 118, on Ambrosiaster's works as lecture notes for busy bishops.

[73] Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, 4. 29. 62: 'Sunt sane quidam, qui bene pronuntiare possunt, quid autem pronuntient, excogitare non possunt. quod si ab

We have other evidence that bishops sometimes delivered sermons composed by others: Gennadius described Salvian as a *magister episcoporum* who composed 'many sermons for bishops to deliver.'[74] Sermons were also collected and reused. Caesarius of Arles compiled selections of sermons from Augustine, Ambrose, and others, and pressed them on willing and unwilling clerics.[75]

One of the potential objections to the idea that Ambrosiaster preached these texts himself as sermons is that we cannot identify Ambrosiaster with any of the bishops of Rome, and that he would, in all probability, have preached these sermons as a presbyter. But the view that only the bishop preached in the early church, correct of say Gaul (as explored above, where some busy bishops appear to have used others' sermons) is incorrect when applied to Rome. This view is based on a logical sequence: only the bishop could say mass, and it was almost always the celebrant who preached on the texts which had been read in the liturgy of the word preceding the celebration of mass. However, Roman presbyters played an important role in their city's church, and sometimes had special powers to celebrate mass. It is also clear that they frequently delivered sermons, and that only deacons were definitely not permitted to preach.

Rome in the late fourth century was under the power of the bishop of Rome. But being a large city, and also having the remains and shrines of many martyrs, it boasted a variety of different churches: both the great basilicas, including the bishop of Rome's own (the Lateran basilica), and the *tituli*, which were in origin private houses used as places of worship but came to be replaced with purpose-built churches. There were also, outside the city walls, but still indisputably 'Roman', the great cemetery churches built on the catacombs such as St Paul's-without-the-walls, St Laurence, and St Sebastian. What

aliis sumant eloquenter sapienterque conscriptum memoriaeque commendent atque ad populum proferant, si eam personam gerunt, non improbe faciunt.'

[74] Gennadius, *De Viris Illustribus*, 68: 'homilias episcopis factas multas . . .' My thanks to David Lambert for elucidating this passage. Gennadius' statement is reliable given that he was writing in Marseilles when Salvian was still alive, and probably knew him.

[75] See Deferrari, 'St Augustine's method', 101–3. Another Gallic collection of sermons, possibly for busy bishops to ransack, was the Eusebius 'Gallicanus' collection (ed. Fr. Glorie), CCSL 51, 51A, 51B (Turnhout, 1970–1).

went on in these churches is a matter of great interest. It is clear that all presbyters were able to perform the episcopal functions of administering baptism and penance. However, they were not all able to say mass. Our evidence, a letter of Innocent I to Decentius of Gubbio, was written some thirty years after Ambrosiaster's *floruit*, in 416:

> Of the true *fermentum*, which we send to the *tituli* every Sunday, you sought our counsel unnecessarily, since all of our churches are constituted within the city. The presbyters of these churches cannot join together with us on that day [Sunday], because of the people entrusted to them [i.e. congregation]; and so they receive the *fermentum* prepared by us from the acolytes, so that they may not judge themselves to be separated from our communion, especially on that day [Sunday]. But I think that this should not be done in the parishes, because the sacrament should not be carried so far, nor do we send it to the presbyters constituted at various cemetery-churches, as the presbyters have the right and permission to prepare the *fermentum* themselves.[76]

This letter outlines Roman practice, and stresses that it is peculiar to Rome and thus not appropriate as a model for practice elsewhere. Leo allowed presbyters of individual churches in Rome to receive the *fermentum* (some consecrated bread) from some of the bishop's acolytes, so as not to be separated from the one communion of the church. However, this was not the case in all churches; in the cemetery churches, which were too far away for communion to be taken there, presbyters were allowed to prepare the sacraments themselves.[77] A second category of evidence shows that precious chalices and patens which would only have been used in masses were given as gifts to *tituli* under the care of presbyters. One assumes that these same presbyters would have made use of these gifts when they celebrated mass there, and not merely waited for the infrequent

[76] Letter of Innocent I to Decentius of Gubbio: 'De fermento vero, quod die dominica per titulos mittimus, superflue nos consulere voluisti, cum omnes ecclesiae nostrae intra civitatem sint constitutae. Quarum presbyteri, quia die ipsa propter plebem sibi creditam nobiscum convenire non possunt; idcirco fermentum a nobis confectum per acolitos accipiunt, ut se a nostra communione, maxime illa die, non judicent separatos. Quod per paroechias fieri debere non puto; quia nec longe portanda sunt sacramenta nec nos per coemeteria diversa constitutis presbyteris destinamus et presbyteri eorum conficiendorum jus habeant atque licentiam.'

[77] See P. Nautin, 'Le Rite du "fermentum" dans les églises urbaines de Rome', *EL* 96 (1982), 510–22.

occasions when the bishop visited their churches.[78] Thus we have a picture of a two-tiered presbyterate, with only those of the outlying cemetery churches performing the traditional episcopal function of consecrating the sacraments.

If the normal practice was for the bishop to say mass and preach, then it is not hard to see how, in the exceptional case of those Roman churches where a presbyter had special dispensation to say mass himself, he would also have been able to preach. When considering the matter of 'who preached', we must also understand the logistics of how the bishop of Rome ministered to the peoples of the large numbers of churches in the diocese. Recent scholarship on 'stational liturgy' has demonstrated how the bishop toured his city, preaching and celebrating mass at different churches on different days.[79] But since he could only be in one place at one time, and the liturgy had to be celebrated on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays (as well as countless feast days), it is unsurprising that presbyters should commonly have preached on these occasions. Although some Roman presbyters would have preached regularly, given their special dispensation to perform (normally) episcopal functions, they would have needed to exercise caution as to the subjects of their sermons. It would have been extremely risky for a presbyter to be seen to rival the bishop's authority over, for instance, widows and the poor. The political necessity of keeping a low profile must have shaped presbyters' choice of subjects for preaching and teaching, and could explain the generalized and ethical content of the homiletic Ambrosiastrian *Quaestiones*.

AMBROSIASTER AS PRESBYTER

All of this is useful for our understanding of Ambrosiaster's possible place in the church hierarchy, which is complemented by the evidence of his *Quaestio* 101. He was spurred to write this by the arrogance of

[78] See S. de Blaauw, *Cultus et decor: liturgia e architettura nella Roma tardoantica e medievale: Basilica Salvatoris, Sanctae Mariae, Sancti Petri*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1994), ii. 814, table 6.

[79] On stational liturgy, see J. Baldovin, *The Urban Character of Christian Worship: The Origins, Development and Meaning of Stational Liturgy* (Rome, 1985).

the Roman deacons, whom he accused of usurping the episcopal functions of *oratio* and *convivia*—preaching and celebrating the eucharist (and maybe also the *agape*). The rest of this *Quaestio*, as well as other writings in his corpus, emphasizes that the presbyter is nearly equal in status to the bishop, and it is the deacons who are distinctly inferior to both. In his *Commentary on Ephesians*, Ambrosiaster again stated that deacons did not at the present have the right to celebrate mass or preach, but did not limit the functions of presbyters. It is just possible that Ambrosiaster wrote *Quaestio* 101 as a lay observer, but an outsider would surely have been less interested in matters of ecclesiastical hierarchy than an insider. The high status he accords to presbyters at the expense of the deacons and the homiletic aspects of his work suggest that he was a presbyter, possibly at one of the important cemetery churches outside the city walls.[80]

Scholars in recent years have been more reluctant to ascribe an identity to Ambrosiaster, but Janet Fairweather has suggested the Roman presbyter Gaudentius as a possible candidate.[81] This individual is named in the *Collectio Avellana* as a partisan of Ursinus (that is, an opponent of Damasus) bound over to keep the peace, and in inscriptions on monuments at St-Paul's-without-the-walls.[82] The fact that Gaudentius was married is, however, rather incompatible with Ambrosiaster's own attitude towards clerical marriage.[83] He defended marriage between lay men and women, but made it clear that, although the apostle Peter may have married,[84] circumstances

[80] Janet Fairweather, 'Ambrosiaster: A Fourth-Century Commentator on Paul' (unpub. seminar paper, 1998), 9, has suggested that his commentaries on the Pauline Epistles could have been written in connection with the dedication of the new Damasene foundation of St Paul's-without-the-walls, which was built in his time. On the construction of this church in the mid-380s, see J. Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital: Rome in the Fourth Century* (Oxford, 2000), 146–7.

[81] My thanks to Janet Fairweather for these references.

[82] *Collectio Avellana*, 11. 3 refers to a list of men, including Gaudentius, whom a condition of correction bound [*eos eadem etiam conditio emendationis astringat*]. See J. B. de Rossi and A. Silvagni (eds.), *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiores*, NS vol. ii, *Coemeteria in viis Cornelia Aurelia Portuensi et Ostiensi* (Rome, 1935), 143, inscriptions 4820 and 4823.

[83] Gaudentius' wife Severa is commemorated in inscription 4823.

[84] See Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 127. 33: 'Certainly the holy John preserved his virginity. But it is equally certain that his co-disciple Peter had a wife and children, and producing children did not prevent him from receiving primacy among the apostles.'

had changed and bishops, presbyters and deacons were now required to be celibate: 'But perhaps someone may say: "if it is licit and good to marry, why are priests not allowed to have wives, that is, so that those who already are ordained are forbidden to have intercourse?" Who does not know that each individual has a law in respect to his own person and dignity?'[85] He continued with a series of comparisons which showed that some things were forbidden to some and allowed to others, ending with the statement that 'it is fitting that [God's] high priest should be purer than others, for he appears to bear the person of God himself . . .',[86] that is, that a standard of celibacy was appropriate for the clergy. It was common practice in this period, before clerical celibacy was strictly enforced, for clerics who had married before ordination to remain in their marriage, but to adhere to a strict rule of celibacy.[87] At a pinch, Ambrosiaster could fit into this category: a presbyter in a celibate marriage who preached abstinence to other clergy. A more major objection to the Ambrosiaster–Gaudentius identification is that there is nothing in Ambrosiaster's œuvre to support a pro-Ursinian identification.

We should read the *Quaestiones* and the *Commentaries* sensitive to the possibilities of why they were produced, and for what sort of occasions. Although the number of indubitably homiletic *Quaestiones* is quite small, it is none the less significant. Modern scholars working on Ambrosiaster agree on one aspect of his mysterious identity: that he was probably a presbyter.[88] This conclusion has

[85] Ibid., 35: 'Sed forte dicatur: "si licet et bonum est nubere, cur sacerdotibus non licet uxores habere, id est, ut ordinatis iam non liceat convenire?" quis nesciat unum quemque pro persona et dignitate sua et legem habere?'

[86] See also id., *I Tim.* 3: 12–13. 2: 'veteribus enim idcirco concessum est levitis aut sacerdotibus uxores ad usum habere . . .', contrasted with the present at *I Tim.* 3: 12–13. 3: 'ac per hoc omnes [encompassing the just-mentioned orders of *diaconus*, *presbyter,* and *episcopus*] a conventu feminae abstinere debere . . .'

[87] See D. Callam, 'Clerical continence in the fourth century: three papal decretals', *TS* 41. 1 (1980), 3–50.

[88] See Speller, 'Ambrosiaster and the Jews', 75: 'His insistence on the original identity of bishop and presbyter also contributes to my suspicion that he could well be a presbyter who does not feel that his talents are recognised'; Hunter, 'On the sin of Adam and Eve: a little-known defence of marriage and child-bearing by Ambrosiaster', *HTR* 82 (1989), 285: 'it is also very likely that Ambrosiaster was a presbyter of the Roman church'; and Fairweather, 'Ambrosiaster', 3: 'he was most likely a priest.'

been reached mainly from internal evidence, and particularly from his tendency to aggrandize the position of the presbyter and resist the ambitions of the lowlier deacons.[89] An obvious out-of-the-way location for a presbyter would have been one of the cemetery churches of Rome which had special exemption from usual episcopal control. Even if it is pointless to speculate further as to which church Ambrosiaster might have been attached, it is possible to see him as a learned cleric preaching, teaching, and answering (in writing and in person) reams of questions from intellectual Christians in Rome, as well as the objections and criticisms of Jews and pagans.

[89] See, most typically, Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 101, 'On the arrogance of the Roman deacons.'

Part II

Ambrosiaster's Political Theology

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4

Social Hierarchies

If Part I of this book was necessarily couched in a subjunctive mood of uncertainty, then Part II takes a more confident indicative character. In examining Ambrosiaster's anthropology, ecclesiology, and political theology, it is possible to focus on the texts with the minimum interference from the 'biographical problem' of working with an anonymous, and in the broader comparative context of a range of other Christian writers. Ambrosiaster's works, be they exegetical or polemical, circle insistently around the intended hierarchy and singularity of God's creation, and the cosmic and scriptural need for developing and preserving a monarchical ruling principle in social relations, the church, and political society.

Ambrosiaster's attitudes to natural social hierarchies in creation are the necessary starting point for any investigation of his ideas about political, institutionalized forms of domination (such as that of the emperor over his subjects) because he used the same language of both sorts of hierarchy. This allowed him to narrow the gap between social and political forms of domination. By comparison, Augustine, writing some decades later, was to endorse as natural only certain basic pre-fall forms of subordination such as that of woman to man, and to identify institutional post-fall forms of subjection such as kingship and slavery as unnatural although sanctioned by God.[1] Ambrosiaster presented man and woman's domination over the animals and man's domination over woman as inherently natural,

[1] R. A. Markus, *Saeculum*: *History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine* (Cambridge, 1970), 203–5, explores this distinction in Augustine, *Commentary on Genesis* and *City of God*. Ibid., 86–7 unpicks Augustine's understanding of the operation of God's providence in two distinct forms: *providentia naturalis* and *providentia voluntaria*.

ordained at the very moment of creation by God. Slavery, however, considered both metaphysically as slavery to sin and literally as institutional slavery, was identified as a postlapsarian system of subjection and therefore unnatural.

MAN AND WOMAN

Ambrosiaster portrayed God's purpose in creating the universe as a demonstration of his omnipotence to the Devil, who had mounted a rebellious challenge to his authority: 'God, that he might destroy [the Devil's] presumption not by power but by reason, founded matter . . .'[2] He presented God's creation of a single man as a demonstration to evil spiritual powers of the singularity of his, God's, power: 'And so one [God] made one [man], to teach that all things are from one, and therefore that there is one God, that superior creation to its confusion might learn the truth in man, who was created from earth.'[3] The singularity of God's creation is an insistent feature of Ambrosiaster's anthropology and fed into his justification of monarchical earthly power. He suggested that God intentionally created a single man, Adam, from whom the whole human race would spring, because his very singularity reflected the singularity of God himself:

> a man is formed in the image of God, and woman is not. But she is the image of God by virtue of the man, because God created one human being, so that just as all things come from the one God, similarly all human beings would come from the one human. The consequence would be that one visible man would bear on earth the image of the one invisible God, so that the one God would be seen to maintain the authority of the single originating principle, to the consternation of the Devil . . .[4]

[2] See Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 2. 3: 'Hinc est unde deus, ut eius praesumptionem non potestate, sed ratione destrueret, materiam condidit . . .'

[3] Ibid.: 'ideo enim unus unum fecit, ut doceret ab uno esse omnia ac per hoc unum esse deum, ut superior creatura ad confusionem suam in homine disceret, qui e terra conditus est, veritatem.' *Superior creatura* could mean 'superior' or 'earlier' creation, but both apply to the Devil, who was superior in substance to man—being angelic and non-corporeal—as well as being created before man.

[4] Id., *Comm. I Cor.*, 11: 5–7. 2: 'vir enim ad imaginem dei factus est, non mulier. haec est autem imago dei in viro, quia unus deus unum fecit hominem, ut sicut

Humanity is given a single fleshly origin in Adam, just as spiritual beings have a single origin in God: 'man is placed here, made in the image of God, so that, just as in the world above all things are from one God, similarly in this world all people have their origin from one man.'[5] And just as one man was created, so one man sinned, and one, Christ, came to redeem mankind: 'the providence of the one God has restored, through the agency of a single individual, that which had fallen through the agency of a single individual, and had been forcibly consigned to death.'[6] Ambrosiaster negotiated the creation of woman without jeopardizing the idea of a single, male ancestor for all of mankind. To preserve the principle of singularity, it is crucial that Eve did not share with Adam the task of originating the human race; thus Ambrosiaster reported that she was not born *ex nihilo* in the way that man was, but took her origin from the flesh of Adam.

Imago Dei

In his *Quaestio* 45, Ambrosiaster rebutted a current belief that man had the image of God (*imago dei*) in domination of the type of man's absolute domination over the animals:

> Some people think it is in domination that man was made the image of God, because he said: 'And he will dominate over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the whole earth' [Gen. 1: 28], even though these things appear to be subject not only to the male but also to the female, who clearly does not have the image of God.[7]

ab uno deo sunt omnia, ita essent et ab uno homine omnes homines, ut unius dei invisibilis unus homo visibilis imaginem haberet in terris, ut unus deus in uno homine videretur auctoritatem unius principii conservare ad confusionem diaboli . . .'

[5] Ibid., 6: 2.1: 'unde homo hic positus est, ad imaginem dei factus, ut sicut in superiore mundo ab uno deo sunt omnia, ita et in hoc ab uno homine omnes haberent originem.' See also id., *Q.* 45. 2.

[6] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 5: 12. 1: 'ut providentiam unius dei per unum reformasse doceret, quod per unum lapsum fuerat et tractum in mortem.'

[7] Id., *Q.* 45. 3: 'Aliquibus tamen videtur, quia in dominatione imago dei factus est homo, quia dixit: "et dominetur piscium maris et volatilium caeli et totius terrae", cum non solum viro, sed et mulieri ista cernantur subiecta, quam constat dei imaginem non habere.'

The phrase 'it is in domination that man was made the image of God' has on occasion been extracted from this passage and quoted out of context to prove that Ambrosiaster himself thought that the image of God consisted of domination.[8] However, Ambrosiaster was in fact rebutting this assertion. He explained that man and woman were equally granted domination over the animals in Genesis, and since it is agreed that woman is not in the image of God, the domination which she shared with man over the animals could not be the defining feature of the 'image of God.' Nor, despite the recurrent insistence that mankind is set above the beasts by rationality, is reason proffered as constituting the *imago dei* in man.[9]

David Hunter has shown convincingly that Ambrosiaster's concept of the *imago dei* lies in God's creation of a single man, and that this idea of Adam as the originator of the human race serves to reflect God's position as creator of the universe.[10] Hunter suggests that Ambrosiaster, albeit implicitly, finds the *imago dei* in man's natural *auctoritas*. This vague term encompasses both the persuasive (counsel, influence) and the imperative (command, might, power), but in Ambrosiaster's use it is most often a political term. In a piece of circular reasoning, Ambrosiaster partly derives man's primal authority from contemporary circumstances: the very fact of man's being socially, legally, and politically superior to woman proves that this must be ordained by God: 'But if the woman did not veil her head, she would also be the image of God. But this would be unfitting, that she who is subjected to her husband be said to be the image of God.'[11] It follows, since Paul is clear that woman is not to have authority over her husband, that she cannot have the image of God in this first, 'natural' sense.[12] Ambrosiaster discussed how woman might be

[8] E. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, N.J., 1957), 129: 'The so-called Ambrosiaster . . . likewise explains in his *Quaestiones*: "In dominatione imago Dei factus est homo".'

[9] Fleeting references to man's unique rationality such as Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 31. 2: 'since no animal is rational except man.'

[10] D. G. Hunter, 'The paradise of patriarchy: Ambrosiaster on woman as (not) God's image', *JTS* NS, 43. 2 (1992), 447–69.

[11] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Col.*, 3: 11. 5: 'si autem et mulier non velaret caput, esset et ipsa imago dei. sed incongruum erat, ut facta viro subiecta diceretur esse imago dei.' On this theme, see K. Power, *Veiled Desire: Augustine's Writing on Women* (London, 1995), 57 and Hunter, 'The paradise of patriarchy.'

[12] e.g. 1 Tim. 2: 12: 'no woman is permitted to teach or have charge over a man.'

considered the image of God in another way in his commentary on Colossians:

> In one way then this is the image [of God], which he said is created from the recognition of the Saviour, and then there is another image, in which man was first made. There is that image [of faith] in woman, since she recognizes him who created her, and tempering her will, abstains from a shameful life and perverse behaviour. But this image [bestowed at creation] is only in man, as Paul himself writes in the first letter to the Corinthians: 'but the man does not have to veil his head, since he is the image and glory of God.' But if the woman did not veil her head, she would also be the image of God. But this was unfitting, that she who is subjected to her husband be said to be the image of God.[13]

That is, Ambrosiaster acknowledged that a woman who believed in God should be said to have the image of God, but stressed that this was a different sort of image to that which man received at creation. Woman did not share man's privilege to be *made* in the image of God, with authority of her own. However, if she curbed her behaviour and acknowledged and worshipped God, she could be said to have the image of God in a secondary sense, through faith.[14] A further example of the 'reformed' image of God received through faith is found in *Quaestio* 108, where Ambrosiaster wrote: 'as in the beginning the image of God was in Adam, so that there might be recognition [of God] on earth, thus after the fall of the human race and the obliteration of the truth, it was reformed in Abraham so that from him, renewed faith in God might sprout into fruit.'[15] Ambrosiaster also explained that since Eve was created from Adam's rib,

[13] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Col.*, 3: 11. 4–5: 'alia est tamen imago haec, quam de agnitione salvatoris dicit creari, et alia imago, ad quam factus est primus homo. ista enim imago est et in femina, cum agnoscit eum, qui se creavit, et obtemperans voluntati eius abstinet a vita turpi et actu perverso. illa autem imago in solo viro est, sicut idem dicit in epistola ad Corinthios prima: "vir quidem non debet velare caput, cum sit imago et gloria dei." si autem et mulier non velaret caput, esset et ipsa imago dei. sed incongruum erat, ut facta viro subiecta diceretur esse imago dei.'

[14] See T. J. van Bavel, 'Woman as the image of God in St Augustine's *De Trinitate* XII', in C. Mayer and A. Zumkeller (eds.), *Signum Pietatis: Festgabe für Cornelius Mayer OSA zum 60. Geburtstag* (Würzburg, 1989), 284 n. 43, who distinguishes between the *imago creationis* and the *imago gratiae*.

[15] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 108. 4: 'sicut in principio in Adam dei fui imago, ut cognitio eius esset in terris, ita post ruinas humani generis et oblivionem veri in Habraham reformatum est, ut ab ipso fides in deum iterum coepta germinaret in fructum.'

woman is in the image of God in so far as she is 'in' the man [*in viro*];[16] in a twist to his otherwise sharply differentiated and hierarchical view of the relations between the sexes, Adam actually comes to stand for both sexes.[17]

Similitudo Dei

Ambrosiaster argued that woman did not have the natural *imago dei* bestowed upon man at his creation and could only be said to possess the *imago dei* in two ways: one, in so far as woman is 'in' man, and two, as renewed by faith. He did allow, however, that woman shares in the *similitudo dei*. Hunter shows how Ambrosiaster presented this as a relationship between woman and man which mirrored the relationship between the persons of the Trinity, in a *quaestio* tackling Genesis 1: 26, which recounts how God made man in his image (*imago*) and likeness (*similitudo*):

> This is how man is made to the image of God, because one made one, so that just as all things are from one God, so the whole human race is from one man. But this is the likeness [*similitudo*] of God, that just as the Son is of the Father, so the woman is from the man, so that the authority of the single source of origin is preserved.[18]

This passage uses one interpretation of the relationship between two persons of the Trinity, Son and Father, to explain the sort of relationship between man and woman. The emphasis on the Father as the source of divinity and on the order of the persons of the Trinity is typical of Greek Nicene theology at the time, which illustrates powerfully the paradox that although Ambrosiaster appears not to have been interested in or well-read in Greek Christian texts, his

[16] Id., *Comm. I Cor.*, 11: 5.

[17] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 5: 12. 1: 'Adam—id est Eva, quia et mulier Adam est . . .'

[18] Id., *Q.* 21: 'hoc est ad imaginem dei factum esse hominem, quia unus unum fecit, ut sicut ab uno deo sunt omnia, ita et ab uno homine omne genus humanum. similitudo autem haec est, ut quem ad modum de patre est filius, sic et de viro mulier, ut unius principii auctoritas conservetur.' See also id., *Comm. Col.*, 3: 11. 5: 'Therefore one made one, to bear the image of unity and so that there would be the likeness of the mystery of the Father and Son [*similitudo mysterii patris et filii*] in the man and the woman.'

writings sometimes manifest a Hellenizing theology.[19] He repeatedly stated that God the Father is the primary principle in the Godhead,[20] but was always keen to affirm his Trinitarian orthodoxy, perhaps in the face of possible accusations of subordinationism: 'The Holy Spirit is the third in order, not in nature; in degree, not divinity; in person, not degree of knowledge. Just as the Son of God is second to the Father and is not lesser in respect of divinity, so also the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Son is not unequal, but of equal substance in divinity.'[21]

Ambrosiaster also sensibly limited the comparison between God the Father's mysterious begetting of a Son and Eve's creation out of Adam: 'But this is the likeness of God in man, that, as the Son is of His father, so woman is of the man; in this [the comparison] is clearly unequal, because she was made, whereas He was born.'[22] None the less, he insisted that woman's subjection to man was a result of her being formed out of man, and he used the Pauline head–body metaphor to describe this: 'The reason why God is the head of Christ is that Christ was begotten of Him, or of Himself, but a man is head of a woman because of the fact that she was formed out of his rib by the power of God.'[23]

The bodily images conjured up by the use of *caput* to describe the ruling of one member or person over others are a mainstay of Paul's writing, and were adopted by Ambrosiaster to explain the relationship of man to woman, also compared to other relationships: ' "And the head of Christ is God"... But Christ is the head of man in one

[19] On the differing characterizations of the Godhead found in Latin and Greek theology, see e.g. G. Whiting, 'The father to the son', *Modern Language Notes*, 65/3 (1950), 191–3.

[20] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 109. 21: 'quoniam autem omni modo unius dei auctoritas conservanda est, idcirco secunda et tertia persona subiciuntur paterno nomini.'

[21] Id., *Q.* 125. 22: 'tertius enim ordine est, non natura; gradu, non divinitate; persona, non ignorantia. sicut enim filius dei secundus a patre est et divinitate minor non est, ita et spiritus sanctus sequens a filio est non inpar, sed aequalis divinitate substantiae.'

[22] Id., *Q.* 106. 17: 'similitudo autem dei haec est in homine, ut, sicut ex patre filius, similiter ex homine mulier, in hoc plane dispar, quia haec facta, ille vero natus est.' Augustine expresses the same idea of the intended singularity of God's creation of man in his *City of God*, 12. 22.

[23] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Cor.*, 11: 3: 'deus autem ideo caput Christi est, quia de eo vel ab ipso genitus est; mulieris vero idcirco caput vir est, quia ex eius costa dei virtute formata est.'

way, man the head of woman in another, and God the head of Christ in yet another.'[24] Again, we see that these analogies are qualified by Ambrosiaster; Christ is the head of man 'in one way', and that man is the head of woman 'in another way.' He was similarly reluctant to equate the relationship between Christ and his church exactly with that between man and woman:

> And as Christ is the head of the church, so is man [head] of the woman. For the church took its beginning from Christ whence it is subjected to him; so also the woman [took her beginning] from man, so she should be placed under him. In this however they are different, because the woman is consubstantial with the man, whereas the church can only participate in the name and not the nature of Christ.[25]

Relations between Man and Woman

Ambrosiaster's construction of a hierarchical ontology for man and woman fed into his analysis of what their proper relations should be:

> Although man and woman are one in their existent nature [*una substantia*], nevertheless, because the man is the head of the woman, it is taught that he is to be given precedence, being greater through the cause and rationale, not by reason of his existent nature itself. So the woman is inferior to man, for she is a part of him, for the origin of woman is man. For she is created out of him, and because of this a woman is seen to be under an obligation to her husband, to be subjected to his rule.[26]

[24] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Cor.*, 11: 3: '"caput autem Christi deus."... aliter tamen caput viri Christus est et aliter vir mulieris et aliter deus caput Christi est.'

[25] Id., *Comm. Eph.*, 5: 24: 'sicut enim caput ecclesiae Christus est, ita et vir mulieris. a Christo enim ecclesia sumpsit initium, unde subiecta est illi; ita et a viro mulier, ut sit subdita. in eo tamen distat, quia mulier consubstantiva viro est, ecclesia autem in nomine potest, non in natura participari Christo.' This analogy (between husband and wife, and Christ and church) recalls another patristic depiction of the relationship between church and Christ—of bride and bridegroom. This imagery is derived from exegesis of the Song of Songs; Paul (Eph. 5: 22–3) names the church as the spouse of Christ.

[26] Id., *Comm. I Cor.*, 11: 5. 1: 'quamvis una substantia sit [et] vir et mulier, tamen, quia vir caput mulieris est, anteponendus traditur, ut per causam et rationem maior sit, non per substantiam. inferior ergo mulier viro est, portio enim eius est, quia origo mulieris vir est; ex eo enim est ac per hoc obnoxia videtur mulier viro, ut imperio eius subiecta sit.'

Ambrosiaster repeatedly stated that man and woman share a unity of nature or substance, and as such are 'one': 'the two are in one flesh. For the persons do not divide the substance . . . they have a unity of nature.'[27] He even admits that 'man and woman are of one substance, both in the soul and the flesh',[28] that is, they are not spiritually differentiated. But the different modes of their begetting meant that she was posterior in time and lower in status to man: '[Paul] places the man before the woman, because he was created first; therefore the woman is inferior, because she was created *after* the man and *from* the man.'[29] Man has authority over woman because it was from man that woman was born, and so he is of a higher status (*gradu maior*): 'Man and woman are of one substance, both in the soul and the flesh, but the man is of a higher status, since the woman is of him, as the apostle says: "Man is the head of the woman" [Eph. 5: 23]. For cause, not substance, made the man greater. For also in one body limbs are greater and lesser in terms not of nature, but of rank [see 1 Cor. 12: 22–3].'[30]

So there were several reasons, according to Ambrosiaster, why woman was subject to man, and this determined how man and woman should behave towards each other. First, the order and manner of their creation required woman to be subject to man: 'a man is head of a woman because of the fact that she was formed out of his rib by the power of God . . .'[31] Secondly, the fall of mankind occurred through the agency of Eve, so she was primarily responsible for man's loss of immortality: 'because transgression began through her . . .';[32] 'And he adds this too, that the Devil did not seduce the man

[27] Id., *Comm. Eph.*, 5: 28: 'quia duo in carne una sunt. non ergo personae substantiam dividunt . . . sed sunt in unitate naturae.'

[28] Id., *Q.* 24: 'Unius substantiae quidem sunt vir et mulier, et in anima et in carne . . .'

[29] Id., *Comm. I Tim.* 2: 15: 'praefert virum mulieri, propter quod primus creatus est, ut inferior sit mulier, quia post virum et ex viro creata est.'

[30] Id., *Q.* 24: 'unius substantiae quidem sunt vir et mulier, et in anima et in carne, sed gradu maior est vir, quia ex eo est femina, sicut dicit apostolus: "caput mulieris vir". causa enim maiorem fecit virum, non substantia. nam et in uno corpore maiora membra sunt et minora non natura, sed ordine.'

[31] Id., *Comm. I Cor.*, 11: 3: 'mulieris vero idcirco caput vir est, quia ex eius costa dei virtute formata est.'

[32] Ibid., 11: 8–10: 'et quia praevaricatio per illam inchoata est . . .'

but the woman, and the man was tricked by the woman . . . through her death entered into the world.'[33] Thus the sentence decreed as a result of the fall confirmed the natural order of creation and returned woman to her proper place in the hierarchy.

The proper visible behaviour reflecting woman's subjection consisted of a silent submission to her husband and a lack of authority in the church: 'For how can it be said of woman that she is the image of God, when it is agreed that she is subjected to the rule of her husband and has no authority? Nor can she teach nor bear witness nor declare her faith nor judge; so how much less can she rule!'[34] This recalls Paul's statement that 'the woman is not permitted to teach or to dominate her husband', quoted by Ambrosiaster elsewhere.[35] It also manifested itself in behaviour in church recommended by Paul and endorsed by Ambrosiaster: woman should veil herself and not speak, in contrast to man: 'A woman therefore ought to cover her head, because she is not the likeness of God, but as is being pointed out, in subjection. And because transgression began through her, she ought to signal this by not having her head uncovered in church out of reverence for the bishop, and not having the power of speaking, because the bishop bears the person of Christ.'[36] Ambrosiaster reiterated that: 'if woman is subjected to man by the law of nature, how much more ought women be subjected in church, as a sign of respect for the man [the bishop] who is the envoy of him [Christ] who is the

[33] Id., *Comm. I Tim.* 2: 15: 'adicit et aliud, quia diabolus non virum seduxit, sed mulierem, vir autem per mulierem deceptus est . . . quia per illam mors intravit in mundum.'

[34] Id., *Q.* 45.3: 'quo modo enim potest de muliere dici, quia imago dei est, quam constat dominio viri subiectam et nullam auctoritatem habere? nec docere enim potest nec testis esse neque fidem dicere nec iudicare; quanto magis imperare!' Hunter, 'The paradise of patriarchy', 450–2, shows how the phrases used here have specific reference to secular legal capacities, demonstrating that woman's lack of these in the Roman world is ordained by her lack of the *imago dei*.

[35] 1 Tim. 2: 12: 'docere autem mulieri non permittitur neque dominari viro.'

[36] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Cor.*, 11: 8: 'mulier ergo idcirco debet velare caput, quia non est imago dei, sed ut ostendatur subiecta. et quia praevaricatio per illam inchoata est, hoc signum debet habere, ut in ecclesia propter reverentiam sacerdotalem (episcopalem) non habeat caput liberum, sed velamine tectum, nec habeat potestatem loquendi, quia sacerdos (episcopus) personam habet Christi.'

head of man.'[37] He thus presented the natural subjection of woman to man, ordained by the order and manner of their respective creations, as confirmed by Eve's subsequent demonstration of her weakness. As a result women were required to show their subjection in church not just to men in general, but specifically to the bishop, himself conceived as Christ's representative (*legatus*).

David Hunter has shown that Ambrosiaster's comments on women should be understood in the context of his social and ecclesiastical conservatism and specifically against the background of his resistance to lay asceticism, a key way for women to achieve social independence and spiritual authority.[38] But although he considered man naturally superior to woman, itself hardly an unusual attitude in late-fourth-century Rome, Ambrosiaster advocated a surprisingly tempered, equal sort of relationship between them. He commented on Paul's injunction 'Let the husband give his wife her due, and similarly the wife her husband', thus: '[Paul] orders them to submit to one another in this respect, so that, following from the fact that they are one body, their will may be one in [accordance with] the law of nature.'[39] This passage suggests a *mutual* dependency and subjection in marriage, where both parties submit *to one another* rather than merely woman to man. Crucially, Ambrosiaster argued for husband and wife to be united in will on the basis of their shared substance. He also acknowledged Paul's statement that 'all things are from God' (1 Cor. 11: 12), and wrote that 'the woman should not be saddened on account of her subjection, and that the man should not grow proud, supposing himself to be an exalted being.'[40] After the fall, even man's natural superiority over woman was ruined as the diabolical vice of pride had corrupted the world.

[37] Ibid., 14: 34: [si] 'et viro subiecta est lege naturae, quanto magis in ecclesia debent esse subiectae propter reverentiam eius, qui illius legatus est, qui etiam viri caput est.'

[38] See Hunter, 'The paradise of patriarchy', 458 ff., who argues that Ambrosiaster's teaching that women do not bear God's image was aimed at counteracting the influence of an ascetic interpretation of Genesis that tended to enhance the status of women in church and society.

[39] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Cor.*, 7: 3: 'invicem sibi subici illos in hac causa, ut quia unum corpus sunt, una illorum sit et voluntas in lege naturae.'

[40] Ibid., 11: 12: 'ut neque mulier subiectionis suae causa contristaretur neque vir quasi exaltatus superbiret.'

SLAVERY

Where Ambrosiaster presented the subjection of woman to the authority of man as natural, he presented the subjection of man to man in the master–slave relationship as something not ordained at the moment of creation by God, and hence implicitly unnatural. Slavery was a result of man's sinning: Adam's first sin enslaved man to the Devil and Ham's sin led, via a curse, to the foundation of institutional slavery.

The Metaphor of Slavery

The Christian rhetoric of paradox exploited the contradictory aspects of Christian doctrine: God made flesh; the meek and poor blessed above the rich and mighty, and so on.[41] Such a rhetoric unexpectedly inverts our expectations to demonstrate how awry our original perceptions and priorities are. Ambrosiaster tapped into this rhetoric in comments such as: 'For what men despise is generally judged by God to be beautiful.'[42] This comment is made of poor Christians who are 'through their neediness and way of dressing, unseemly', but who are 'nevertheless not without grace.'[43] His comment has, however, a general resonance; divine judgment does not, obviously, follow human *mores*. Similarly, slavery, long an institution with fiercely negative associations in antiquity, came to function in Christian discourse as a many-layered metaphor, often playing on the Stoic idea that slavery was determined internally rather than by external circumstances: a fool enslaved to his passions was the true slave, the wise man with self-control the true freeman. The physically enslaved could be accounted free according to this reading, while their debauched masters could be considered to be the true slaves.[44]

[41] On the rhetoric of paradox, see A. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley, Calif., 1991), ch. 5.

[42] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Cor.* 12: 23. 3: 'quod enim hominibus videtur despectum, solet a deo pulchrum iudicari.'

[43] Ibid., 12: 23. 2: 'simili modo et quidam fratrum, cum sint egestate et habitu inhonesti, non tamen sunt sine gratia . . .'

[44] On Stoic and Christian ideas of slavery, see P. D. A. Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge, 1996).

Ambrosiaster picked up this Stoic paradox but transferred it more explicitly to the spiritual plane. A supposed 'freeman' could actually be a slave to sin and the Devil; and a supposed 'slave' could be free through faith in Christ:

> Someone who is rescued from sins, which are truly indicative of 'slaves', becomes a freedman of the Lord. For he who behaves unwisely is a slave through and through. This was the opinion of the ancients too, who called wise men 'free' and all the unwise 'slaves'... Therefore he who believes, even if he is a slave from a temporal point of view, becomes a freedman of the Lord because, in believing in Christ, he is doing a wise thing.[45]

It is typical of Ambrosiaster (and indeed of Paul, whom he echoes) to equate belief in Christ with wise action, for he perpetuated the language of wisdom and reason even when speaking about faith and belief, contrasting spiritual reason (a synonym for faith) with fleshly/worldly reason.[46] It also allowed Ambrosiaster to stay close to the Stoic language of wisdom and foolishness, while transforming these moral terms to bear the Christian spiritual meanings of faith and lack of faith. Ambrosiaster also stressed that Christ had freed men from the constraints of the old law: 'This is liberty in Christ Jesus, not to be subject to the law.'[47] He did more than merely contrast freedom from sin with servitude to sin, however; he enthusiastically unpicked Paul's paradoxical formulation that, although Christ had freed men from slavery to sin, he had also enslaved men to himself:

> 'Similarly too, he who is called free is the slave of Christ.' [1 Cor. 7: 22] He has set out, from being a free man, to becoming a slave of Christ. For he was free from God, which is the greatest crime. And thus, having lost his bitter and inverted liberty, he has been assigned a status which is beneficial to him, in accordance with the saying of the Lord, 'Take up my yoke upon you, because it is pleasant, and my burden, because it is light.' [Matt. 11: 29][48]

[45] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Cor.*, 7: 22. 1: 'ereptus enim a peccatis, quae vere servos probant, libertus fit. hic enim omnino servus est, qui inprudenter agit, sicut et veteribus placuit, qui omnes sapientes liberos appellarunt, inprudentes autem omnes servos... hic ergo qui credit, acsi servus sit ad tempus, quia rem facit prudentem, ut credat in Christum, libertus fit domini.'

[46] See e.g. ibid., 1: 25. 1; *Q.* 59. 1.

[47] Id., *Comm. Gal.*, 2: 5. 3: 'libertas in Christo Iesu haec est, non subici legi.'

[48] Id., *Comm. I Cor.*, 7: 22. 2: '"Similiter [et] qui liber vocatus est, servus est Christi." profectus est ex libero servum fieri Christi. liber enim erat a deo, quod

Ambrosiaster derived man's *spiritual* slavery to God from natural law, rather than from the Mosaic law:

> For we are called servants of the one whom we obey. Moreover, because it is right to obey Christ—for he himself is righteousness and also the things which He commands are righteous—Paul says that we have been made servants of righteousness from our heart, not from the law; out of a free choice, not out of fear; and the purpose of this was so that our profession should be approved on the basis of the judgment of our mind. For we have been brought to faith by nature not by law... Hence Paul gives thanks to God that though we were slaves of sin, we obeyed from our heart, believing in Christ, with the result that we would serve God not according to the law of Moses, but according to the law of nature.[49]

Ambrosiaster, again following Paul closely, depicted men as enslaved to their ultimate spiritual masters, to God or to the Devil: 'Now, so that we may not profess one thing and do another, and when we are called servants of God, be discovered by our actions to be servants of the Devil...'[50] For Ambrosiaster, slavery was rendered good or unpleasant by the sort of master whom the slave served, much as love in Augustine was not a good or bad emotion or activity of itself, but was better or worse depending on its object. To continue the Augustinian comparison, it is striking (and typical) that where Ambrosiaster envisaged a universe divided between two masters, served by two slavish populations, Augustine's universe, as described in mystical terms in his *City of God*, was divided between two allegorical cities whose populations were defined by the objects of their love.[51]

maximum crimen est. [et] ideo amissa amara et contraria libertate condicionem sortitus est quae prodest...'

[49] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 6: 17. 1–2: 'eius enim servi dicimur, cui obaudimus. et quia iustum est obaudire Christo—et ipse enim iustitia est et quae praecepit iusta sunt—idcirco dicit servos nos factos iustitiae ex corde, non ex lege, ex voluntate, non ex timore, ut professio nostra animi iudicio probatur. per naturam enim inducti sumus ad fidem, non per legem... hinc gratias refert domino, quia cum essemus servi peccati, obaudivimus ex corde credentes in Christum, ut serviremus deo non per legem Moysi, sed per legem naturae.'

[50] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 6: 16: 'nunc ne aliud profitentes aliud faciamus, et cum dei servi dicimur, gestis servi diaboli inveniamur...'

[51] See Augustine, *City of God*, 14. 28: 'Two cities, then, have been created by two loves: that is, the earthly by love of self extending to contempt of God, and the heavenly by love of God extending to contempt of self.'

The Institution of Slavery

For Ambrosiaster, slavery functioned as a way of describing the dependent, subject relationship of sinful man to the Devil and faithful man to God. But he also confronted it as a social and legal institution. Like other patristic writers from the second century onwards, he sought the origin of temporal slavery in Genesis 9: 25–7.[52] In this story, Noah got drunk and was naked in his tent; his son Ham saw his nakedness and told his brothers, Shem and Japheth, who covered Noah up without looking at him. When Noah awoke, he cursed Canaan, Ham's son. Interestingly, Ambrosiaster does not tackle directly the logic and fairness of visiting punishments on sons for sins committed by fathers, as he does in *Quaestiones* 13 and 14. Instead, in two separate instances he described Ham as the object of Noah's wrath, even though in the story in Genesis Noah's wrath was visited upon Ham's son Canaan. Ambrosiaster wrote that 'slaves are created through sin, just as Ham the son of Noah was the first who deservingly received the name of slave.'[53] Ham's sin is characterized in Stoic terms as 'foolishness' and 'stupidity',[54] displayed in his laughing at his father's nakedness.[55]

Ambrosiaster commented, keeping close to Paul, on the desirable form of behaviour for actual slaves or those subject to a master on earth:

> What [Paul] is urging is that, by serving his earthly master in the fear of God, a person should make himself worthy of being free; in case perhaps, on hearing the words, 'You were called while a slave: do not let this bother you', he should become more negligent about the good works of his earthly master, and the teaching of Christ should get a bad name, and the person in question should not find favour with God, whereas, if he performs his

[52] On this biblical story and subsequent use of it to justify slavery, see D. M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Princeton, N.J., 2003).

[53] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Phil.*, 2: 7. 2: 'servi autem ex peccato fiunt, sicut Cam filius Noe, qui primus merito servi nomen accepit.'

[54] Id., *Comm. I Cor.*, 7: 22: 'For if sins create slaves, as Ham the son of Noah was made a slave for his sin and foolishness . . .'

[55] Id., *Comm. Col.*, 4: 1: 'Whence Ham was called a slave on account of his stupidity, because he stupidly laughed at his father's nakedness.'

service well in these earthly affairs, he deposits his merit with God as an investment for himself, for the Lord has said: 'He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much.'[56]

Ambrosiaster here preached a passive acceptance of status in life and urged slaves to strive to please their masters, thereby giving Christianity a good name, and earning merit with God. He even unpicked the implications of the theological idea that Christ has 'bought' mankind, literally redeemed him, from the Devil, stating that: 'It is the truth that we have been bought at such a high price that we could not have been ransomed by anyone except by Christ, who is rich in all things. Someone who is bought for a price ought to serve all the more, so as to recompense his buyer to some extent.'[57] In this context Ambrosiaster was driving at boundless faith as the appropriate gift of man to God in return for having been saved from sin.

Despite his protection of the institution of slavery—itself standard in the early church—Ambrosiaster enjoined the lesson of humility not just on slaves but also on free men: 'And so [Paul] has cut down pride and created unity, so that no slave would consider himself despised on account of his shameful status, and nor would a freeman, puffed up with proud thoughts, place himself above the slave.'[58] He even advised masters that their domination over their slaves was far from complete, compared to God's absolute domination over men's bodies and souls: 'Thus [God] shows masters that they are not really masters, but only as an image; for they are the masters of bodies, not of souls. For only the Lord and invisible author of things, God, is as

[56] Id., *Comm. I Cor.*, 7: 21: 'hortatur, ut bene serviens de dei timore carnali domino dignum se faciat libertate, ne audiens forte "servus vocatus es? non sit tibi curae", neglegentior esset circa bonos actus carnalis domini et doctrina Christi blasfemaretur et nec ille deum promereretur, qui in his terrenis bene serviens meritum sibi conlocat apud deum, quia dixit dominus: "qui in minimo fidelis est, et in magno [fidelis est]".'

[57] Id., *Comm. I Cor.*, 7: 23: 'verum est quia tam caro empti sumus, ut a nullo redimi potuissemus nisi a Christo, qui omnium dives est. qui ergo pretio emitur, magis servire debet, ut aliquatenus vicem reddat emptori.' See Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, 31–3 on John Chrysostom's use of 'price' to refer both to buying slaves and to Christ's redemption of man.

[58] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Cor.*, 7: 22: 'superbiam itaque abscidit et unitatem fecit, ut neque servus pudore condicionis despectum se putet neque liber elatione mentis inflatus servo se superponat.'

much master of bodies as of souls . . .'[59] We remember that the image of God in man is not domination, but authority, because man's domination can never be complete. He is only *quasi dominus*. In Ambrosiaster's writings, then, to be free from God was to be a slave to sin and the Devil. The only good freedom was that won for us by Christ, which is liberation from sin and the law. But Ambrosiaster jeopardized the security of even that freedom by emphasizing that no man is ever entirely free from sin: 'because of the weakness of its infirmity, the human race could not restrain itself from sins and it became liable to the death of the world below.'[60]

Ambrosiaster provided scriptural, logical, and spiritual support for existing social hierarchies and norms, both of men's authority over women and of masters over slaves. But while he argued that man's authority over women was divinely ordained from the moment of creation of Adam and Eve, he considered metaphysical slavery to be a post-fall institution which man had brought on himself by choosing sin, and institutional slavery to have its roots in Noah's curse of Ham. As we shall see, his natural hierarchical anthropology influenced both his ecclesiology and political thinking.

[59] Id., *Comm. Col.* 4: 1. 3: 'ostendit ergo dominis, quia non vere sunt domini, sed quasi per imaginem; corporum enim, non animorum sunt domini. solus enim dominus et auctor rerum invisibilis deus tam corporibus quam animis dominatur . . .'

[60] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 6: 15. 2*:* 'sed quia infirmitate inbecillitatis suae genus humanum a peccatis se inhibere non potuit, factum obnoxium mortis infernae . . .'

5

Ecclesiastical Hierarchies

If, as seems likely, Ambrosiaster was a presbyter in the Roman church, then his comments on both the theory and reality of church organization have a particular insider interest for us. The church fathers tended not to treat the development of the clerical hierarchy in a historical fashion so Ambrosiaster was unusual in freely admitting that the current hierarchy had evolved far from the situation of the primitive church. He explained how change had been necessitated by the growth of the church, and promoted the idea of a monarchical episcopate. His exaltation of the bishop was coupled with a promotion of the presbyter's status (to nearly equal that of the bishop) and a desire to keep the Roman deacons in their 'proper' place as inferior to both, recalling Cyprian's attitude towards the clergy.[1] There is an ideological underpinning to his espousal of a monarchical episcopate which can be related to his emphasis on the singularity of the creation of man, and, as we shall see in Chapter 6, on the singularity of kingly rule as in the image of God's government. Although Ambrosiaster admitted that the nature of contemporary church organization was very different from that of the primitive church, he was also keen to establish parallels between the grades of priesthood found in the Old and New Testaments, and current offices and roles. He negotiated any possible conflict between these concerns by using terms which evoked offices from both dispensations, thus smoothing out the obvious differences between them.

[1] On Cyprian and the clergy, see M. Bévenot, '"Sacerdos" as understood by Cyprian', *JTS* 30 (1979), 413–29, and *Letters* (trans. G. W. Clarke), ACW 43, 44, 46, and 48 (New York, 1984–8) *passim*.

CHURCH HIERARCHY

In his *Commentary on I Corinthians*, Ambrosiaster stated that the primitive church was without governors: 'Paul writes to the church, because at that time governors were not yet appointed for individual churches';[2] 'for governors had not yet been appointed for churches everywhere . . .'[3] He used *rector*, a term which at this time was generally used to indicate an officer in secular government.[4] Indeed, the only other writer in this period who consistently and insistently used *rector* to mean bishop was Damasus.[5] The resonance of *rector* was still administrative rather than sacral or spiritual, and its use in this context makes perfect sense. The earliest church had no administrative officers to compare with secular *rectores*, and so the claim that the church had no *rectores* does not conflict with Ambrosiaster's other assertion, that the apostles were appointed *episcopi* by Christ.

Ambrosiaster described the development of the distribution of various tasks in the church in his *Commentary on Ephesians*:

> However, after churches were established and duties appointed in all places, things were arranged differently from how they had begun. For in the beginning everyone used to teach and baptize, on whatever day or at whatever time the opportunity arose . . . And so that the congregation might grow and be multiplied, at the beginning it was granted to all to evangelize, baptize and explain the scriptures in church. But when the church had spread everywhere, small assemblies were established and *rectores* and other offices were appointed in the churches, so that none of the clergy who had not been ordained to the office in question [such as lectors and exorcists] would dare to take to himself an office which he knew not to be entrusted or granted to him. And so the church began by another order and Providence to be governed, because, if all had equal power, it would seem most irrational and a vulgar and cheap affair. This then is why now

[2] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Cor.*, 1: 2. 1: 'propterea ecclesiae scribit, quia tunc (adhuc) singulis ecclesiis rectores non erant constituti.'

[3] Ibid., 11: 22: 'quia adhuc rectores ecclesiis non omnibus locis fuerant constituti.'

[4] The only earlier example I can find of *rector* used to mean bishop was from an epistle of the synod of Sardica (*c.*342/3) preserved in Hilary's *Collectanea Antiariana Parisiana*, 4. 1. 21: 'non enim secundum nos, qui ecclesiis sanctissimis praesedemus populisque rectores sumus . . .'

[5] See C. H. Turner, 'Ambrosiaster and Damasus', *JTS* 7 (1906), 281–4.

deacons do not preach to the people, nor do other ranks, or even laymen, baptize, nor are believers baptized on whatsoever day unless they are sick.[6]

Ambrosiaster was describing a primitive 'priesthood of the faithful', where all Christians could minister to other aspirants to the faith. The vital elements of this ministry were teaching, explaining scripture, and administering baptism. He explained that this provision was necessary to encourage the growth of the church in its earliest days, but argued that it was no longer an appropriate model because it had been historically contingent.

We sense here that Ambrosiaster, after the example of Cyprian, was dealing with an ecclesiology of the sort promoted by Tertullian in his later, Montanist phase. Tertullian embraced the idea that all members of the church were *sacerdotes*,[7] and the possibility that laymen, besides priests, might baptize: 'for what is equally received can be equally given . . . Baptism which is equally a divine institution, can be administered by all . . .'[8] Cyprian's defence of the episcopate led him inexorably to rebut this idea that all might share in priestly functions, and he conspicuously avoided using phrases like 'a royal priesthood'(1 Pet. 2: 5) and 'a holy nation' (1 Pet. 2: 9) to refer to the mass of Christians, since they were associated with Tertullian's troublesome rejection of episcopal authority.[9] Ambrosiaster, when discussing 1 Peter 2: 9, to some extent also avoided Tertullian's conclusion that all have priestly capabilities: 'For priests used to be born in the law, levites from the seed of Aaron. Now all are of priestly

[6] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Eph.*, 4: 12. 3–4: 'tamen postquam omnibus locis ecclesiae sunt constitutae et officia ordinata, aliter conposita res est quam coeperat. primum enim omnes docebant et omnes baptizabant, quibuscumque diebus vel temporibus fuisset occasio . . . ut ergo cresceret plebs et multiplicaretur, omnibus inter initia concessum est et evangelizare et baptizare et scripturas in ecclesia explanare. at ubi autem omnia loca circumplexa est ecclesia, conventicula constituta sunt et rectores et cetera officia ecclesiis sunt ordinata, ut nullus de clero auderet, qui ordinatus non esset, praesumere officium, quod sciret non sibi creditum vel concessum. et coepit alio ordine et providentia ecclesia gubernari, quia, si omnes eadem possent, inrationabile esset et vulgaris res et vilissima videretur. hinc ergo est, unde nunc neque diaconi in populo praedicant neque ceteri vel laici baptizant neque quocumque die credentes tinguntur nisi aegri.'

[7] Tertullian, *De Exhortatione Castitatis*, 7: 'nonne et laici sacerdotes sumus?'

[8] Id., *De Baptismo*, 17: 'quod enim ex aequo accipitur, ex aequo dari potest . . . perinde et baptismus, aeque dei census, ab omnibus exerceri potest.'

[9] See Bévenot, '*Sacerdos*', 423, on Cyprian's avoidance of *sacerdotes* for all baptized.

stock as Peter the apostle says: "because we are a royal and priestly race"; and so a priest can be created from the laity.'[10] Although he conceded that Christians are a priestly race (interestingly his gloss fails to repeat the proposition that they were also a royal race), this was used to support the conclusion that priests could be drawn *from* the laity (*plebs*),[11] not that the laity were themselves all priests.

New Testament and Old Testament Ministries

Ambrosiaster had a subtle sense of the historical development of the church, but was also keen to link distant dispensations. He did this in two major ways, linking the church of the New Testament with his own time, finding the origins of contemporary institutions in apostolic times, and also applying vocabulary and exempla from the Old Testament to the contemporary church. Ambrosiaster boldly stated that 'the apostles are bishops',[12] expressed elsewhere in more detail as: 'No one is ignorant of the fact the Saviour instituted bishops for the churches; for he, before he ascended into heaven, imposing his hand on the apostles, ordained them *episcopi*.'[13] He even justified this apostolic–episcopal identification with a specific instance: 'Thus [God] has placed at the head of the church the apostles, who are the representatives of Christ; as the same apostle says, "on behalf of whom we carry out our tasks as representatives". They are bishops, as Peter the apostle confirms when he says, among other things, of Judas, "Let another take his episcopacy." '[14] He was not the first to

[10] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Eph.*, 4: 12. 6: 'in lege nascebantur sacerdotes ex genere Aaron levitae. nunc enim omnes sunt ex genere sacerdotali dicente Petro apostolo: "quia sumus", inquit, "genus regale et sacerdotale"; ideoque ex populo potest fieri sacerdos.'

[11] On *plebs* meaning laity, established usage by Ambrosiaster's time, see Clarke, *Letters*, i. 149.

[12] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Eph.*, 4: 12. 1: 'apostoli episcopi sunt.'

[13] Id., *Q.* 97. 20: 'nam nemo ignorat episcopos salvatorem ecclesiis instituisse; ipse enim priusquam in caelos ascenderet, inponens manum apostolis ordinavit eos episcopos.'

[14] Id., *Comm. I Cor.*, 12: 28. 1: 'caput itaque in ecclesia apostolos posuit, qui legati Christi sunt, sicut dicit idem apostolus: "pro quo legatione fungimur". ipsi sunt episcopi firmante istud Petro apostolo et dicente inter cetera de Iuda: "et episcopatum eius accipiat alter." '

do this. Cyprian breezily stated that 'it was the Lord who chose apostles, that is to say, bishops and appointed leaders.'[15] But Ambrosiaster was not seeking an apostolic origin for the episcopate alone. The apparently bald statement that 'apostles are bishops' occurs in the context of a passage explaining the correspondences between a range of offices described in the New Testament and their contemporary counterparts:

> The apostles are bishops; the prophets are indeed explainers of scripture. For although in the beginning there were prophets like Agabus and the four prophesying virgins, as is contained in the Acts of the Apostles, in order to recommend the rudiments of faith, now however the interpreters are called prophets. The evangelists are deacons, as was Philip. For although [deacons] are not *sacerdotes*, they can still evangelize without a *cathedra* in the same way as Stephen and the afore-mentioned Philip. The shepherds can be readers, who nourish the people who hear them with readings, because 'man cannot live by bread alone, but by every word of God.' The teachers are indeed the exorcists, because in church these men restrain and beat the restless, or they are those who, having been instructed in the readings themselves, were accustomed to instruct the children, as is the custom of the Jews, whose tradition was passed to us and fell into disuse through negligence.[16]

Ambrosiaster was, none the less, alert to the problems of strictly identifying current offices with New Testament ones: 'And so the

[15] Cyprian, *Letter*, 3. 1: 'apostolos id est episcopos et praepositos Dominus elegit . . .' See Clarke, *Letters*, i. 167–8 n. 16.

[16] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Eph.*, 4: 11–12: 'apostoli episcopi sunt; profetae vero explanatores sunt scripturarum. quamvis inter ipsa primordia fuerint profetae sicut Agabus et quattuor virgines profetantes, sicut continetur in Actis apostolorum, [sed] propter rudimenta fidei conmendanda; nunc autem interpretes profetae dicuntur. evangelistae diacones (diaconi) sunt, sicut fuit Filippus. quamquam non sint sacerdotes, evangelizare tamen possunt sine cathedra quemadmodum et Stefanus et Filippus memoratus. pastores possunt esse lectores, qui lectionibus saginent populum audientem, quia "non in pane tantum vivet homo, sed in omni verbo dei". [Matt. 4: 4] magistri vero exorcistae sunt, quia in ecclesia ipsi conpescunt et verberant inquietos, sive hi qui lectionibus inbuendi infantes solebant inbuere, sicut mos Iudaeorum est, quorum traditio ad nos transitum fecit, quae per neglegentiam obsolevit.' He also writes of this tradition of teaching children in church at *Comm. I Cor.*, 12: 28: 'He describes as "teachers" those who used to instruct boys in church in letters and reading according to the practice of the synagogues. For their tradition has come down to us.' This is evidence for the early development of Christian education for children, as well as for Ambrosiaster's interest in the Christian inheritance of Jewish traditions and history.

writings of the apostle do not in all things correspond to the order of offices which now exists in the church, because they were written in the very beginning.'[17] He explained that 'the presbyters first in rank were also called *episcopi*', which might be confusing for the reader since Ambrosiaster reserves *episcopus* for the bishop alone, using *sacerdos* as a term embracing both presbyters and bishop and only differentiating between these two higher ranks by describing the bishop as *summus sacerdos*, *primus sacerdos*, or *princeps sacerdotum*.[18] But Ambrosiaster explained that although in the past senior presbyters had been automatically promoted to the episcopate, this had to change when these presbyters were found to be unsuitable:

> For he calls Timothy, whom he himself had created presbyter, bishop, because the presbyters first in rank were called bishops, so that with his retirement, the next-in-rank might succeed. And indeed in Egypt presbyters confirm, if a bishop is not present. But because the presbyters next-in-rank began to be found unworthy of holding primacy, the procedure was changed with foresightful deliberation, so that not rank but merit might create a bishop, who should be established by the judgment of a number of priests, so that an unworthy man should not heedlessly usurp [the position] and it would be a scandal to many.[19]

That is, although Ambrosiaster promoted parallels between biblical and contemporary offices, he was sufficiently aware of the historical differences between the two, and the human failings which resulted in organizational shifts, to admit that the description of the church found in Paul's writings did not continue to prescribe exactly how the church should be organized in his own day.

[17] Id., *Comm. Eph.*, 4: 12. 5: 'ideo non per omnia conveniunt scripta apostoli ordinationi, quae nunc in ecclesia est, quia haec inter ipsa primordia sunt scripta.'

[18] For *summus sacerdos*, see id., *Q.* 101. 5; for *primus sacerdos* and *princeps sacerdotum*, see id., *Comm. Eph.*, 4: 12. 2.

[19] Id., *Comm. Eph.*, 4: 12. 5: 'nam et Timotheum presbyterum a se creatum episcopum vocat, quia primi presbyteri episcopi appellabantur, ut recedente eo sequens ei succederet. denique apud Aegyptum presbyteri consignant, si praesens non sit episcopus. sed quia coeperunt sequentes presbyteri indigni inveniri ad primatos tenendos, inmutata est ratio prospiciente consilio, ut non ordo, sed meritum crearet episcopum multorum sacerdotum iudicio constitutum, ne indignus temere usurparet et esset multis scandalum.' On this passage, see A. Souter, *A Study of Ambrosiaster* (Cambridge, 1905), 177–8.

Ambrosiaster also used the Latin terms *levita* and *sacerdos*, which evoked Old Testament priests to describe contemporary grades of ministry. He was not the first to do so: Cyprian used terms such as *minister* to elide deacons with Old Testament examples.[20] *Levita* took its etymological root from Levi, and referred both to the Aaronic priests descended from Levi and to the deacons who were perceived to have inherited their office. *Sacerdos* referred both to Old Testament priests and to bishop and/or presbyter.[21] The twofold meaning of these terms helped to narrow the gap between ancient Israel and fourth-century Rome. Their ambiguous meaning allowed Ambrosiaster to present statutes concerning priests from the old law as definitive or prescriptive of contemporary practice, despite the abrogation of the old law with the coming of Christ. For instance, he explained that 'Levites' (deacons) should subject themselves to the presbyter/bishop because of the example of subjection to the *sacerdos* given by their Israelite type and namesake: 'For this is written when the Lord says to Moses: "Bring the tribe of Levi from the middle of the sons of Israel and present before them Aaron the priest [*sacerdotem*] that they might minister unto him." For what example could be clearer, which is even now preserved in the church?'[22] And, a little later, he argued: 'For they [the Levites] certainly bore [the priest's] altar and vessels, and poured water on his hands, just as we see practised in all the churches, just as indeed was established by the Lord through Moses. For surely they are not better than Elisha, who poured water on the hands of Elijah?'[23]

The Old Testament contains colourful stories about the hierarchy of the Levitical priesthood and the penalties incurred by those unworthily usurping its functions. Ambrosiaster enthusiastically employed the story of the sticky end of Dathan, Core, and Abiron found in Numbers 16: 31–5:

[20] See Clarke, *Letters*, i. 166 n. 6.

[21] Cyprian uses *sacerdos* to mean just the bishop; in Ambrosiaster it encompasses bishop and presbyter. See Bévenot, '*Sacerdos*.'

[22] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 101. 2: 'hoc enim scriptum est dicente domino ad Moysen: "accipe tribum Levi de medio filiorum Israhel et statue illos ante Aaron sacerdotem et deservient ei". quid hoc exemplo apertius, quod etiam nunc in ecclesia custoditur?'

[23] Id., *Q.* 101. 3: 'nam utique et altare portarent et vasa eius, et aquam in manus funderent sacerdoti, sicut videmus per omnes ecclesias et sicut constitutum est a domino per Moysen. aut numquid meliores Heliseo sunt, qui aquam fundebat in manus Heliae?'

For when they presumed that there was no difference between priests and Levites, Core and his comrades were by the judgment of God swallowed up by an earthquake; at the same time he consumed 250 men with pouring fire, and Ozias the king, when he presumed priestly work, was covered in leprosy, so that others would be too terrified to dare to presume what was not granted to them.[24]

In this respect he was part of a tradition of Christian writers like Cyprian and Ambrose using the story of Dathan, Core, and Abiron to teach a salutary lesson to unworthy aspirants to ecclesiastical office.[25] But where in the Old Testament anyone not of the race of Aaron who dared to perform the functions of a priest was immediately struck down by God, the parallel punishment in the new dispensation was inflicted on lower clergy who presumed the duties of a higher cleric.

Presbyters and Deacons

Ambrosiaster was very concerned to establish precisely the relative status and duties of the different grades of the ministry. His *Quaestio* 101, attacking the arrogance of the Roman deacons, is a particularly rich source for his views on the relative status of deacons, presbyters, and bishops, which was an issue also tackled by Jerome.[26] There were only seven deacons and a much larger number of presbyters at Rome, but none the less Ambrosiaster defended the presbyters' rank as superior to that of the deacons, which should not surprise us given that he was probably a presbyter himself.[27] He defined the relationship of the different ranks thus: 'So after the bishop he adds the

[24] Id., *Q.* 101. 7: 'cum enim nihil inter sacerdotes et levitas interesse praesumerent, deo iudice hiatu terrae absorti sunt Chore et consentientes ei, et CCL viros torrens ignis simul consumsit, et Ozias rex, cum opus sacerdotale praesumeret, lepra perfusus est, ut hoc utique exemplo ceteri territi non auderent quod concessum non est praesumere.'

[25] For other uses of this story, see Cyprian, *Letter*, 3. 1. 2 to bishop Rogatianus about an insolent deacon, Cyprian, *De Unitate*, 18, and Ambrose, *Letter*, 63. The story was also used as a warning to schismatics of the fate that awaited them: see Augustine, *Letter*, 87. 4 and Optatus, *Contra Parmenianum*, 1. 21 and 6. 1.

[26] See Jerome, *Letter*, 146.

[27] Ambrosiaster himself establishes the numbers of clergy for a city (like Rome) at *Comm. I Tim.*, 3: 12. 3: 'nunc autem septem diaconos esse oportet, aliquantos presbyteros, ut bini sint per ecclesias et unus in civitate episcopus.'

ordination of the deacon. And why, unless because the rank of bishop and presbyter is one? For each is a priest, but the bishop is chief, so that every bishop is a presbyter, but not every presbyter is a bishop. For the bishop is first among the presbyters.'[28]

Another important aspect of Ambrosiaster's theory of ministry was that each order contained within itself all inferior orders: 'For all ranks are in the bishop, who is the *primus sacerdos*, that is the *princeps sacerdotum*, and also prophet, evangelist, and everything else that is required to make up the offices of the church in the ministry of the faithful.'[29] The presbyters also contained all orders lower than themselves: 'For the greater order has within itself and with itself also the lesser; for the presbyter also performs the role of the deacon and of the exorcist and reader.'[30] This leads us to consider the nature of the relationship which Ambrosiaster espoused between presbyters and deacons.

In *Quaestio* 101 Ambrosiaster mentioned a ringleader of Rome's arrogant deacons, whom he identified only as 'a certain man, who has the name of a false god.'[31] While this sort of allusion to one of seven deacons would hardly be lost on contemporary Romans, it does not enable us to identify his target. Deacons were apparently usurping the episcopal liturgical duties of celebrating mass (and possibly the *agape*) and leading responsorial (probably eucharistic) prayer despite the fact that their job was merely that of distribution (of the eucharist):[32] 'For now we see deacons rashly perform what is episcopal through meals and to desire in prayer, that they be responded to, when this [sc. task of celebrating mass] is permitted

[28] *Comm. I Tim.*, 3: 10. 1–2: 'post episcopum tamen diaconis ordinationem subiecit. quare, nisi quia episcopi et presbyteri una ordinatio est? uterque enim sacerdos est, sed episcopus primus est, ut omnis episcopus presbyter sit, non tamen omnis presbyter episcopus. hic enim episcopus est, qui inter presbyteros primus est.'

[29] Id., *Comm. Eph.*, 4: 12. 2: 'nam in episcopo omnes ordines sunt, qui et primus sacerdos est, hoc est princeps sacerdotum, et profeta et evangelista et cetera ad implenda officia ecclesiae in ministerio fidelium.' See also id., *Comm. I Cor.*, 1: 17: 'because the dignity of all orders is in the bishop. For he is the head of the other limbs.'

[30] Id., *Q.* 101. 4: 'maior enim ordo intra se et apud se habet et minorem; presbiter enim et diaconi agit officium et exorcistae et lectoris.'

[31] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 101. 2: 'quidam igitur, qui nomen habet falsi dei . . .'

[32] Deacons helped to distribute communion: see A. Hamman, *Vie liturgique et vie sociale, repas des pauvres, diaconie et diaconat, agape et repas de charité, offrande dans l'antiquité chrétienne* (Paris, 1968), 135: 'Il aide à distribuer la communion et plus particulièrement présente le calice aux communiants.'

only to the bishops. For the responsibility of the deacon is to accept from the bishop and so to give to the people.'[33] The individual addressed specifically at intervals throughout this *Quaestio* apparently wished to give deacons the same status and functions as the higher ranks of ministry: '[He] contends to make levites equal with *sacerdotes* and deacons equal with presbyters . . .'[34] This phrase, which appears to use *variatio* to say the same thing twice, actually illustrates perfectly the bridging agency of language discussed earlier; although *levita* and *sacerdos* correspond to 'deacon' and 'presbyter', they also recall the more ancient priestly ranks of the Old Testament and thus allowed Ambrosiaster to present examples and lessons from the Old Testament as having explicit relevance for modern practice. He reacted with indignation to the attempt to level the hierarchy, adducing logical and pragmatic objections: 'It's as if office-staff were to put themselves on a level with prefects, slaves with masters.'[35] But his battery of argument against the arrogant deacons depended above all on the example of the Old Testament priestly hierarchy. He described the deacons as porters of altar and vessels, wood-cutters and water-carriers, all descriptions of levites as ministers of priests taken from 1 Chronicles 23: 26 and Joshua 9: 27.[36] He then explained that 'this was the office of the levites',[37] with the obvious implication that this should also be the case now.

Women and the Clergy

Deacons were not the only individuals in the church hierarchy to be sharply criticized by Ambrosiaster. He was also vigorously opposed to women assuming any clerical role at all, including that of deacon:

> 'Wives should be similarly modest, not inciting discord, but sober and faithful in all things' [1 Tim. 3: 11]. Since he decreed a holy bishop should be made, and likewise a deacon, it does not follow that he wants the people

[33] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 101. 7: 'nunc enim videmus diaconos temere quod sacerdotum est agere per convivia et in oratione id velle, ut respondeatur illis, cum istud solis liceat sacerdotibus. diaconii enim ordo est accipere a sacerdote et sic dare plebi.'

[34] Id., *Q.* 101. 2: 'levitas sacerdotibus et diaconos presbiteris coaequare contendit . . .'

[35] Ibid.: 'tale est, si praefectis officiales, dominis servi aequentur.'

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.: 'hoc enim officium fuit levitarum.'

to be any different, since the Lord said, 'Be holy, because I also am holy' [Lev. 19: 2]. And so he wants women too, who are seen to be inferior, to be without spot, so that the church of God might be pure. But the Cataphrygians [Montanists],[38] seizing the occasion for error, argued with vain presumption that women should be ordained deaconesses because Paul addresses women after deacons, although they know that the apostles chose seven [male] deacons. Can it be that no suitable woman was found at that time, even though we read that there were holy women among the eleven apostles? But the heretics seem to reconstruct his mind with the words rather than with the sense of the law, so that they rely on the words of the apostle rather than his meaning; so that, although [Paul] orders that woman should keep silence in church, they [the heretics], even against authority, lay claim to the ministry [for women] in the church.[39]

This particular passage is directed against the Montanists, a group who were inspired by the ecstatic prophecy of Montanus, Prisca, and Maximilla, and who continued to afford a prominent role to women.[40] Ambrosiaster identified as Montanists a group who had ordained deaconesses; however, this was probably a sub-sect of Montanism famous for ordaining women.[41] Ambrosiaster justified his strict exclusion of women from all grades of the ministry on the grounds that although the apostles knew holy women, they chose to ordain only male deacons. His objection to the ordination of

[38] See Augustine, *De Haeresibus*, 26. 1: 'Cataphryges—also known by the name Montanists after their founder.'

[39] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Tim.*, 3: 11: '"Mulieres similiter pudicas, non studentes discordiae, sed sobrias, fideles in omnibus." quia sanctum praecepit creari episcopum, adaeque et diaconum, non utique disparem vult esse plebem, quippe cum dicat dominus: "sancti estote, quia et ego sanctus sum". ideoque etiam mulieres, quae inferiores videntur, sine crimine vult esse, ut munda sit ecclesia dei. sed Catafrygae occasionem erroris captantes, propter quod post diaconos mulieres adloquitur, etiam ipsas diaconissas debere ordinari vana praesumptione defendunt, cum sciant apostolos septem diaconos elegisse. numquid nulla mulier tunc idonea inventa est, cum inter undecim apostolos sanctas mulieres fuisse legamus? sed cum [ut] heretici animum suum verbis, non sensu legis adstruere videantur, apostoli verbis contra sensum nituntur apostoli, ut, cum ille mulierem in ecclesia in silentio esse debere praecipiat, illi e contra etiam auctoritatem in ecclesia vindicent ministerii.'

[40] Montanist oracles and testimonies are usefully collected in R. E. Heine, *The Montanist Oracles and Testimonia* (Macon, Ga., 1989).

[41] On the Pepuzians or Quintillianists, a sect associated with the Montanists who ordained women, see Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 49. 2: 'And women are bishops among them, and presbyters, and the other offices, as there is no difference, they say, for "in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female" [Gal. 3: 28].'

deaconesses was typical of a Christian living in Rome, for although legal provision for and ecclesiastical acceptance of women deacons was well-established by the later fourth century in the East, and had creeping influence in the West, deaconesses were not accepted in Rome until as late as the eighth century.[42]

ECCLESIOLOGY AND POLITICAL THEOLOGY

Thus far I have delineated Ambrosiaster's attitude towards the historical and contemporary church. But his real, lasting contribution to ecclesiology, which in turn informed his political thinking, is to be found in his attitude to the office and role of the bishop. Ambrosiaster's phrase 'for the king has the image of God, just as the bishop has the image of Christ' has been identified by intellectual historians as an important contribution to later medieval political thought.[43] The statement occurs in a brief *quaestio* devoted to the question of why David continued to honour Saul even after God had withdrawn from him. In it, Ambrosiaster states that a man is to be honoured not on his own account, but on account of his rank (*ordo*), and that God would be seen to be injured if his king were slighted. The phrase does not therefore stem from a wider discussion of the relationship of the bishop to Christ, and should not be used out of context for this purpose. We must look elsewhere for a reasoned formulation of the source of the bishop's authority, which admits of the same logic, the

[42] On deaconesses, see G. Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Life-styles* (Oxford, 1993) and J. G. Davies, 'Deacons, deaconesses and the minor orders in the patristic period', *JEH* 14 (1963), 1–15. The earlier ordination of deaconesses in the east should not be taken to indicate that women were able to ascend the clerical hierarchy there. The diaconate was the lowest grade of the ministry and did not include a liturgical function; it was instituted to allow women to minister to other women in performing intimate duties deemed inappropriate for men.

[43] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 35: 'dei enim imaginem habet rex, sicut et episcopus Christi.' See E. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ, 1957), 161: 'It was probably the so-called "Ambrosiaster", in the fourth century, who coined the maxim: Dei imaginem habet rex, sicut et episcopus Christi. This doctrine—the king an antitype of God the Father, and the bishop typifying God the Son—reappears with great consistency in the English orbit whereas it does not seem to occur elsewhere.' He goes on to cite the use made of this 'doctrine' by Cathwulf, the Norman Anonymous, and Hugh de Fleury.

creation of one being by one God, as the creation of man: 'And because all things are from one God the Father, He has decreed that individual bishops should take charge of individual churches.'[44]

The exact nature of the bishop's relationship with God is again facilitated by the linguistic fact that both Christ and the bishop are described as *sacerdotes*. The following passage discusses the relationship of three persons of the Godhead, and I preserve the Latin terms used throughout to demonstrate the repeated use of priestly terminology to describe Christ and the Holy Spirit:

> But Christ is the representative [*vicarius*] of the Father and the overseer [*antestes*] and therefore is also called priest [*sacerdos*]. Similarly, the Holy Spirit, also sent like an overseer [*antestes*], was called priest [*sacerdos*] of the highest God, not highest priest [*summus sacerdos*] like our [sc. bishops] take to themselves in the sacrifice, because, although Christ and the Holy Spirit are of one substance, nevertheless the rank of each one is to be preserved. And so they are called priests [*sacerdotes*] or legates, because they show forth in themselves him whose legates they are; for they are his image. And thus Christ and the Holy Spirit, having naturally the image of God, are said to be his priests [*sacerdotes*].[45]

Christ and the Holy Spirit are both described as *sacerdotes*, but not *summi sacerdotes*, which would jeopardize the equality of the persons of the Godhead; thus an exact terminological equation between bishops, who are distinguished from presbyters as *summi sacerdotes*, and Christ, simply *sacerdos*, is limited by theological necessity.

The bishop represents Christ by his continued re-enactment of Christ's sacrifice, and Ambrosiaster had different ways of presenting the relationship between them, as in this passage on the bishop's role:

> And through this His overseer should be purer than the others; for he is seen to bear His person. For he is His vicar, so that what is allowed to others is not

[44] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Cor.*, 12: 28: 'et quia ab uno deo patre sunt omnia, singulos episcopos singulis ecclesiis praeesse decrevit.'

[45] Id., *Q.* 109. 21: 'Christus autem vicarius patris est et antestes ac per hoc dicitur et sacerdos. similiter et spiritus sanctus missus quasi antestes sacerdos appellatus est excelsi dei, non summus, sicut nostri in oblatione praesumunt, quia, quamvis unius sint substantiae Christus et sanctus spiritus, unius cuiusque tamen ordo servandus est. sacerdotes igitur vel legati ideo dicuntur, quia illum in se ostendunt cuius legati sunt; sunt enim eius imago. ac per hoc Christus et sanctus spiritus naturaliter habentes dei imaginem sacerdotes eius dicuntur.'

allowed to him, because it is held necessary that he act in the place of Christ every day, either praying for the people, or offering [sacrifice] or baptizing… and through this the overseers of God should be purer than the rest, because they also play the part of Christ, and ministers of God should be cleaner.[46]

The first analogy was legal and dramatic: that the bishop bears the *persona* of Christ. The second was to describe the bishop in political–administrative terms as vicar (hitherto reserved to secular governors) or legate.[47] Finally, blending aspects of both, the bishop was said to act in the place of Christ (*agere vicem Christi*). In this passage these analogies are made to set the bishop apart from other Christians and thus to argue for clerical celibacy. In other contexts Ambrosiaster elevated the bishop by associating him closely with Christ in order to explain why women should be subject to the bishop in church.[48]

Priest Considered as Person and Office

An important part of Ambrosiaster's thinking on the priesthood was his development of the idea that a priest should be thought of both as an individual and as tenant of an office. This was important given that the church had long been divided over the issue of the efficacy of sacraments administered by priests who were schismatic, heretical, or compromised by apostasy under persecution. Ambrosiaster supported the logic that a church office had merit of its own: 'he who holds a position in an order involved in work for the Church

[46] See Id., *Q.* 127. 36: 'ac per hoc antestitem eius puriorem ceteris esse oportet; ipsius enim personam habere videtur. est enim vicarius eius, ut quod ceteris licet illi non liceat, quia necesse habet cotidie Christi vicem agere aut orare pro populo aut offerre aut tinguere… ac per hoc antestites dei puriores esse debent quam ceteri, quia et Christi habent personam et ministros dei mundiores esse oportet.'

[47] On vicars, see M. T. W. Arnheim, 'Vicars in the Roman empire', *Hist* 19 (1970), 593–606.

[48] See Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Cor.*, 11: 8–10: 'because the priest bears the person of Christ. And so woman should be seen to be subjected, on account of the origin of guilt, as if before a judge so also before a bishop, who is the vicar of the Lord.' (*quia sacerdos [episcopus] personam habet Christi. quasi ergo ante iudicem sic ante sacerdotem [episcopum], quia vicarius domini est, propter reatus originem subiecta debet videri.*)

has grace, which is not, of course, his own, but belongs to the order, through the agency of the Holy Spirit.'[49]

His exaltation of office was based on the role of office in the expansion of the church, but he stressed that recipients of gifts of office received them for the purpose of building up the church, not as a personal reward: 'in the law of the Lord there are rankings of charisms, granted to the office-holders of the church, which are not granted for human merits, but which, being contributory factors to the building up of the church, have glory through themselves and in themselves, just as is the case with offices which are (of) human (origin).'[50] Ambrosiaster insisted that priests' acts were never effectual through personal merit, but through ordination. Thus, worthy unordained people could not perform reserved functions: 'For it is one thing to live well and another thing to accept the power of some office.'[51] He also implied that ordained priests who led dissolute lives continued to have the powers and gifts of ministry, when he wrote about Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest before whom Christ was tried. In biblical accounts, Caiaphas prophesied that Jesus would die for all. Ambrosiaster commented:

> But let us learn of what high dignity is the priestly order. For it was said of the most evil Caiaphas, murderer of the saviour, among other things: 'And this he spoke not of himself, but because he was high priest for that year, he prophesied' [John 11: 51]. This demonstrates that the spirit of graces does not attend a person, either worthy or unworthy, but rather the ordination of tradition, so that although someone might be of good merit, nevertheless he is not able to bless, unless he is ordained to present the office of a minister. But it is for God to grant the effect of blessing.[52]

[49] See Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Cor.*, 12: 4: 'et in loco ordinis officii ecclesiastici positus gratiam habet, qualisvis sit, non utique propriam, sed ordinis per efficaciam spiritus sancti.'

[50] Ibid., 12: 3. 1: 'et in lege dominica gradus carismatum sunt officiis ecclesiae non utique meritis humanis indulti, sed ut membra ad aedificationem ecclesiae pertinentia, quae per se et in se habent gloriam, sicut est etiam in humanis officiis.'

[51] Id., *Q.* 46. 7: 'aliud est enim bene vivere et aliud potestatem alicuius officii accipere.'

[52] Id., *Q.* 11. 2: 'Quanta autem dignitas sit ordinis sacerdotalis, hinc advertamus. dictum est autem de nequissimo Caiapha, interfectore salvatoris, inter cetera: "hoc autem a semet ipso non dixit, sed cum esset princeps sacerdotum anni illius, profetavit." per quod ostenditur spiritum gratiarum non personam sequi aut digni aut indigni, sed ordinationem traditionis, ut quamvis aliquis boni meriti sit, non tamen

Ambrosiaster made the example of Caiaphas an explicit precedent for bishops in *Quaestio* 101: 'The example of Caiaphas shows of what great a dignity is the priestly rank, who, even though he was the worst of men, prophesied. How? For he says: "because he [Caiaphas] was the chief of priests" [John 11: 51].'[53]

Throughout his work Ambrosiaster separated the two aspects of Caiaphas, flawed as an individual, but retaining the gift of prophecy which stemmed from his priestly rank. He characterized these two aspects of the priest as *ordo/dignitas ordinis* and *meritum*: 'He prophesied by reason of his rank, not his own merit';[54] 'and Caiaphas prophesied not by his own merit, but by the dignity of priestly rank.'[55] The sacerdotal order, by which we must understand both Caiaphas' office and that of bishop in Ambrosiaster's day, has special capabilities: in Caiaphas' case, prophecy; in the case of bishops, administering the sacraments. Ambrosiaster deemed that the special capability of a man ordained to this order was unaffected by his behaviour. He thus aligned himself with the anti-rigorist churchmen who believed that, whatever a priest's actions, he retained the sacramental powers which were a function of his office. In this he was far from Cyprian and other late third-century writers, and nearer to Augustine, who was to develop a more explicit and insistent doctrine distinguishing between sacramental power and the right to use that power.[56] Augustine also used Caiaphas as an example, in a passage which is faithful to Ambrosiaster's own thinking, and hinges on the same passage from John:

> For that a man should be a true priest, it is requisite that he should be clothed not with the sacrament alone, but with righteousness, as it is written: 'Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness.' But if a man be a priest in virtue of the sacrament alone, as was the high priest Caiaphas, the persecutor of the one

possit benedicere, nisi fuerit ordinatus, ut officium ministerii exhibeat. dei autem est effectum tribuere benedictionis.'

[53] Id., *Q.* 101. 6: 'Quanta autem sit dignitas ordinis sacerdotalis, causa ostendit Caiphae, qui, cum esset homo pessimus, profetavit. quare? inquit: "quia princeps erat sacerdotum".'

[54] Id., *Comm. I Cor.*, 12: 28. 1: 'profetavit ordinis utique causa, non proprii meriti.'

[55] Ibid.., 13: 2. 1: 'et Caiafas profetavit non merito, sed dignitate ordinis sacerdotalis.'

[56] See R. Benson, *The Bishop-elect: A Study in Medieval Ecclesiastical Office* (Princeton, N.J., 1968), 50.

most true priest, then even though he himself be not truthful, yet what he gives is true, if he gives not what is his own, but what is God's: as it is said of Caiaphas himself, 'thus he spoke not of himself; but being high priest that year, he prophesied' [John 11: 51].[57]

Ambrosiaster's idea that a priest is a channel for God's working and not effective in his own right is expressed more explicitly in a passage in *Quaestio* 102 comparing the bishop and the advocate. He explained that as an advocate's character was not used against his client neither could a bishop influence whether God ('the judge') took up his client's case, that is, received the Christian aspirant. The bishop could never know whether catechumens were really worthy of being admitted to the faith; he merely had to perform the office of baptism delegated to him and leave to God the decision whether to accept the new Christian or not.[58]

With reference to the idea of an indelible sacramental capability, Ambrosiaster explained that a priest may not himself choose whom to bless or not to bless, since he was merely the channel through which God blesses those whom he has chosen. The priest himself could not know who had been chosen by God; he had just to exercise his duty which would be effective not because of his personal choice, but through the merits of the person whom he blessed:

> But God, who is the judge of hidden things, shows that the younger man [Jacob] deserved the blessing, that he might show that the benefit in the blessing was not of man, but of God, and that the blessing of God goes with the dignity of the office, not the merit of the person. And finally it is said by God in Numbers to the priests Moses and Aaron: 'place my name on the sons of Israel; I the Lord will bless them', so that handing on might transfer grace to men through the ministry of the ordained, and so that the will of the priest could be neither beneficial nor prejudicial, but only the merit of him asking for the blessing.[59]

[57] Augustine, *Contra Litteras Petiliani*, 2. 30. 69: 'Ut enim sit quisque verus sacerdos, oportet ut non solo sacramento, sed iustitia quoque induatur, sicut scriptum est: "sacerdotes tui induantur iustitia". Qui autem solo sacramento sacerdos est, sicut fuit pontifex Caiphas, persecutor unius et verissimi sacerdotis; quamvis ipse non sit verax, quod dat tamen verum est si non det suum, sed Dei: sicut de ipso Caipha dictum est: "Hoc autem non a se dixit, sed cum esset pontifex, prophetavit".'

[58] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 102. 31.

[59] Id., *Q.* 11. 1: 'sed deus, qui occultorum cognitor est, minorem benedictionem mereri ostendit, ut in benedictione non hominis ostenderet esse beneficium, sed dei

The blessing would only be effective if God truly blessed the recipient, through his priest, as reward for his merit.

In *Quaestio* 109 Ambrosiaster presented Melchizedek as a manifestation of the Holy Spirit—a view which, as we saw, Jerome violently disputed. Ambrosiaster began by explaining how the lesson of Melchizedek's blessing of Abraham, that the greater bless the lesser, 'should by no means refer to the tradition of ecclesiastical office.' That is, we should not believe that the priest himself is the greater blessing the lesser: Abraham himself was so great a man that it is impossible to think of another human being reducing him to the status of a lesser man; the only possible conclusion is that Melchizedek was himself 'ultra homines.'

Ambrosiaster went on to expound the limitations to a priest's blessing. It was not his personal choice, but was something worked through him by God; his words were not productive, but God was. Similarly, no priest chose in whom his blessing would be effectual. It is, overall, a passage which rebuts any notion that the story of Melchizedek can be used to buttress the power of a priest. Ambrosiaster may not have written here about the efficacy of a priest's actions according to his personal merit, but he did show that a priest's actions only had effect if their *recipient* had been judged worthy by God.

Although the efficacy of a priest's sacramental actions was not determined by his own morality, they could only be effective when performed by a rightfully ordained priest. It was of course a commonplace by this time that ministers were appointed by God, through human agency.[60] Ambrosiaster paid very little attention to the actual method of election and consecration of bishops, although this was an issue which vexed many of his clerical contemporaries. But he did digress at some length on the issue of anti-bishops when

esse, et quia officii dignitas est, non hominis meritum, quam dei sequitur benedictio. denique dictum est a deo in Numeris ad Moysen et Aaron sacerdotes: "vos autem ponite nomen meum super filios Israhel; ego dominus benedicam eos", ut gratiam traditio per ministerium ordinati transfundat hominibus nec voluntas sacerdotis obesse aut prodesse possit, sed meritum benedictionem poscentis.'

[60] See S. L. Greenslade, 'Scriptural and other doctrinal norms in early theories of the ministry', *JTS* 44 (1943), 162–76, and H. Koester, 'Writings and the spirit: authority and politics in ancient Christianity', *HTR* 84 (1991), 353–72.

commenting on the *cathedra pestilentiae* of Psalm 1: 1 in his *Quaestio* 110: 'For they disturb the order begun with the apostle Peter and preserved up to this time through the vine-branch of successive bishops, laying claim to the order for themselves without source, that is, professing to be the body without the head; whence it is appropriate to call their seat the chair of pestilence.'[61] Leaving aside the issue of to whom he was referring here,[62] it is clear that Ambrosiaster had a touchstone of orthodoxy for determining who was the rightful bishop: apostolic succession.[63]

Rome and Peter

Ambrosiaster considered individual bishops to have special authority over their individual churches as Christ's representatives. What was his thinking with regard to the bishop of Rome's authority over other bishops? The self-conscious promotion by Roman bishops of their Petrine authority has traditionally been dated to the early fifth century onwards, but Ambrosiaster, some time earlier, exalted the bishop of Rome's position as Peter's heir.[64] This is unsurprising if we consider that he was writing in Rome—where Peter was martyred—during the reign of Damasus. Damasus was acutely aware of his position as heir of St Peter, perhaps partly because his own tenure as bishop was, initially at least, fragile in the face of opposition from Ursinus' party.[65]

[61] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 110. 7: 'nam et ordinem ab apostolo Petro coeptum et usque ad hoc tempus per traducem succedentium episcoporum servatum perturbant ordinem sibi sine origine vindicantes, hoc est corpus sine capite profitentes; unde congruit etiam eorum sedem catedram pestilentiae appellare.'

[62] As discussed in Chapter 2, Ambrosiaster could be referring here to Ursinus, or to the Donatists' bishop at Rome.

[63] See A. Brent, 'Diogenes Laertius and the apostolic succession', *JEH* 44 (1993), 367–89.

[64] On the emergence of a Roman episcopal *principatus*, see R. A. Markus, 'The Latin Fathers', in J. H. Burns (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1988), 102.

[65] Ch. 3 of the earlier part of the *Decretum Gelasianum* (*Explanatio Fidei*) asserts the supremacy of the Roman See; several scholars believe this part to be a genuine work of Damasus. The text of the *Decretum Gelasianum*, with some discussion, can be found at C. H. Turner, 'Latin lists of the canonical books. i. The Roman council under Damasus, AD 382', *JTS* 1 (1899–1900), 554–60.

Ambrosiaster referred to Peter as 'first among the apostles',[66] and stated that 'thus after the Saviour all are contained in Peter. For he constituted Peter as the head of them, to be the pastor of the flock of the Lord.'[67] Such phrases certainly established the special authority of Peter, the ancestor of all Roman bishops. But Ambrosiaster did not depend merely on the tradition of apostolic succession to promote the Roman church. His orderly and hierarchical cast of mind extended the metaphor of the domination of Rome over the world to the importance of the Roman church in the universal church. He referred to the Romans as 'the head of all peoples', and to the might and sway of the Roman empire as powerful support for the church, once its leaders had converted.[68] He recognized that Rome's greatness may have led her clerics, especially the deacons, to develop an over-inflated estimation of their importance. His solution was to exalt all of her clergy, not just the deacons:

> But because [the deacons] are ministers of the Roman church, therefore they are thought to be much more worthy of honour than those at other churches, on account of the magnificence of the city of Rome, which is seen to be the head of all cities. If this is so, they should also lay claim to this for her *sacerdotes*, because, if those who are inferior gain enhanced stature on account of the magnificence of the city, then how much more are those who are greater to be exalted![69]

If Rome's stature exalted that of her clergy, then her bishops were the most exalted of all. This may not have been the strongest statement of primacy, but it certainly suggests that Roman clergy had an inkling of their own importance some time before fifth-century Popes moved to consolidate this.

[66] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 79. 2: 'qui primus inter apostolos erat . . .'

[67] Id., *Q.* 79. 3: 'ita et post salvatorem in Petro omnes continentur. ipsum enim constituit esse caput eorum, ut pastor esset gregis dominici.'

[68] For Rome as head of all peoples, see id., *Comm. Rom.*, *argumentum*: 'hi enim caput sunt omnium gentium' and for Rome as supporting church after conversion (see ibid., 1: 8. 4 and 1: 9–10. 6).

[69] Id., *Q.* 101. 4: 'sed quia Romanae ecclesiae ministri sunt, idcirco honorabiliores putantur quam apud ceteras ecclesias propter magnificentiam urbis Romae, quae caput esse videtur omnium civitatum. si ita est, hoc debent et sacerdotibus suis vindicare, quia, si hi qui inferiores sunt crescunt propter magnificentiam civitatis, quanto magis qui potiores sunt sublimandi sunt!'

Ambrosiaster's work does not provide an accurate account of all the nuances of over three centuries of change and development in the church hierarchy. The likelihood that he himself was a presbyter gives an added piquancy to his promotion of presbyters as co-bishops. But he did have a fairly acute sense of the difference between ministry in the contemporary and in the earlier church. It is particularly striking, then, that he was able to present the process of change as culminating in the most desirable situation, and so to defend spiritedly the monarchical episcopacy which he knew. His awareness that the current church hierarchy was not 'authentic' was happily reconciled with the patterns of the Old and New Testaments. This was partly enabled by the bridging agency of language; *sacerdos* and *levita* could and did refer both to Israelite cultic practice and the Christian clergy. As we shall see, his ideas about the personal and official aspects of the priest shape his attitude to kingship. There is considerable interpenetration of political, theological, and ecclesiological thought, further enabled by his innovative employment of terms such as *vicarius* and *rector*, terms traditionally used of secular administrative offices to refer to ecclesiastical positions.

6

Divine Kingship

Ambrosiaster's ideas about kingship and emperorship (interchangeable in his usage)[1] drew together themes from his cosmology, anthropology, and ecclesiology. He insisted that God's singularity was reflected in the creation of a single man, and in the existence of kings and bishops. A recurring feature of his writing on kings, often scriptural kings, is that they had the 'image of God.' The idea that kings in particular have the image of God was not new in the later fourth century; ideas of divinized kingship can be found in Hellenistic culture and literature, and Roman emperors from the second century AD were treated as divine after death—and sometimes in life too.[2] It is remarkable that Christians, opposed to the logic of deifying and worshipping emperors, should have come to adopt and modify some of the striking features of pre- and non-Christian legitimation and exaltation of earthly rulers. But a number of Christian texts in both Latin and Greek from the third and fourth centuries AD equated or compared earthly and heavenly ideas of rulership, kingly and imperial. The process of drawing parallels between the emperor's authority on earth and the authority of God over the universe tended to support a high, unassailable ideal of rulership as divinely appointed.

[1] Ambrosiaster, like many Latin Christian writers of the era, mingled the vocabularies of kingship and emperorship, using *rex* and *imperator* interchangeably. This was still taboo in Latin secular political usage, since the distant memory of the tyrannous Tarquins continued to inform an imperial rhetoric distancing itself from monarchy.

[2] On Hellenistic kingship theory, see D. E. Hahm, 'Kings and constitutions: Hellenistic theories', in C. Rowe and M. Schofield (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought* (Cambridge, 2000), 457–76; on the imperial cult, see M. Beard, J. North, and S. Price (eds.), *The Religions of Rome*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1998), i. *A History* and S. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge, 1984).

EARLIER CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TO EMPERORS

The conversion of the emperor Constantine to Christianity is often identified as a turning-point in Christian attitudes to emperors and indeed empire; in the preceding period of bitter, albeit sporadic, persecution, Christians had never experienced imperial rule reconciled to, let alone allied with, their God. However, even before 312 we find Christians taking a robustly positive and supportive attitude to imperial rule in an attempt to deny the charge so often made against them that they were disloyal to the Roman gods and thus also to the emperor. Tertullian, in an address of *c.*212 to Scapula, the proconsul of Africa, wrote in mollifying tones:

> A Christian is an enemy of no one, much less of the emperor. Since he knows him to be appointed by his own God, he must love, reverence, honour, and wish him well, together with the whole Roman Empire, as long as the world shall last. For, so long the Roman empire will last. In this way, then, do we honour the emperor, as both lawful for us and expedient for him, as a man next to God; who has received whatever he is from God; who is inferior to God alone. This too, [the emperor] himself will desire. For in this way he is greater than all, since he is inferior only to the true God. Thus, he is even greater than the gods themselves, since they, too, are in his power.[3]

In this passage Tertullian allowed that the emperor was himself inferior only to God, but otherwise greater than all; that he was especially close to God and received his power from God; and that he was superior to the Roman gods. Since Christians did not themselves honour the Roman gods but regarded them as malevolent demons, to elevate the emperor above them was a clever but easy piece of flattery. A third-century Greek writer, Origen, provided an even more positive picture of the Roman empire and its emperor.

[3] Tertullian, *To Scapula*, 2. 6–7: 'Christianus nullius est hostis, nedum imperatoris, quem sciens a deo suo constitui, necesse est ut et ipsum diligat et reuereatur et honoret et saluum uelit, cum toto Romano imperio, quousque saeculum stabit: tamdiu enim stabit. colimus ergo et imperatorem sic quomodo et nobis licet et ipsi expedit, ut hominem a deo secundum; et quicquid est a deo consecutum est, solo tamen deo minorem. hoc et ipse uolet. sic enim omnibus maior est, dum solo deo minor est. sic et ipsis diis maior est, dum et ipsi in potestate eius sunt.'

He explained that the very existence of the Roman empire, uniting many populations under one monarchy, allowed for the ready spread of Christianity throughout the world. He presented God as 'preparing the nations for his teaching, that they might be under one prince, the king of the Romans.'[4]

There was, then, a pre-Constantinian tradition of exalting the role of the emperor in earthly politics and in God's plans for the world. If there is any marked shift in the tone of Christian writing on rulers from the reign of Constantine onwards, it is in the new acknowledgement that a Christian emperor was able to represent the Christian God's will on earth. The Christian writer most famous for promoting a monarchical brand of monotheism was Eusebius of Caesarea, Constantine's biographer, even hagiographer. In Eusebius' vision of the universe, '[God] has modelled the kingdom on earth into a likeness of the one in heaven.'[5] Eusebius developed this theme of earth in the image of heaven with regard to the earthly monarch's imitation of his divine creator, as in this passage in his *Praise of Constantine*:

> And this selfsame one [God] would be the Governor of this entire cosmos, the one who is over all, through all, and in all, visible and invisible, the all-pervasive logos of God, from whom and through whom bearing the image of the higher kingdom, the sovereign dear to God, in imitation of the higher power, directs the helm and sets all things straight on earth.[6]

This text nowhere mentions Christ, and can be characterized only as 'monotheist', not as Christian. We must look to Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* to find him expressing this mimetic vision in explicitly Christian terms, as in a description of the imperial palace during the Vicennalia celebrations as an 'imaginary representation of the kingdom of Christ.'[7] What was the source of Eusebius' inspiration for his vision of Christian empire? An older school of scholarship asserts that his models were the Neopythagoreans and that his political theology was a Christianization of Hellenistic ideas.[8] More recent work suggests that he was more heavily influenced by the Bible and

[4] Origen, *Against Celsus*, 2. 30. [5] Eusebius, *In Praise of Constantine*, 4. 1.
[6] Ibid., 1. 6. [7] Id., *Life of Constantine*, 3. 15.
[8] See N. H. Baynes, 'Eusebius and the Christian Empire', *Annuaire de l'institut de philologie et d'histoire orientale*, ii. Mélanges Bidez (Brussels, 1933–4), 13–18.

the work of Christian writers like Origen, and Plotinus.[9] But overall it is certain that his works, written in Greek, draw on a long, rich tradition of Greek philosophy and theology, revolving around the Greek word *mimesis*—imitation.[10] There was also a Latin counterpart to this enterprise, although it was less hyperbolic about the earthly emperor.[11] Lactantius, writing at the same time as Eusebius, and for the same imperial patron, Constantine, described God as monarch of the world, and also drew parallels between divine and imperial government:

> So it is necessary for the world to be governed by the will of one. Unless the power of the separate parts were referred to one providence, the whole itself could not stand . . . just as not even the military system could stand unless it had one leader and ruler . . . Thus in this empire of the nature of things, unless there was one to whom the care of the sum of all were referred, all things would be destroyed and fall to pieces.[12]

AMBROSIASTER'S MONARCHICAL POLITICAL THEOLOGY

In both Latin and Greek pre-Constantinian Christian writing earthly monarchy had been promoted on the grounds that its singularity was in imitation of God's singular kingship, or that it enabled the spread

[9] See C. Rapp, 'Imperial ideology in the making: Eusebius of Caesarea on Constantine as "bishop"', *JTS* NS 49 (1998), 685–95, and M. J. Hollerich, 'Religion and politics in the writings of Eusebius: reassessing the first court theologian', *CH* 59. 3 (1990), 309–25.

[10] There is a vast literature on the subject of mimesis. On Hellenistic tradition, see Hahm, 'Kings and constitutions'; on Platonists and Neopythagoreans, see B. Centrone, 'Platonism and Pythagoreanism in the early empire', in Rowe and Schofield, *Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought*, 567–75; and G. F. Chesnut, 'The ruler and logos in Neopythagorean, Middle Platonic and Late Stoic Philosophy', in H. Temporini and W. Haase (eds.), *ANRW* 16. 2 (Berlin, 1978), 1310–31; on Christian mimesis ideology, see G. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), 86 ff. and 120 ff.; on the afterlife of Pauline imitation, see G. Constable, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge, 1995).

[11] See H. Inglebert, *Les Romains chrétiens face à l'histoire de Rome: histoire, christianisme et romanités en Occident dans l'antiquité tardive, III^{e}–V^{e} siècles* (Paris, 1996), 153–357.

[12] Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 1. 3.

of the gospel. It is unlikely that Ambrosiaster was tapping directly into Eusebius' work. He seems not to have read Greek, and the only near-contemporary Latin translations of Eusebian works circulated after Ambrosiaster's probable *floruit*; Augustine received Jerome's translation of the *Chronica* in 394, and Rufinus' translation of the *Ecclesiastical History* in *c.*402–3.[13] Nor should he be placed squarely within the Eusebian tradition, as Dvornik suggests, since, as we shall see, he is more restrained than Eusebius.[14] If Ambrosiaster was influenced by particular writings, it was more likely to have been by Latin 'Eusebians' like Lactantius; but he does not explicitly borrow from such texts, and one can only argue, not prove, that he had absorbed certain ideas from particular writers. Overall his justification of a high role for kingship is based overwhelmingly on the sometimes idiosyncratic exegesis of particular passages of scripture.

Although there were Christian intellectual precedents and models for Ambrosiaster's positive attitude towards earthly rulers, it is somewhat surprising to find such views being expressed in late-fourth-century Rome, when the appearance in Latin Christian writing of an exalted role for kings and emperors was waning. Christian imperial authority had been severely undermined in the mid years of the century by the persecuted pro-Nicenes Hilary of Poitiers and Lucifer of Cagliari, and Ambrose of Milan, writing only shortly after Ambrosiaster, expressed a very moderate, chastising attitude to emperors in the last decades of the fourth century.[15] The mimetic idea of earthly kings imitating, or being in the image of, divine government, seems to have had a much longer afterlife in the Greek East.[16] What, then, were the contours of Ambrosiaster's unusual insistence on the king as in the image of God and representing God's rule on earth?

[13] See P. Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers and their Greek Sources* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), 200–1.

[14] See F. Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy: Origin and Background* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies, 9), 2 vols. (Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C., 1966), ii. 626: '[Ambrosiaster] was in many ways the Western counterpart of Eusebius.' Ibid., ii. 628 suggests that Ambrosiaster was influenced by Themistius.

[15] See the invective of Hilary of Poitiers, *Against Constantius* and Lucifer of Cagliari, *De Regibus Apostaticis*. Ambrose famously chastised emperors in his *Letter*, 51, *De Apologia Prophetae David*, and funeral orations on Valentinian and Theodosius.

[16] This elevated Greek ideology and imagery of government emerges in the epilogue of C. Kelly, *Ruling the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 2004).

'The king has the image of God'

Ambrosiaster reiterated in his various works that God is 'the single originating principle'; as there existed one God who created all creation, so one Adam was created, one ancestor for all mankind.[17] He presented both man and woman as having dominion over the beasts of the earth, but reserved true authority—the defining feature of the original image of God in man—for man alone. This was a fairly run-of-the-mill Christian anthropology but it fed into an exalted political theology in which the king especially has the image of God. This idea is found in striking form at *Quaestio* 106, an exposition of the creation account in Genesis. Having recounted the story of the seven days of creation and finished by considering the creation of Adam in the image and likeness of God, Ambrosiaster stated: 'This is, therefore, the image of God in man, that one was made (as it were) a master [*dominus*], from whom the rest were to spring, he having the power [*imperium*] of God, as his (as it were) representative; for which reason every king has the image of God.'[18] Here, Ambrosiaster moved smoothly from Adam made *quasi dominus* in God's image, to man as *quasi vicarius Dei*, to the king in particular having God's image. The nature of the links between these three ideas is far from clear, even though all share some sort of singular authority in the world: Adam was mankind's common ancestor, mankind shared in dominion over the animals, and kings had singular authority.[19] We get a better idea of why kings are in the image of God in Ambrosiaster's exegesis of Romans 13, where he wrote: 'He calls "princes" those kings who are created to correct people's way of life and to prohibit adverse actions, who bear the image of God, so that the rest should be subject to one.'[20]

[17] See e.g. Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Cor.*, 11: 5. 2.

[18] Id., *Q.* 106. 17: 'haec ergo imago dei est in homine, ut unus factus sit quasi dominus, ex quo ceteri orirentur, habens imperium dei quasi vicarius eius, quia omnis rex dei habet imaginem.'

[19] E. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies* (Princeton, N.J., 1957), 89 n. 7, described this passage as a fusion of *homo imago* (*vicarius*) *dei* and *rex imago* (*vicarius*) *dei*. See also ibid., 264: 'The oscillation between the notions of man, of man a king, and of royal office could hardly be more irritating than in the case of Ambrosiaster.'

[20] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Rom.*, 13: 3: 'principes hos reges dicit, qui propter corrigendam vitam et prohibenda adversa creantur, dei habentes imaginem, ut sub uno sint ceteri.'

Here, the subjection of all men to one ruler is common to God's monarchy and to earthly rulership.

Ambrosiaster's general statement that 'the king has the image of God' takes a more specific exegetical form in *Quaestio* 35, tackling the question 'Why did David call Saul the anointed of the Lord and defer to him, even after God had departed from him?'[21] Ambrosiaster explained that David honoured Saul precisely because Saul was king by the grace of God, and had the image of God: 'David, knowing that appointment into the office of the kingly order was divine, therefore honoured Saul, placed in the same office by that tradition, so that he not be seen to do injury to God, who decreed honour to these orders. For the king has the image of God, as the bishop has the image of Christ.'[22] The final sentence of this passage should not be read, as it sometimes has been by medieval and modern commentators, as a dogmatic statement linking the office of bishop with Christ and the office of king with God.[23] As we shall see, Ambrosiaster was not as consistent as this. Instead, these two pairings seem to have been suggested and constructed by the linking word *christus*; Saul was God's anointed (*christus domini*) and the bishop was in the image of Christ (*imago Christi*), having been sacramentally transformed at ordination partly through anointment. The two offices are linked primarily by the idea of divine ordination: both Old Testament king and bishop were appointed to (and anointed in) offices established by God and therefore should not be disobeyed.

Where Ambrosiaster described the king (in general terms, but referring back to the specific story of David) as having the image of God in *Quaestio* 106, in *Quaestio* 111 on Psalm 23 he described David in passing as having the image of Christ. In this *Quaestio* Ambrosiaster was expounding the meaning of the title of Psalm 23

[21] Id., *Q.* 35: 'Qua ratione David Saul, postquam deus ab eo recessit, christum domini vocat et defert ei?'

[22] Ibid.: 'Non nescius David divinam esse traditionem in officio ordinis regalis idcirco Saul in eadem adhuc traditione positum honorificat, ne deo iniuriam facere videretur, qui his ordinibus honorem decrevit. dei enim imaginem habet rex, sicut et episcopus Christi.'

[23] See e.g. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 91 n. 12: 'The passages are characteristic of the Ambrosiaster's tenet that the king is the vicar of God, and the priest that of Christ.' Kantorowicz refers (p. 161) to this as a 'maxim' and a 'doctrine.'

which was added to the Latin Bible: *huic David prima sabbati*—'a psalm for David on the first day of the sabbath.' He explained that 'the Lord's day means the psalmist is about to speak of the sacrament of our Lord Jesus Christ', and that 'when he says "for David", it refers to him [Christ] whose image David has, of whom the prophet says "and my son David shall pasture them".'[24] This is a typological analysis of the psalm, expounding its meaning by presenting Christ as the antitype of David the type; this style of exegesis is found in Ambrosiaster's other *Quaestiones* on psalms.[25] Thus the different pairings—king in the image of God, king in the image of Christ—in these *Quaestiones* can be explained by their different exegetical projects.

The Office and Person of King

In his discussion of Saul, and why David did not disobey him, Ambrosiaster raised the problem of a monarch who had behaved in a way which might seem to merit disobedience or resistance. He tackled the scriptural example of David and Saul by referring to the divinely ordained nature of the office of king. This serves to introduce one of Ambrosiaster's most important and enduring contributions to political theology: the separation of the fallible tenant of an office from the divinely ordained office itself, which in turn fed into his counselling submission to the powers that be, whether they were good or evil, because obedience was owed to the office not to the individual. He explained that the office of king had inherent merit, regardless of the character of its occupant:

> And for as long as he [the king] is in that tradition he should be honoured, if not for his own sake, then on account of his rank [*ordo*]. Whence Paul said: 'Be subject to all higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God' [Rom. 13: 1]. That is why we honour even a pagan placed in power, though he be unworthy, who holding rank of

[24] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 111. 1: 'de Christi enim domini nostri sacramento locuturus dominicum diem significavit dicens: "huic David prima sabbati." [Ps. 23] cum enim dicitur: "huic David," ad eum pertinet, cuius hic David habet imaginem, de quo dicit profeta: "et puer meus David pascit illos" [Ezek. 37: 24].'

[25] e.g. id., *Q.* 112 on Ps. 50.

God nevertheless gives thanks to the Devil. For power exacts honour, because it deserves it.[26]

The reference to the pagan ruler who holds office of God but give thanks to the Devil evokes the reign of the emperor Julian, elsewhere described by Ambrosiaster as recently past.[27] But rather than digging into the painful historical example, Ambrosiaster characteristically turned to scripture to explain his position. He adduced the examples of Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, who were both personally enemies of God but none the less continued to be granted divine visions on account of their rank: 'For a dream was revealed to Pharaoh of a famine to come, and Nebuchadnezzar, while others stood around him, alone saw the son of God in the fire . . .' He explained further that this latter revelation was conferred 'not for his own merit—he wanted to be worshipped in an idol—but for the merit of kingly rank.'[28]

For some time it had been orthodox opinion that a cleric's actions were unaffected by the quality of his life, but had universal efficacy from the fact of his ordination. In Chapter 5 I explored Ambrosiaster's commitment to the idea of indelible priestly character and his description of a cleric's sacramental actions as effective whatever his personal character, good or bad. Ambrosiaster's innovation was to apply the idea of the cleric's 'two bodies', that is, his office and his person, to the secular realm, leading to the conclusion that a king 'is to be honoured not for his own sake but on account of his rank.' Ambrosiaster associated the king and the priest when he linked Caiaphas, an unworthy high priest, and Saul, a bad king, as both receiving the gift of prophecy with their office which was not, much like Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar's visions, withdrawn when they had sinned: 'Caiaphas prophesied, not deservedly, but on the strength of the dignity of his priestly office, and Saul prophesied, at a time

[26] Id., *Q.* 35: 'quam diu ergo in ea traditione est, honorandus est, si non propter se, vel propter ordinem. unde apostolus: "omnibus" inquit "potestatibus sublimioribus subditi estote. non est enim potestas nisi a deo; quae enim sunt, a deo ordinatae sunt." [Rom. 13: 1] hinc est unde gentilem, in potestate tamen positum, honorificamus, licet ipse indignus sit, qui dei ordinem tenens gratias agit diabolo. potestas enim exigit, quia meretur honorem.'

[27] Id., *Comm. II Thess.*, 2: 7: 'novissime Julianum . . .'

[28] Id., *Q.* 35: 'nam ideo Pharaoni futurae famis somnium revelatum est et Nabuchodonosor aliis secum adstantibus solus filium dei vidit in camino ignis non utique merito suo, qui in idolo se adorari voluit, sed merito ordinis regalis.'

when he had been filled with an evil spirit because of his disobedience, not deservedly, but in the interest of God's cause, so that he could not capture David . . .'[29] It is no coincidence that the phrases used of the cleric's inherent merit echo those used of kingly merit almost word for word. Ambrosiaster attributed to both king and priest these two contrasting aspects, one official, one personal.

Submission to 'the powers that be'?

Ambrosiaster's basic justification for counselling submission to earthly monarchs was that they were appointed by God and in his image. Implicitly, therefore, resisting a king represented a resistance of God's ordnances. But in his exegesis of Romans 13, Ambrosiaster mounted a more sustained defence of 'the powers that be' (which he consistently, and typically, characterized as royal):

> In order to give confirmation to justice and to the fear of natural law, [Paul] affirms that God is its author and that those which administer it have God's ordination. Hence he adds: 'and those [powers] which exist are ordained by God', in order that no one should think them contemptible, as being human fabrications; for he sees divine justice as having been delegated to human authorities. Well then, a person subject to a power is one who through fear of God abstains from the things which it prohibits.[30]

Here we find an articulation of why earthly rulers should not be contemned which goes beyond the bald proposition that they should be obeyed because they are appointed by God. Ambrosiaster asserted that rulers administered divine justice on earth and restrained man from sinning through fear. Man's subjection to kings was also held to represent something of the subjection of man to God himself. In

[29] Id., *Comm. I Cor.*, 13: 2. 1: 'et Caifas profetavit non merito, sed dignitate ordinis sacerdotalis, et Saul profetavit [I Sam. 19: 23], cum iam inoboedientiae causa spiritu malo fuisset repletus, sed propter dei causam, ne posset conprehendere David . . .' See ibid., 12: 28: Caiaphas was a priest who 'prophesied by reason of his rank, not his own merit.'

[30] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 13: 1. 1–2: 'ut ergo ius et timorem legis naturalis confirmet, deum auctorem eius testatur et ministrantes eam dei ordinationem habere. ideo adiecit: "quae autem sunt, a deo ordinata sunt", ut nemo putet quasi humana commenta contemnenda; videt enim ius divinum humanis auctoritatibus deputatum. hic ergo subiectus est potestati, qui se terrore dei ab his abstinet quae prohibet.'

expounding Romans 13, Ambrosiaster worked out a 'theology of representation' in practical, not merely metaphysical terms:

> Paul says that tributes, or those which are called *fiscalia* [exactions for the treasury], are maintained so that they may represent subjection, and so that, through them, people may know that they are not free, but acting in subjection to the power which is from God. [They are subject to] their prince, who acts in the place of God [as if to God]; as the prophet Daniel says: 'The kingdom is God's and he will give that to whom he wishes.' Hence the Lord too says: 'Render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's.' They should be subjected to him, therefore, as if to God. The proof of their subjection is that they pay him taxes.[31]

The idea that taxes represent subjection to a power which is itself from God was an unusual exegesis of Matthew 22: 21 ('Render unto Caesar…'), although Pelagius appears to have picked it up subsequently in his commentary on Romans.[32] Striking too are the ideas that the king acts 'in the place of God' (*vicem Dei*), and that men are both subject to the king in God's place and through the king subject to God. The idea of a kingly vicariate was expressed elsewhere in terms even closer to the clerical language of the bishop acting as Christ's vicar: 'For the king is adored in earth as if [*quasi*] the vicar of God, Christ however having served as vicar and fulfilled his charge, is adored in heaven and on earth.'[33] However, in this statement, although Ambrosiaster presented the king as God's *vicarius*, he used the word *quasi* to temper the relationship; Christ accomplished the full office of *vicarius*, whereas the king's role was only *quasi vicarius*. A further example of this reserved sort of parallel is found

[31] Ibid., 13: 6: 'propter hoc dicit tributa praestari vel quae dicuntur fiscalia, ut subiectionem praestent, per quam sciant non se esse liberos, sed sub potestate agere, quae ex deo est. principi enim suo, qui vicem dei agit, sicut dicit Danihel profeta: "dei est enim" inquit "regnum et cui vult dabit illud". [unde et dominus: "reddite" ait "quae sunt Caesaris, Caesari".] huic ergo subiciendi sunt sicut deo. cuius subiectionis probatio haec est, quia pendent illi tributa.'

[32] Pelagius appears to have borrowed this interpretation in his *Commentary on Romans*, 13: 6: '"Taxes" can also mean taxes for the priests, which were established for them by God. Or: you pay taxes to those who rule because in possessing the world you were willing to be subject to them.' Augustine avoided Rom. 13: 6 altogether in his *Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans*, and stopped well short of it in his unfinished *Commentary on Romans*.

[33] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 91. 8: 'rex enim adoratur in terris quasi vicarius dei, Christus autem post vicariam impleta dispensatione adoratur in caelis et in terra.'

in *Quaestio* 106: 'This then is the image of God in man, that one be made like a master [*quasi dominus*], from whom all the others might take their origin, having the power of God like his vicar [*quasi vicarius eius*], because every king has the image of God.'[34] We remember the reserved parallel that Ambrosiaster made between the Trinity and man and woman's relationship, explored in Chapter 4.

Ambrosiaster, then, separated clerical and royal person and office. He suggested that a king was to be honoured because he held rank of God, had his image, and represented God on earth. But overall he refrained from making the sort of sweeping, extravagant comparisons between earthly kings and God which can be found in earlier, particularly Greek Christian texts such as Eusebius' *Vita Constantini*.[35] Ambrosiaster acknowledged the distance between the earthly monarch and his divine archetype in comments such as: 'Now, one approaches a king by way of tribunes or *comites*, because the king is, at all events, a man, and does not know to whom he may entrust affairs of state. But to propitiate God, from whom nothing we may be sure is hidden . . . there is no need of an intermediary, but a faithful mind.'[36] The reminder that emperors were human, with the implication that they were also fallible like humans, was to become the dominant Latin Christian attitude to rulers in the last third of the fourth century. Ambrose, writing a decade or so after Ambrosiaster's *floruit*, famously took to reminding the emperor Theodosius that: 'You are a man—you have met temptation—conquer it.'[37]

Fear

The idea of beneficial fear which we encountered in Ambrosiaster's commentary on Romans ('a person subject to a power is one who through fear of God abstains from the things which it prohibits') is

[34] Id., *Q.* 106. 17: 'haec ergo imago dei est in homine, ut unus factus sit quasi dominus, ex quo ceteri orirentur, habens imperium dei quasi vicarius eius, quia omnis rex dei habet imaginem.'

[35] *Pace* Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy*, ii. 626: Ambrosiaster was 'in many ways the Western counterpart of Eusebius.'

[36] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Rom.*, 1: 22. 1b: 'nam et ideo ad regem per tribunos aut comites itur, quia homo utique est rex et nescit, quibus debeat rem publicam credere. ad deum autem promerendum, quem nihil utique latet . . . suffragatore non opus est, sed mente devota.'

[37] Ambrose, *Letter*, 51.

a recurrent feature of his explanation of the divinely ordained duty and purpose of rulers, expounded in more detail in a comment on Romans 13: 4: 'Since God has determined that there is to be a future judgment and he wishes that no one should perish, he has ordained rulers for this age, to be pedagogues for mankind by the exertion of terror, teaching them what they should maintain so that they may not incur the penalty of the judgment to come.'[38] The principle that a ruler exerts terror to check sin is based on three concepts: fear of God, fear of the law, and fear of the ruler.

Fear of God is a recurrent theme in the Bible, and is especially prevalent in the Old Testament.[39] References in Ambrosiaster's works to *timor dei* and *terror dei* are also persistent.[40] Man should fear God's power to punish in the judgment to come, and thus Ambrosiaster described preaching the end of the world as a 'beneficial threat', because it 'terrorizes people into leading a better life.'[41] However, as he explained, this fear of God ebbed away and inspired him to give the Mosaic law in order to make manifest the reality of judgment and punishment:

> But when the natural law faded away, oppressed by habitual sin, then it had to be made manifest, so that among the Jews, all might hear; not because it had vanished without trace; but they lacked the great authority of the [natural] law; they applied themselves to idolatry; there was no fear of God on earth; they devoted themselves to fornication . . . And so the law was given, so that what was known should have authority, and that which had started to be concealed might be made manifest.[42]

[38] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Rom.*, 13: 4: 'quoniam futurum iudicium deus statuit et nullum perire vult, huic saeculo rectores ordinavit, ut terrore interposito hominibus velut paedagogi sint, erudientes illos quid servent, ne in poenam incidant futuri iudicii.'

[39] See P. Brown, 'St Augustine's attitude to religious coercion', *JRS* 54 (1964), 107–16, who explains Augustine's attitude to coercion against a background of polarity ('of severity and mildness, of fear and love') found in scripture itself—the so-called *duae voces* of the scriptures of the one God.

[40] See e.g. Ambrosiaster, *Qq.* 1. 2, 13. 1, 109. 18, 110. 13, 115. 81, 126. 3; *Comm. Eph.*, 1: 18, 6: 8; *Comm. Col.*, 2: 2; *Comm. II Tim.*, 2: 14.

[41] Id., *Comm. I Cor.*, 7: 29. 1: 'inminere multum proficit. terrorem enim incutit ad meliorem vitam agendam hominibus.' He went on to compare the threat of judgment day with the terror provoked by an imminent earthly trial.

[42] Id., *Q.* 4. 1: 'adubi autem naturalis lex evanuit pressa consuetudine delinquendi, tunc oportuit manifestari, ut in Iudaeis omnes audirent, non quod penitus oblitterata esset, sed maxima eius auctoritate carebant: idolatriae studebatur; timor dei in terris

In Ambrosiaster's writings we find that different sorts of fear coalesce. If God gave men written law to enshrine the natural law which had been lost or obliterated, then God also gave men earthly rulers, partly to administer this law, and partly because the very fear of the earthly ruler's power to punish and coerce checked and corrected men's sinful tendencies. God's authority runs down from God to his king thus:

> So just as the authority of the earthly emperor runs down through all, so that there might be awe of him amongst all, thus God instituted that the authority of God should begin from the king himself and run down through all. Although the world frequently does not understand this, and is placed in the power of and subjects itself to another than to whom it ought, nevertheless it was ordained that there should be one who is feared.[43]

Reverentia, even *timor*, of the earthly emperor is natural since his own authority derives directly from God, who is obviously a natural object of both *reverentia* and *timor*.

Whence the necessity for fear as an instrument of government? It curbs our (post-fall) tendency to sin.[44] Clement of Alexandria dealt at length with fear as beneficial for mankind in his *Paedagogus*, writing, for instance: 'by inspiring men with fear, he [Christ the pedagogue] cuts off the approach to sin . . . this is a good device, to terrify lest we sin.'[45] Towards the end of this treatise, he moves smoothly between the religious and the political, making the subject–ruler/pupil–pedagogue analogy: 'There is a twofold species of fear, the one of which is accompanied with reverence, such as citizens show towards good rulers, and we towards God, as also right-minded children towards their fathers . . . The other species of fear is accompanied with hatred, which slaves feel towards hard masters . . .'[46]

non erat; fornicatio operabatur . . . data ergo lex est, ut et quae sciebantur auctoritatem haberent et quae latere coeperant manifestarentur.' Fornication must be read metaphorically, as the unholy consorting with strange gods.

[43] Id., *Q.* 110. 6: 'sicut ergo terreni imperatoris auctoritas currit per omnes, ut in omnibus eius sit reverentia, ita deus instituit, ut ab ipso rege dei auctoritas incipiat et currat per cunctos. quamvis frequenter mundus hoc non intellegat et alii se subiciat in potestate positus quam debet, tamen institutio est ut unus sit, qui timeatur.'

[44] On the impossibility of post-fall man not sinning, see e.g. id., *Comm. Rom.*, 5: 14: 'It is impossible not to sin.'

[45] Clement, *Paedagogus*, 8. [46] Ibid., 9.

In an echo, deliberate or unintentional, of Clement, Ambrosiaster expounded Romans 13: 7 with the same relationships of fear between the subject and the ruling power, the Christian and God: ' "Render to whom fear is due, fear"—the fear which is to be shown to a power, because fear prevents sin; secondly, the fear shown to a parent or earthly master, in order that he may be thankful for a son or slave who is a Christian.'[47] Ambrosiaster uses fear to characterize (always monarchical) earthly rulers: 'it is ordained that there should be one who is feared.'[48] This presupposes a relatively pessimistic or pragmatic view of human nature; we obey because we fear, rather than because we love. In turn this seems to endorse the idea that human nature was permanently flawed after the fall. We will do evil unless checked, and kings are that necessary check: 'It is clear that the purpose for which rulers are given is so that evil may not come about.'[49]

The predominance of fear as a legitimate instrument of earthly government was not an Ambrosiastrian invention; *timor dei* and *timor mortis* are prevalent in scripture, and indeed fear of the law was a defining feature of late antique society.[50] Late antique government was brutal, involving both the routine use of torture in judicial investigations, and gruesome if not lethal punishments for those convicted. Fear was thus deemed to be beneficial as it acted as a deterrent to committing crimes.[51] Although fear was an accepted instrument of government in late antiquity, some Christians felt

[47] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Rom.*, 13: 7. 3: ' "Cui timorem, timorem". potestati timorem exhibendum, quia timor prohibet peccatum; deinde aut parenti aut domino terreno, ut gratias agat in filio aut servo Christiano.' Notably, Clement put slaves and hard masters in a different category, of fear and hatred (*Paedagogus*, 9) where Ambrosiaster *included* slaves in the category of beneficial fear; by implication that which is characterized by love.

[48] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 110. 6: 'tamen institutio est ut unus sit, qui timeatur.'

[49] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 13: 4: 'manifestum est ideo rectores datos, ne malum fiat.'

[50] See E. Rebillard, *In hora mortis: Évolution de la pastorale chrétienne de la mort au IV^e^ et V^e^ siècles* (Rome, 1994), on *timor mortis* (pt. 1) and fear of the *dies iudicii* (part II).

[51] See J. Harries, *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1999). She explains (p. 145) that Ambrosiaster, 'an enthusiast for power and terror, argued in a brief history of law that, because the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was buried "by the forgetfulness of antiquity", Moses had to receive the Ten Commandments "to inspire terror, in order to correct and restore order, and renew faith in God" [*Q.* 4. 1].'

uneasy with its use for religious purposes; most famously, Augustine was to change his opinion over time as to the desirability of coercing conversion.[52] Ambrosiaster was principally interested in fear as a means of preventing sin, and he also seemed to support the legitimacy of coercion in comments such as this: 'For, although it would have been fitting for them [idolaters] to be forced into subjection, to do what they did not wish and to be tormented—because what is done against one's will, even a good thing, is bitter and evil—these people, however, who were turning away from God, were handed over to the Devil.'[53]

Pedagogues

Paul used the figure of the pedagogue metaphorically at Galatians 3: 24: 'For the [Mosaic] law was our pedagogue in Christ.' Ambrosiaster stuck close to Paul in his exegesis of this passage, writing about the Mosaic Law as a pedagogue thus:

> He who acts under a pedagogue is not under his own power; for a small child who is also vulnerable to sinning is held under the care of a pedagogue. But with the coming of Christ, who makes as it were adults out of minors, freed from the power of the pedagogue [the law], we are made sons of God through the washing away of sins, since we were the slaves of sin.[54]

Ambrosiaster also used the Pauline image in his *Commentary on Romans* 13: 1, describing the law as 'a sort of pedagogue, giving elementary teaching to small children, so that they may enter upon

[52] See Brown, 'Augustine's attitude', 112: 'the final spontaneous act of the will [to convert] could be preceded by a long process—of *eruditio* and *admonitio*—in which elements of fear, of constraint, of external inconvenience are never, at any time, excluded.'

[53] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Rom.*, 1: 24. 1: 'cum enim dignum fuisset subici illos, ut facerent quae nolebant et cruciarentur—quia licet bonum, si contra voluntatem fiat, amarum et malum est—isti autem avertentes se a deo traditi sunt diabolo.'

[54] Id., *Comm. Gal.*, 3: 25: 'sub paedagogo qui agit potestatis suae non est; parvulus enim et lubricus ad peccandum sub paedagogi cura habetur. veniente autem Christo, qui quasi de minoribus facit maiores, liberati de potestate paedagogi, per ablutionem peccatorum facti sumus filii dei, cum essemus servi peccati.' The characterization of the law as a pedagogue was also taken up by Augustine, and is discussed in Brown, 'Augustine's attitude.'

the path of a greater righteousness.'[55] However, in commenting on Romans 13: 4, Ambrosiaster imaginatively extended the metaphor by presenting not the law, but 'rulers of this age' (themselves characterized as administrators of the law) as pedagogues: 'Since God has determined that there is to be a future judgment and he wishes that no one should perish, he has ordained rulers for this age, to be pedagogues for mankind by the exertion of terror, educating those who serve them so that they may not incur the penalty of the judgment to come.'[56]

The image of a pedagogue encouraging Christians, themselves figured as children (*parvuli*) to live a righteous life was prominent in Clement of Alexandria's *Paedagogus*, in which he presented Christ as the ultimate pedagogue. Either Ambrosiaster was drawing directly on Clement, not impossible from another textual hint of contact, although unlikely since *Paedagogus* was written in Greek; or both Clement and Ambrosiaster were drawing on Paul's use of the stern figure of the pedagogue, seen as providing as much an education in discipline as intellect.[57] Either way, Ambrosiaster used the image to develop the idea of rulers as pedagogues, where Clement had stuck closer to Paul in presenting the Law, and Christ, as pedagogues.

Prayer for Kings

Ambrosiaster's exegesis of Old and New Testaments is larded with pithy statements about the nature of kingship, often couched in fairly abstract, generalized terms. In his commentary on 1 Timothy 2: 1–2 we find a more practical attitude towards rulers and their role in the world and the church:

[55] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 13: 1. 1: 'haec enim quasi paedagogus est, quae parvulos inbuit, ut possint potioris iustitiae viam ingredi.'

[56] Ibid., 13: 4. 2: 'quoniam futurum iudicium deus statuit et nullum perire vult, huic saeculo rectores ordinavit, ut terrore interposito hominibus velut paedagogi sint, erudientes illos quid servent, ne in poenam incidant futuri iudicii.'

[57] See Clement, *Paedagogus*, 1: 'The pedagogue [in this context, sc. Christ] being practical, not theoretical, his aim is thus to improve the soul, not to teach, and to train it up to a virtuous, not to an intellectual life.'

'[Pray] for kings and for all who are placed in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all piety and chastity.' This ecclesiastical rule is given by the teacher of the heathen, a rule which our priests use, that they supplicate for all, praying for the kings of this world, that they might hold the tribes subject, so that placed in peace we might serve our God in tranquillity of mind and calmly, praying also for those to whom highest power is entrusted, so that they might govern the state in justice and truth, supplied with an abundance of things, so that the disturbance of sedition put away, happiness might follow . . . [58]

Here, Ambrosiaster explains how the ecclesiastical prayer for kings and those in power has been passed down, practised by 'our priests' (*sacerdotes*). The prayer is concerned, in his account, with the security of the state; that it be safe from the barbarians, blessed with abundance, and free from sedition. Mention of the 'disturbance of sedition' reminds us that the threat of rebellion and usurpation was ever present in the later Roman empire, and, as we shall see in Chapter 7, for Ambrosiaster this threat bound earth and heaven together since earthly usurpers gathering support from their armies were imitating the example which the Devil gave in rebelling against God.

It seems likely that Ambrosiaster has preserved the structure and dynamic of an actual prayer in church for rulers. The similarity of the priorities of the prayer with Paul's—peace and security—could be taken to reflect the real format of contemporary prayer, modelled consciously on 1 Timothy, or could be an Ambrosiastrian gloss bringing the reported prayer into close line with Paul. This passage indicates that, whatever Ambrosiaster's attitude towards and expectations of emperors, the contemporary church's basic requirement of emperors was that they should create and preserve the environment of peace and tranquillity in which Christians might serve their God. This received its fullest expression in the later books of Augustine's

[58] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Tim.*, 2: 1–4. 1: '"pro regibus et pro omnibus qui in sublimiori loco positi sunt, ut placitam et quietam vitam degamus in omni pietate et castitate . . ." haec regula ecclesiastica est tradita a magistro gentium, qua utuntur sacerdotes nostri, ut pro omnibus supplicent deprecantes pro regibus huius saeculi, ut subiectas habeant gentes, ut in pace positi in tranquillitate mentis et quiete deo nostro servire possimus, orantes etiam pro his, quibus sublimis potestas credita est, ut in iustitia et veritate gubernent rem publicam subpeditante rerum abundantia, ut amota perturbatione seditionis succedat laetitia . . .'

City of God, where he promoted earthly peace and order as goods in themselves, enabling men to reach, even if not providing, ultimate, eternal peace.[59]

Ambrosiaster derived the idea of singular political rule from the very nature of God and his creation. His claim that ' "to be subject" is the same as "to follow" '[60] was a typical use of the language of subjection in a positive sense. If to be subject to God is good, then it follows that to be subject to a ruler who is God's representative is good. Despite a somewhat bleak view of post-fall humanity and human politics Ambrosiaster offered some reassurance: the universe is subject to the rule of God. For man, more important than the reality of earthly political rule was the possibility of becoming a subject of the heavenly *dominium*: 'God [intended that] people who believed this should be set apart for salvation, becoming subjects of his dominion.'[61] The 'kingdom of God' contrasted with the 'kingdom of the Devil' recurs in Ambrosiaster's works, as does his tendency to cite other opposed pairs: laws, peoples, empires, and *dominia*. Ambrosiaster's political theology was rooted in the monarchical, autocratic language of kingship, itself deriving from the rule of God. It was to be eclipsed by a more fully worked-out political theology, expressed in the republican language of citizenship, pioneered by Augustine in his *City of God* some decades later.[62]

[59] On peace and order, see Augustine, *City of God*, 19. 14. On Augustine and peace, see R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine* (Cambridge, 1970).

[60] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Cor.*, 14: 32: 'hoc est subiectum esse, quod et sequi.'

[61] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 4: 19.3: 'ut qui hoc crederent . . . discreti salvarentur dei dominio mancipati.'

[62] See Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, 248–9.

7

Diabolical Tyranny

Ambrosiaster presented God as a monarchical ruler and the king as in the image of God and his representative on earth. But he took this reflexive political theology to its logical conclusion, and, more explicitly and consistently than any of his predecessors, presented the Devil as the tyrannical opponent of God and a spiritual political model for earthly tyrants and usurpers. He was not, of course, the first Christian to pair the diabolical and the political. Paul described spiritual forces of evil using words normally applied to earthly rulers: in the *Vetus Latina* New Testament which Ambrosiaster used, these were *principes et potestates*.[1] Christian writers before Ambrosiaster had characterized persecuting emperors as tyrants and close to the Devil, and the Devil himself as a cruel, tyrannical ruler. However, where earlier writers had tended to focus on the brutal aspects of the Devil's tyranny, that is, on his cruel persecution of Christians, Ambrosiaster insisted that the Devil was a contumacious rebel who attempted a usurpation of God's kingship and successfully won mastery over sinful man. It is plausible that historical circumstances influenced this shift; Ambrosiaster's Latin predecessors had lived under the threat of persecution and suffering (Lactantius under the pagan Diocletian, Hilary and Lucifer under the Arian Constantius), whereas Ambrosiaster's immediate historical context was that of a plethora of western usurpers.

[1] Eph. 6: 12.

CLASSICAL PRECEDENTS

There was a precedent in classical literature and mythology for linking evil spiritual archetypes with a particular style of political rule—tyranny. In the pagan *cosmos*, God as king was not without his opponents. According to one mythic theology, the supreme god (Jupiter/Zeus) faced opposition from the giants.[2] The association between rebellions in heaven and earthly government was cemented by Dio Chrysostom, who in the first of his kingship orations to Trajan told the story of Heracles' choice between two paths, that to 'Mount Royal' (populated by personifications of the royal virtues) and that to 'Mount Tyrannus' (populated by personifications of the tyrannous vices). He wrote that the first peak is sacred to Zeus, the second named after the Giant Typhon, thus linking the battle between the gods and the giants with the tension between earthly styles of government.[3] Themistius, writing in the late fourth century, described the imperial usurper Procopius as: 'a man hateful to the gods, who had always lived in the position of scribe, dared from the ink and quill to cast his mind on domination of the Roman Empire, a wretch from among the wretched, a true Typhon risen from Cilician Corycus . . .'[4]

There was then a pagan precedent for linking the heavenly battle between gods and giants with the tension between two earthly styles of government. But the dynamic of the two texts cited above is essentially polemical and political; two orators addressing emperors and saluting their just and legitimate government in hyperbolic terms, contrasting it not just with earthly illegitimate usurpers, but with figures from myth. The struggle between gods and giants was also a Greek myth, deployed by Greeks in Greek; Latin writers tended to resort to earthly, historical archetypes for tyranny. Thus Pacatus, in his panegyric to Theodosius, compared the usurper Magnus Maximus' rebellion to those of rebel gladiators, the pirate Athenio, and Spartacus.[5]

[2] See W. Horbury, 'Antichrist among Jews and Gentiles', in M. Goodman (ed.), *Jews in a Greco-Roman World* (New York, 1998), 113–33.

[3] Dio Chrysostom, *First Oration on Kingship*, 67.

[4] Themistius, *Oration*, 7, 86b.

[5] Pacatus, *Panegyric on Theodosius*, 23. 2.

Furthermore, although there was a pagan precedent for adducing spiritual archetypes for earthly tyranny, the Christian idea of a Devil was powerfully new. Classical philosophers had been exercised by the problem of evil, and popular belief had invested *daemones*, the intermediate spirits between gods and men, with the potential for mischief and evil as much as with the possibility for favouritism and protection. The idea of a single, powerful, malevolent spirit (albeit accompanied by a host of demons) bent on tempting and ensnaring mankind was one of the great novelties of Christian theology. It was arguably a greater novelty even than the idea of a single omnipotent God, since monotheism was never an exclusively Judaeo–Christian preserve and was certainly not so in the later fourth century.[6]

EARLY CHRISTIAN DIABOLOGY

Early Christians could not find a single, unified biography of the Devil in scripture, but rather saw him alluded to in numerous different guises. Christian writers were taxed by the need to reconcile the various different diabolical *personae* in scripture, and this is demonstrated by the existence in the third century of competing versions of the nature of the Devil's first sin. A passage from 1 Enoch about the fall of some angels due to their sexual misadventures with human women informed the earliest Christian ideas about the nature of the Devil's sin—that it was lust—although 2 Enoch also gave some warrant to the idea that the Devil was puffed up with pride.[7] This story of the sexual fall of the angels was accepted and cited with enthusiasm in the first three centuries of the church, but began to fall from favour in the mid-fourth century, when authors such as Hilary, John Chrysostom,

[6] On pagan monotheism in general, see M. Beard, J. North, and S. Price (eds.), *The Religions of Rome*, i. *A History* (Cambridge, 1998), 286–7; on monotheism in late antiquity, see P. Athanassiadi-Fowden, *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 1999).

[7] See 1 Enoch 6–11 on the fall of the angels, and 2 Enoch ('And one out of the order of angels, having turned away with the order that was under him, conceived an impossible thought, to place his throne higher than the clouds above the earth, that he might become equal in rank to my power').

Jerome, and Augustine consigned it to the category of pernicious apocrypha, culminating in its being explicitly condemned by the late-fourth-century (pseudo-) Apostolic Constitutions.[8]

Once the book of Enoch had been removed from the scriptural canon, a new portrayal of the entrance of evil into the world came to dominate, which was an elaboration of the fall of Lucifer and the rebel angels, taken from Isaiah 14: 12 and read in conjunction with Luke 10: 18.[9] This origin-story of evil put the fall of Satan before the creation of the world and man, however, thus separating more clearly the two 'falls'—of Satan and of Adam—and making the latter dependent on the former. The first surviving identification of the fallen angel Lucifer with the Devil was made by Origen in the early third century.[10] Although Origen freely admitted that there was some confusion in the church over the nature of the Devil and his minions, he presented the story of Lucifer, the apostate, as that generally accepted by Christians.[11]

AMBROSIASTER'S DIABOLOGY

Some 150 years later, Ambrosiaster too recounted Lucifer's pride as the Devil's first sin:

we say that the apostasy of the Devil dragged many angels, that is spiritual powers, with him in transgression, when he wanted with impious presumption

[8] See R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* (Oxford, 1913), 181–3, who catalogues citations of Enoch in the following authors: Justin Martyr, Tatian, Athenagoras, Minucius Felix, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Julius Africanus, Origen (though he had reservations), Commodianus, Cyprian and pseudo-Cyprian, Hippolytus, Zosimus of Panopolis, Clementine Homilies, Lactantius, and Cassian.

[9] Isa. 14: 12: 'How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken nations!' and Luke 10: 18: 'And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.'

[10] Origen, *De Principiis*, 1. 5. He composed his *De Principiis* between 220 and 230. Only fragments of the Greek original survives, but a Latin translation of the entire text made by Rufinus in *c.*397 survives (GCS 22, ed. P. Koetschau); see G. Butterworth's introduction to his translation, *Origen on First Principles* (London, 1936), p. xii. On Origen's Lucifer, see H. A. Kelly, *Satan: A Biography* (Cambridge, 2006), 191 ff.

[11] Origen, *De Principiis*, 1, preface, p. 6.

to take the kingdom to himself. The prophet Isaiah indicates this when he says: 'How did Lucifer fall from the heavens, who rose in the morning?' [Isa. 14: 12]. That is, 'he who appeared to others as more light-bearing.' For he was as it were a prince of the multitudes among whom he stood out in splendour, and in whose company he descended to the impious struggle. For seeing below him many spiritual powers, indeed since he was the more outstanding in the paradise of God by his knowledge of the heavenly mysteries, he was puffed up with that elation and wanted to be called God, and of course it's in a similar way that we see in the life of the present that some men have imitated his example: they exult in surveying the soldiery flocked around them and, with their attendants providing the tinder of conspiracy in this purpose, they have wanted to lay claim to the empire for themselves.[12]

This description of the Devil's pride in his station leading to his rebellion against God, itself mirrored in contemporary attempts at usurpation, serves as an excellent starting point for a consideration of Ambrosiaster's political diabology. But some consideration must first be given to the particular associations and nuances of tyranny and usurpation, the two words (and their cognates) which Ambrosiaster used most frequently to describe the Devil and his imitators.

The Devil as Usurper and Tyrant

Ambrosiaster related tyranny and usurpation by consistently using *tyrannus* and its cognates to describe the Devil's usurping attempt to seize God's power. Recurring phrases are *praesumptio tyrannica*, and the pairing of usurpation with tyrannical ambition, as in: 'he wants to usurp the rulership by tyranny for himself.'[13] Ambrosiaster

[12] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 2. 2: 'dicimus diaboli apostasiam multos angelos, id est spiritales potentias, secum in praevaricatione traxisse, dum vult sibi regnum impia praesumptione defendere. quod profeta Eseias significat dicens: "quo modo cecidit de caelo Lucifer, qui mane oriebatur?" id est "qui ceteris lucidior apparebat". erat enim quasi princeps multorum, inter quos clarior erat, quorum societate ad impium descendit certamen. videns enim infra se multas spiritales potentias, quippe cum in paradiso dei praestantior esset cognitione mysterii caelestis, ipsa elatione inflatus voluit dici deus, hac scilicet ratione, qua etiam in praesenti vita exemplum eius quosdam imitatos videmus, qui contemplatione adgregati circa se militis extolliti satellitibus in hac re fomitem conspirationis praebentibus imperium sibi vindicare voluerunt.'

[13] For *praesumptio tyrannica*, see e.g. Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Rom.*, 1: 32. 2a; for tyranny as a mode of usurpation, see id., *Q.* 110. 1: 'vult sibi principatum per tirannidem usurpare.'

frequently used *tyrannus* and *usurpator* alongside each other, and they seem to share a sense of illegitimacy, what we would translate as 'usurpation.'[14] We should, of course, be careful to avoid assessing the 'legitimacy' (or otherwise) of particular imperial successions, for the concept of legitimate succession is a rather anachronistic creation of modern historians which does not have warrant in the sources themselves.[15] There were no strict criteria for succession in this period, and a ruler (such as, indeed, Constantine) who had gained power by force could none the less subsequently present himself as a legitimate emperor himself threatened by usurpers. Usurpation was, then, a convenient term in the arsenal of political abuse, applied to those who had failed in their attempt to seize power, not as an objective way of characterizing a particular mode of accession. Furthermore, usurpation, far from being a neutral, descriptive term, must have carried with it associations of brutality. A successful usurper had often initially to use violence to secure his position.[16] Overall it seems fair to say that when the accusation of tyranny was cast against an emperor by Christian writers suffering under pagan persecution (be they pre-Constantinian or Julianic) or doctrinally motivated Christian persecutions (under Constantius), it was more often an accusation of brutality in office than of the usurping attempt to gain office.[17]

Interestingly, on the rare occasions when Ambrosiaster accused the Devil of cruelty, he did so without recourse to the political

[14] See T. D. Barnes, 'Oppressor, persecutor, usurper: the meaning of "tyrannus" in the fourth century', in G. Bonamente and M. Mayer (eds.), *Historiae Augustae Colloquia*, NS iv. *Colloquium Barcinonense MCMXCIII* (Bari, 1996), 53–63.

[15] A. E. Wardman, 'Usurpers and internal conflicts in the fourth century AD', *Hist* 33 (1984), 225.

[16] See ibid., 233: 'Usurpers were never unexpected but they were perhaps most feared at the beginning of a reign.' He cites the example of what happened on the death of Constantine: 'the army in a brutal way simplified the situation in favour of the sons of Constantine; potential relatives who might be a threat were removed.'

[17] See Hilary of Poitiers' apostrophe of Constantius: 'you fight against God, you savage the church, you persecute saints, you hate the preachers of Christ, you destroy religion, you are a tyrant not just of human but divine affairs' (*Contra Constantium*, 7). See also Lucifer of Cagliari's accusations against the same emperor: 'During the persecution we Christians were constantly being tormented by your tyranny with perverse tortures' (*Moriundum Esse pro Dei Filio*, 170–1); 'We Christians refuse no torture, not even death; we cannot fear your tyrannical orders, nor the swords of your judges, because we resist you armed with the sword of God' (ibid., 571–3).

vocabulary of tyranny: 'Through the law, the Devil found an opportunity whereby he might satiate his cruelty with human death.'[18] Furthermore, although cruelty and force were one of the most important characteristics of a tyrant in the classical king–tyrant contrast, Ambrosiaster defined the Devil more by his use of deceit, trickery, and persuasion: 'For although the law had been given for the good of mankind, the Devil made it his business to overturn it by persuasive recommendation of illicit actions.'[19] This cunning and trickery, although perhaps not the attributes of an ideal king (who was said to use kindness and mercy rather than deceit), were not the traditional attributes of a tyrant either, who tended to be defined by more violent characteristics such as force and cruelty.[20]

Ambrosiaster repeatedly accused the Devil of usurpation (tainted with blasphemy since he desired divine honours and powers for himself): 'so that the one God be seen to maintain the authority of the single originating principle, to the consternation of the Devil, who wanted to appropriate lordship and divinity to himself, to the neglect of the one God.'[21] But he tempered this claim with the qualification, returning to strict scriptural warrant, that the Devil never actually claimed to be God:

> For the Devil, who is attested to be sinful from the beginning of the Bible, fosters a tyrannical ambition, but, even so, has not dared to state the claim, 'I am God.' The clinching instance is that he says to God among other things: 'All these things have been handed over to me'; he does not say, 'They are from me', or, 'They are mine.'[22]

[18] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Rom.*, 7: 11. 1: 'hic occasionem invenit per legem, quomodo crudelitatem suam de nece hominis satiaret . . .'

[19] Ibid., 5: 20. 4a: 'cum data esset lex ad utilitatem humanam, id egit diabolus, ut suadendo inlicita inverteret . . .'

[20] On the classical king–tyrant contrast expressed in Christian terms, see John Chrysostom, *A Comparison between a King and a Monk: Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life* (trans. D. Hunter) (Lewiston, N.Y., 1988).

[21] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Cor.*, 11: 5. 2: 'ut unus deus in uno homine videretur auctoritatem unius principii conservare ad confusionem diaboli, qui sibi neglecto uno deo dominium et deitatem voluit usurpare.'

[22] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 1: 32. 2a: 'nam diabolus, quem ab initio scriptura peccare testatur, quamquam tyrannicae praesumptioni studeat, non tamen hoc ausus est profiteri, ut dicat: "ego sum deus". denique inter cetera dicit ad deum: "haec omnia mihi tradita sunt", non dicit: "a me sunt", vel "mea sunt".'

Man Tempted by the Devil

Ambrosiaster portrayed the Devil as envious of God and attempting to usurp his position. God in turn taught the Devil a lesson by creating the earth, and then man:

> So God, that he might destroy [Lucifer's] presumption not by power, but by reason, founded matter, which would be a confusion of things from which he would make the world . . . For so one [God] made one [man], to teach that all things are from the one and through this that there is one God, that the superior creature [Lucifer] to his confusion might learn truth in man who was created from the earth.[23]

Ambrosiaster thus presented the act of creation as an extravagant demonstration of God's powers to the Devil, and stated elsewhere that: 'It was no secret that the purpose for which man had been created in the world was to preach the imperial rule of the one God, from whom Satan had wrongfully seceded.'[24] This however provoked the Devil:

> From this arose the Devil's hostility to man; for he saw that man was made for his accusation. Whence [the Devil] acted with his subtlety, that he might lead [man] into the same transgression into which he had fallen, that he might make his accuser a participator in his own damnation. For he promised deity to [man] by this transgression, although he himself had been thrown down when he had striven for it.[25]

The Devil was incensed by God's giving of the law, a manifest help for man who had lost his pre-fall innocence and natural cognizance of justice, and needed written law to free him from the habit of sin.

[23] Id., *Q.* 2. 3: 'Hinc est unde deus, ut eius praesumptionem non potestate, sed ratione destrueret, materiam condidit, quae esset rerum confusio, ex qua faceret mundum . . . ideo enim unus unum fecit, ut doceret ab uno esse omnia ac per hoc unum esse deum, ut superior creatura ad confusionem suam in homine disceret, qui e terra conditus est, veritatem.'

[24] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 5: 14. 3a: 'non enim latuit illum ad hoc factum hominem in mundo, ut imperium unius dei praedicaret, a quo praevaricatus est satanas.'

[25] Id., *Q.* 2. 4: 'Ex eo diabolus inimicus exstitit hominis; pervidit enim quia ad accusationem eius factus est homo. unde subtilitate sua id egit, ut in eadem illum praevaricatione, in quam ipse ruit, induceret, ut accusatorem suum participem suae damnationis efficeret. ex transgressione enim deitatem illi spopondit, ad quam ipse dum adfectatur deiectus est.'

God's leading man back onto the right track was resented by the Devil as an attempt to wrest from him his power, legitimately gained over man after his freely chosen sin:

> For when the Devil saw the help provided by the law for man, whom he was delighted to have snared as much by his own sins as by the sin of Adam, he realized that this was done against him. For when he saw man placed under the law he knew that he would escape from his control, for now man knew how to escape the punishment of hell. Hence the Devil's anger against man flared up, with the result that he turned the law upside down for him so that he would again offend God by doing things which had been forbidden and would fall back into the Devil's power. The Devil set about this not by giving orders but by deceiving subtly. For he lost his dominion when the law was given, and he knew from henceforth that mankind would belong to the jurisdiction of God.[26]

Ambrosiaster psychologized the Devil's motives in tempting man to sin; his desire to entrap man was apparently driven by his need for companionship: 'when he wanted to usurp lordship to himself through tyranny, having been thrown down from the sacred thrones, he judged this to be solace, if he could acquire very many companions for his perdition . . .'[27] The Devil was then jealous of Christ, who came to rescue men from his domination, with the consequence that Christ's death is seen to be inflicted by the Devil: 'For Satan fell victim to jealousy towards the Saviour, seeing him teaching men how to make God propitious towards themselves by renouncing the Devil. And because of this [the Devil] killed him . . .'[28]

[26] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 7: 8: 'videns enim diabolus auxilium per legem homini provisum, quem in condicione se tam propter peccatum Adae quam propter ipsius habere gratulabatur, intellexit factum adversum se; quem vidit enim factum sub lege, pro certo habuit de suo ablatum dominio; agnoverat enim homo, quomodo poenam inferni evaderet. hinc exarsit iracundia adversum hominem, ut illi legem inverteret, ut prohibita admittendo deum rursum offenderet et denuo in potestatem diaboli caderet. coepit non imperare, sed subtiliter fallere, quoniam in lege data amisit dominium diabolus, sciens de cetero hominem ad dei iudicium pertinere.'

[27] Id., *Q.* 110. 1: 'dum vult sibi principatum per tirannidem usurpare, deiectus de sacris sedibus hoc solacium aestimavit, si perditioni suae adquireret plurimos socios.'

[28] Id., *Comm. II Cor.*, 5: 18–21. 4: 'zelum enim passus est satanas adversus salvatorem videns eum docere homines, quomodo sibi propitium facerent deum abrenuntiantes diabolo. et propter hoc occidit eum . . .' Ambrosiaster stated that the Devil was responsible for the crucifixion elsewhere, at e.g. *Comm. Rom.*, 7. 4; he blamed the Jews at e.g. *Qq.* 98. 3 and 44. 9.

The Devil as Legitimate Master

Ambrosiaster only described Satan as tyrannous and usurping in connection with his (clearly doomed) attempt to depose God and seize his kingdom for himself. By contrast, the Devil's reign over sinful man was presented by Ambrosiaster as protected by God's justice and law. With regard to the Devil's dominion over man, he used a much more neutral, legitimating vocabulary of lordship (*dominium*), itself absolute power of the sort exercised by a master over his slaves, albeit without the negative associations this now evokes. He also used *dominium* of God's power over creation and man's power over beasts, both implicitly non-tyrannical, legitimate forms of authority.

The reason for the differing emphasis on the Devil's actions and rights can be sought in Ambrosiaster's attitude to man's self-wrought enslavement:

> Is it the case that because Paul says man sins against his will, he ought to be seen as not liable to a charge, on the ground that he does what he does not wish under the forcible compulsion of a ruling power? Certainly not. These things originated from his own vice and inertia; for because he has made himself a slave to sin by assenting to it, its rule over him is legitimate.[29]

Man enslaved himself (*mancipavit se*) to the Devil by sinning. *Mancipare* was a verb used to denote conveyance of ownership, originally of a slave, and then of other forms of property.[30] As we shall see below, this is another aspect of Ambrosiaster's presentation of the Devil as involved in legitimate transactions and acting rightly therein, even if it is also clear that the Devil persuaded man into sinning by deceit and trickery, and so took possession of them in an underhand way.[31] Self-enslavement was an ancient (but still prevalent) practice, whereby a man sold himself into slavery for a fixed term to clear

[29] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 7: 20: 'numquid quia invitum hominem dicit peccare, inmunis videri debet a crimine, quia hoc agit, quod non vult pressus vi potestatis? non utique. ipsius enim vitio et desidia haec coepta sunt; quia enim mancipavit se per adsensum peccato, iure illius dominatur.'

[30] A. Berger, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law*, *TAPS* NS 43, pt. II (Philadelphia, Pa., 1953), 573.

[31] On deception, see Ambrosiaster, *Comm. II Cor.*, 11: 14; on cunning, see id., *Comm. Rom.*, 7: 14 and *Q.* 83. 6.

his debts.[32] This phrase neatly expresses the spiritual fact that man chose to sin, and could not thus claim immunity; it stakes Ambrosiaster to the theological position that man was weak and wicked, but that he was not forced to sin; man's sinfulness, because it was chosen rather than natural, legitimized the Devil's rule over him. In this way, the Devil has authority over man: ' "But the sting of death is sin". The sting signifies authority, because death received authority through sin, because if there had been no sin, the Devil would have become numb and there would have been no death.'[33]

The idea of sin as voluntary self-enslavement is found in slightly later Christian writing. Ambrose declared that: 'Christ chooses for himself the volunteer soldier; the Devil buys for himself at auction the volunteer slave. [The Devil] holds no man bound to the yoke of slavery unless such a one has first sold himself to him at the purchase price of his sins.'[34] Augustine also linked the idea of self-enslavement with man's first consent to sin: 'Rather, [man] was divided against himself, and now, instead of enjoying the freedom for which he so longed, he lived in harsh and miserable bondage to the Devil: a bondage to which he consented when he sinned.'[35]

Ambrosiaster was tapping into a long tradition of defending the Devil's rightful rule over mankind. In the second century, Irenaeus defined the Devil's 'rights' by arguing that Adam's disobedience justified the Devil's unjust rule over man. God could not use force because that would negate his being perfectly just. Therefore God 'bought' man back, using Jesus as a ransom:

> the word of God, powerful in all things and not lacking in his own justice, acted justly even in the encounter with the Apostasy itself [Satan], ransoming from that which was his own, not by force, in the way in which it secured the sway over us at the beginning, snatching insatiably what was

[32] On self-enslavement in the Roman empire, see J. Ramin and P. Veyne, 'Droit romain et société: les hommes libres qui passent pour esclaves et l'esclavage volontaire', *Hist* 30 (1981), 472–97, esp. 483 ff.

[33] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Cor.*, 15: 56: ' "Aculeus autem mortis peccatum est." aculeum auctoritatem significat, quia mors auctoritatem per peccatum accepit, quia si peccatum non esset, diabolus obtorpuisset et mors non esset.'

[34] Ambrose, *Jacob and the Happy Life*, 1. 3. 10.

[35] Augustine, *City of God*, 14. 15. See also Augustine, *De Libero Arbitrio*, 3: 'sinners are convicted when attempting to excuse themselves by blaming God, because they have free will.'

not its own; but by persuasion, as it became God to receive what he wished; by persuasion, not by the use of force, that the principles of justice might not be infringed . . . [36]

Ambrosiaster also outlined a 'ransom theory' of atonement, with two important strands. The first was the idea that Christ is a 'ransom', whose sinless death won back sinful man from the Devil's dominion, expressed partly in the language of debt and finance and partly in the language of slavery:

'You have been bought for a price: do not become the slaves of men.' It is the truth that we have been bought at such a high price that we could not have been ransomed by anyone except Christ, who is rich in all things. Someone who is bought for a price ought to serve all the more, so as to recompense his buyer to some extent.[37]

Secondly, Ambrosiaster stressed that: 'The Saviour intercedes for us if we do not give the adversary our assent.'[38] This theory of atonement rests on the assumption that the Devil must be treated fairly, not because he deserves leniency, but because God cannot be other than just: 'Then the Devil triumphed, having overcome man, while man, vanquished, subjected his race to sin. Whence it was unjust to take away the spoils [sc. of victory] from the victor by force, because God does what he does justly, and moreover man had sinned gravely.'[39] In this framework of justice the Devil may expect to be treated in accordance with certain standards: 'But because the whole man was not restored by the grace of Christ to his former state, the sentence pronounced on Adam remains in force, for it would have been unlawful to quash a sentence justly promulgated.'[40]

[36] Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 5. 1. 1.

[37] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Cor.*, 7: 23: '"Pretio empti estis, nolite fieri servi hominum". verum est quia tam caro empti sumus, ut a nullo redimi potuissemus nisi a Christo, qui omnium dives est. qui ergo pretio emitur, magis servire debet, ut aliquatenus vicem reddat emptori.'

[38] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 8: 34. 2: 'si non ei adsentiamus, salvator interpellat pro nobis . . .'

[39] Id., *Q.* 83. 6: 'tunc diabolus superato homine triumfavit, hic victus genus suum subiecit peccato. quam ob rem iniustum erat victori violenter auferre spolia, quia deus quod facit iuste facit, praeterea cum acerbe peccaverit homo.'

[40] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 7: 24. 5a: 'ut autem totus homo minime reparatus fuisset Christi gratia ad statum pristinum, sententia obstitit data in Adam; iniquum enim erat solvere sententiam iure depromptam.'

That is, the Devil's rule over sinful man is a just sentence, and so the Devil, despite his transgression against divine law and his consequent fall, became a lawful ruler with certain rights over his (sinful) people.

The problem with this is the idea that the Devil and God are bound by some sort of framework of justice, either divine or natural. Ambrosiaster's assumption that God would not act unjustly (seizing dominion by force) is more reminiscent of human and Roman law, *ius gentium* and *ius civile*, which seems a strange way for God to regulate the cosmos. Does the Devil have any rights or arena to complain? Rather, God *must* be just otherwise he would not be God; one of his attributes is (an albeit sometimes inscrutable) justice. But in the 'ransom theory' account of atonement God tricked the Devil, which hardly seems fairer or more just than using force. Whether or not Ambrosiaster provided a consistent account of the relations between God and the Devil, his language of legitimate diabolic *dominium* did qualify and temper the dominant features of the emerging early Christian Devil: as an unjust, illegitimate, and cruel ruler.

Augustine, writing after and possibly tapping into Ambrosiaster, notably reiterated the idea that the Devil must be overcome by justice, not bare power:

> But when the Devil became a lover of power through the vice of his own perversity, and the betrayer and attacker of justice, and since in this respect men also imitate him so much the more, in proportion as they set aside or even hate justice and strive after power, and as they either rejoice in acquiring power or are inflamed with the lust of it, it pleased God that for the sake of rescuing men from the power of the Devil, the Devil should be overcome not by power but by justice, and that men too, by imitating Christ, should seek to overcome the Devil not by power but by justice.[41]

[41] Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 13. 13. 17: 'Sed cum diabolus vitio perversitatis suae factus sit amator potentiae et desertor oppugnatorque iustitiae (sic enim et homines eum tanto magis imitantur quanto magis neglecta vel etiam perosa iustitia potentiae student eiusque vel adeptione laetantur vel inflammantur cupiditate), placuit deo ut propter eruendum hominem de diaboli potestate non potentia diabolus sed iustitia vinceretur, atque ita et homines imitantes Christum iustitia quaererent diabolum vincere non potentia.'

THE DEVIL'S GUISES ON EARTH

Ambrosiaster cast the Devil on earth as ubiquitous and able to assume multiple disguises in order to roam around and tempt man. The Devil was intimately associated with fleshly sin, despite being immaterial himself. Ambrosiaster wrote that: 'because of the fact that the cause of the deed [flesh] is still present, sin is said to "dwell in" the flesh. The Devil approaches it, approaching, as it were, his own jurisdiction, because flesh now belongs to sin, and sin remains, as it were, in sin.'[42] All carnal sin was somehow linked to the Devil, despite the fact that he is resolutely spiritual and incorporeal in nature, only assuming others' bodies and having none of his own: 'he is neither corporeal nor mortal.'[43]

The Devil, as a spiritual power, used the weaknesses of men's flesh to insinuate himself into their souls; it is an oft-repeated fact that man's flesh is irrational and so 'cannot close access to the enemy' in the way that the rational spirit can. Early Christian hostility to man's fleshly sins derived in part from the exegesis of the book of Enoch—identifying the Devil's first sin as sexual lust—assumptions from which endured even after the book itself had been removed from the scriptural canon. It also had a distinguished ancestry in classical notions of the passions of the body disrupting the peaceful rationality of the mind and soul.

A further psychological element to the drama of the Devil's entrapment of man is his insinuation into man's own mind, his *interiora*. Ambrosiaster's Devil is subtle and beyond providing mere fleshly temptations:

> For prior to the sin of mankind, before humanity made itself the slave of death, the Enemy had no power to reach the inwardnesses of a human being and sow adverse thoughts . . . After he tricked man, moreover, and subjugated him, he received power over him, enabling him to strike at the inner self, attaching himself to the mind in such a way that a person cannot

[42] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Rom.*, 7: 18. 2: 'per id quod ergo facti causa manet, inhabitare dicitur peccatum in carne, ad quam accedit diabolus quasi ad suam [legem], quia caro iam peccati est et manet quasi in peccato peccatum . . .'

[43] Id., *Q.* 31. 1: 'quia neque corporeus est neque mortalis.'

recognize what is his own in his thinking and what belongs to the Devil, unless he takes heed of the law.[44]

The Devil as Serpent and as Angel

At the beginning of creation, the Devil took on the form of the serpent in order to tempt Eve, and Ambrosiaster described the role of the serpent in the temptation as mere instrument. The serpent did not share anything with the Devil by nature. Indeed, the sentence decreed on it ('on your belly shall you crawl and earth shall you eat all the days of your life'), from Genesis 3: 14, is 'far from the condition of Satan, since he is neither corporeal nor mortal.'[45] Ambrosiaster also analysed the serpent's part in the temptation of Eve:

> And so because it is clear that the serpent really spoke with Eve, it remains to be determined whether it could be so wise and cunning as to deceive her by guile. For if it was wiser than all the other beasts, it was not however [wiser than] men, since no animal is rational except man. And so it is impossible that the serpent could have devised this subtlety. For though it be said to be wise, it cannot surpass its own nature; nor does it deliberate or consider or take counsel. Therefore there is no doubt that it was the Devil who overcame the woman *through* the serpent. For mixing himself with the serpent he acted through it as if through an instrument, so that the woman would not understand the deceit of the hidden Devil, knowing the serpent to be wise.[46]

[44] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 7: 14. 4–5: 'nam ante praevaricationem hominis, priusquam se manciparet morti, potestas non erat inimico ad interiora hominis accedere et cogitationes adversas inserere . . . postquam autem circumvenit eum et subiugavit, potestatem in eum accepit, ut interiorem hominem pulsaret, copulans se menti eius, ita ut non possit agnoscere, quid suum sit in cogitatione, quid illius, nisi respiciat legem.'

[45] Id., *Q.* 31. 1: 'haec longe sunt a conditione satanae, quia neque corporeus est neque mortalis.'

[46] Id., *Q.* 31. 2: 'Igitur quia claruit vere serpentem locutum esse cum Eva, illud superest ut discernatur, an potuerit tam prudens esse et astutus, ut dolo falleret eam. si enim ceteris bestiis prudentior erat, non tamen hominibus, quippe cum nullum animal rationabile sit nisi homo. itaque serpentem subtilitatem istam conposuisse inpossibile est. quamvis enim prudens dicatur, sed non ultra naturam suam; nec enim deliberat aut excogitat aut consilium capit. idcirco diabolum esse, qui per serpentem mulierem circumvenit, dubium non est. admiscens enim se serpenti egit per illum quasi per organum, ut nec mulier occulti diaboli intellegeret dolum sciens prudentem esse serpentem.' Interestingly, Philo, *Questions and Answers on*

Ambrosiaster did not tackle why the serpent came to be liable for the sentence which was in fact due to be given against the Devil, but he does give an explanation for how Eve could have understood an animal's communication. If there are those who understand 'the barking of dogs and the howling of wolves and the trumpeting of elephants and the songs of doves', why could the woman not also understand the hissing of serpents, 'since we know how to discern the voices of many birds'? 'And so it is agreed that the Devil used the tongue of him whose body he entered.'[47]

He treated the punishment visited on the serpent as merely returning it to its natural place in the hierarchy of creation—to be bruised by man's heel:

> For although all the cattle and living creatures had been subjected to man, as we have read, the serpent rejected this order and, after circumventing them by a deceitful trick, subjected him to himself. For without a doubt whoever captures someone puts that person below himself. Therefore, so that the serpent should not have the result of its cunning, it was called back by the sentence of God and reduced to a level below his original station, that he might not be superior to man . . . [48]

By implication, it was only when temporarily possessed by the Devil that the irrational, brute serpent could rise above its lowly place in creation and trick man.

As the Devil is capable of marvellous tricks, he can even disguise himself as a good angel: 'It is obvious that Satan frequently tricks many people, presenting himself to them as an angel of God, so as to deceive them.' The idea that the Devil can co-opt spiritual forces is repeated: 'Nor indeed if an angel manifests himself to us in order to seduce us, suborned by the trickery of his father the Devil, ought he

Genesis, 1. 32, also concludes that before the fall, man and woman could understand animals' language.

[47] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 31. 3: 'nam et constat diabolum eius lingua uti, cuius corpus intraverit.'

[48] Id., *Q.* 127. 27: 'cum enim omnia pecora et animantia homini fuissent, sicut legimus, subiecta, serpens vero contra hanc constitutionem erexit se et dolo per fallaciam circumventum hominem sibi subiecerat. sine dubio enim qui aliquem capit intra se eum facit. propter quod serpens, ne astutiae suae effectum haberet, sententia dei revocatur et reprimitur ultra quam fuerat factus, ne supra hominem esset . . .'

to prevail against us, since we know that nothing is to be considered as superior to Christ as a messenger of great counsel . . .'[49] The closeness between Lucifer (light-bearer, light being a typically divine attribute) and the Devil, as well as his pretence that good men have joined his cause, has a fatal result: 'Besides, this is a trick of Satan, by which in order to deceive many he pretends also to have good men in his thrall. The apostle says among other things: "Satan has transformed himself into an angel of light." '[50]

Diabolical Possession of Pagan Gods and Idols

If the Devil was immaterial, he was none the less well suited to possessing and sometimes animating material objects in order more easily to seduce men into following him. One of the Devil's favourite guises and habitats, and possibly the most important for a Roman Christian, was the pagan statue, derided as an 'idol.' Some ascribe Christian hostility to statues, whether they represented pagan gods or not, to a general uneasiness with imagery suggested in the ten commandments. However, there is no firm evidence that the early church was iconoclastic, and even very early Christian imagery adapted pagan pictorial types for its own ends.[51] More relevant to the hostility to the paraphernalia of pagan cult were the years of persecution in which Christians were forced to supplicate to the Roman gods, at their altars or before their statues, under threat of torture and even death. It is not surprising, then, that the tangible remains of the old gods were not to Christian eyes quaint reminders

[49] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 8: 39. 1: 'nec quidem si se angelus nobis ostendat ad seducendos nos, subornatus fallaciis patris sui diaboli, praevalere debebit adversum nos, cum sciamus Christo ut magni consilii angelo nihil praeponendum.'

[50] Id., *Q.* 27. 1: 'porro autem hoc est praestigium satanae, quo ut plurimos fallat, etiam bonos in potestate se habere confingit. quod apostolus inter cetera ait: "ipse satanas transfigurat se in angelum lucis".'

[51] Examples of the Christian adaptation of classical and pagan pictorial types are the image of the 'good shepherd', a bucolic image used to show Christ, and the 'sleep of Endymion', used to represent Jonah's rest under the gourd tree. On the Christian transformation of classical art, see J. Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer: The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity* (Cambridge, 1995) and K. Weitzmann, 'The survival of mythological representation in early Christian and Byzantine art', *DOP* 14 (1960), 45–68.

of an old dispensation, but very potent symbols of the evil recently wrought against them. Ambrose expressed unease with the ubiquity of the remains of paganism in late-fourth-century Rome thus: 'There are altars in all the temples, and an altar also in the temple of Victories. Since they take pleasure in numbers they celebrate their sacrifices everywhere . . . Are not the baths, the colonnades, the streets filled with images sufficient for them?'[52] Ambrosiaster explained that the Devil worked under the cover of 'dead' idols:

> An idol, for sure, is nothing, because it is visibly the image of something dead. But under cover of images the Devil is worshipped. 'I do not wish you to become partakers in demons' [1 Cor. 10: 20]. [Paul] demonstrates to them that in an idol there is not just what is visible; there is a hidden mystery of wickedness, which Satan invented to corrupt faith in the one God.[53]

To Christians, giving honour to pagan idols was not just idolatrous; it merged with devil-worship. For Ambrosiaster, Satan had invented idolatry as a way of weakening man's faith. He expanded on Paul's characterization of man's tendency to shun God for idols thus:

> So blinded is their heart that they altered the majesty of the invisible God, which they knew from the things which he had made, not into human beings, but—which is worse and an inexcusable crime—into the image of human beings, so that the form of a corruptible man, that is an image of a man, is said by them to be god. Thus they include in the glory of God images of dead men to whom, in their lifetimes, they did not dare to give that name. What feebleness, what stupidity . . . ![54]

[52] Ambrose, *Letter*, 18. 31.

[53] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. I Cor.*, 10: 19–20: 'simulacrum vere nihil est, quia imago videtur rei mortuae. sed sub tegmine simulacrorum diabolus colitur. "Nolo vos participes fieri daemoniorum." ostendit illis non hoc esse tantum quod videtur in idolio, sed esse occultum iniquitatis mysterium, quod ut unius dei fidem corrumperet, satanas adinvenit.' He repeated the nostrum that the Devil was worshipped through idols at *Comm. Rom.*, 5: 14: 'For almost all people used to be enslaved to idols, and in an idol lies Devil-worship, and it was through this that death ruled', and *Q.* 113. 7: 'For the Devil who had begun transgression in heaven, sowed [transgression] on earth, promoting the worship of many gods, among whom he had the first place.'

[54] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 1: 23. 1–2: 'sic obcaecatum est cor illorum, ut maiestatem invisibilis dei, quem ex his factis agnoverant, non in homines, sed, quod peius est et inexcusabile crimen, in similitudinem hominum inmutarent, ut forma corruptibilis hominis deus ab his vocetur, hoc est simulacrum hominis, ut quos vivos hoc nomine

Ambrosiaster went on to list the instances in the Old Testament of man disobediently erecting idols, and condemned the stupidity of those who worshipped 'birds and four-footed animals and serpents': 'For they have so diminished the majesty and glory of God that they give divine worship to the images of things which are small and tiny.'[55] He also produced a standard Christian attack on the flawed logic of worshipping any image created by man:

> They exchanged the truth of God for a lie in this way: through the fact of giving the name of God—who is true—to those who are false gods. For, by taking away from stones and pieces of wood and other materials that which they are, they are giving to those [false gods] what they are not: hence the 'truth of God' is a lie when a stone is called a 'god'... Thus they have served a created thing rather than the creator... For in order that they should seem to be [acting] appropriately in worshipping these things, they have invested them with divine honour.[56]

The reference earlier in this passage to the worship of images of men, not beasts, had a particular piquancy in late-fourth-century Rome, since less than a century before the setting-up and worship of images of deified emperors had been common and obligatory. Ambrosiaster's vague exposition of instances of scriptural idolatry is strikingly applicable to the recent pagan dispensation; for instance, his attack on honouring dead men tallies with the Roman pagan custom of deifying an emperor after his death.[57]

donare non audeant, mortuorum imagines in gloriam dei recipiant. quanta hebetudo, quanta stultitia...!'

[55] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 1: 23. 3: 'sic enim dei maiestatem et gloriam minuerunt, ut horum, quae minima et parva sunt, similitudini dei honorificentiam darent.'

[56] Ibid., 1: 25. 1–2: 'sic commutaverunt veritatem dei in mendacium, dum nomen dei qui verus est dederunt his qui falsi sunt dii. lapidibus enim et lignis vel ceteris metallis auferentes quod sunt, dant illis quod non sunt, ut dei veritas sit mendacium, quando lapis dicitur deus... hoc est servire creaturae potius quam creatori.... ut enim viderentur digne haec colere, dei honorem his imposuerunt...'

[57] See also id., *Q.* 80. 1: 'So this man is the son of Devil, who once born is imbued with bad things, so that he strives for those things which are hateful to the Creator, declaring that there are many gods, and sacrificing to these as if to rulers of the world' (*filius autem diaboli hic est, qui natus malis rebus imbuitur, ut his studeat, quae inimica sunt creatori, multos adserens deos et his immolandum quasi mundi rectoribus*).

Ambrosiaster also used the political language of usurpation to defame idolatry stating that 'idolatry usurps the giving of honour to God and appropriates it for creation . . .'[58] The use of the verb *usurpare* in this context is significant; idolatry was part of the Devil's plan to usurp honour owed to God for himself. Ambrosiaster stigmatized idolaters as imitators of the Devil: 'These imitators of their father, the Devil, invented the evil of idolatry, through which all the evils in the world—and utter perdition—had their origin.'[59] Ambrosiaster thus unusually asserted that the Devil's first sin provided an archetype for idolatry. This suggestion is found in many of his discussions of subsequent, diabolically inspired sins.

DIABOLICAL IMITATORS

Ambrosiaster played on the Pauline language of imitation which was wholly aimed at encouraging Christians to imitate Christ, by applying it to those who could be classed as imitators of the Devil's archetypal sins of usurpation and idolatry.[60] Christian writers before Ambrosiaster had explored the idea of imitation of the Devil: for instance, Cyprian explained that 'he who is about to perish by jealousy obeys the author of his ruin, imitating the Devil in his jealousy.'[61] But Ambrosiaster's idea of human imitation of the Devil was sustained and insistent throughout his work; he used it of biblical, Roman-historical, and contemporary figures. The idea of imitation was particularly piquant when used of contemporary usurpers'

[58] Id., *Comm. Eph.*, 5: 5: 'idolatria dei honorificentiam usurpat et vindicat creaturae . . .'

[59] Id., *Comm. Rom.*, 1: 32. 1a: 'isti autem imitatores facti patris sui diaboli malum invenerunt idolatriae, per quod omnia vitia nata sunt in mundo et perditio maxima.'

[60] On imitation, see G. Constable, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge, 1995). Paul uses μιμητής (Latin *imitator*) six times in his writings, all of Christ or himself, at 1 Cor. 4: 16, 11: 1; Eph. 5: 1; Phil. 3: 17; 1 Thess. 1: 6, 2: 14.

[61] Cyprian, *De Zelo et Livore*, 4: 'dum livore periturus magistro perditionis obsequitur, dum diabolum qui zelat imitatur . . .' See also e.g. Tertullian, *De Ieiuniis*, 16; Firmicus Maternus, *De Errore Profanorum Religionum*, 23. 5.

attempts to seize imperial power, mirroring the Devil's attempt to usurp God's power.

Adam and Cain

Ambrosiaster applied the idea of diabolical imitation to the first men and their sins, as described in scripture. He presented Adam's sin as close to idolatry, and an imitation of the Devil's sin:

> The Devil used to rejoice in those people because he saw them made imitators of himself . . . the sin of Adam is not far removed from idolatry. For he transgressed in thinking that he, a man, was to be a god; he reckoned that what the Devil persuaded (him to do) would be of more benefit than what God commanded, and he set up the Devil in God's place, as the result of which he became, also, subject to the Devil.[62]

Adam's sin was the image of the Devil's sin as both were allured by the prospect of deity: 'but after promising [Eve] that, if they were to partake of the forbidden [fruit], he would offer deity to them, [the Devil] overcame them.'[63]

Ambrosiaster also accused Cain of imitating the Devil and of providing a type and *exemplum* of the cruelty of parricide in his murder of Abel:

[62] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Rom.*, 5: 14. 2: 'idcirco laetabatur in istis diabolus, quia videbat illos imitatores suos effectos . . . et peccatum Adae non longe est ab idolatria; praevaricavit enim putans se hominem futurum deum; aestimavit enim hoc magis profuturum quod diabolus suasit quam quod deus iussit, in loco dei diabolum statuens, unde et subiectus factus est diabolo.'

[63] Id., *Q.* 83. 6: 'postea autem promittens illi, quod, si interdictum contigissent, praestaret illis deitatem, circumvenit eos.' *Circumvenire* has a legal sense of 'evading the law by trickery.' See Berger, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law*, 388. The exact relationship between Adam's sin and mankind's sin is an enormous and controversial problem. On the one hand, Ambrosiaster used the term *massa perditionis*, which implies that all mankind was contained potentially in Adam and sinned 'in him', but, on the other hand, he stated that man persistently re-subjects himself to sin through sinning individually: 'if many have died by the sin of one man, through imitating his sin . . .' (Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Rom.*, 5: 15. 1). In this passage Ambrosiaster introduces imitation, a familiar Pauline term, into a Pauline text where imitation was not present. He continues this passage by differentiating those who sinned in the likeness of Adam's sin and those who were condemned owing to ancestral sins. On the *massa perditionis*, see B. Leeming, 'Augustine, Ambrosiaster and the massa perditionis', *Greg* 11 (1930), 58–91.

but scripture calls him by his name, who was his imitator, so that, because he has received the name from the work, everyone who has done a bad deed is deservedly called 'Devil.' Therefore the Saviour called Cain the Devil in this place [John 8: 44] because Cain was emulous of [the Devil's] work; through envy of his brother, he perpetrated a murder leaving an example of the cruelty of parricide; thus also the Devil, in so far as he envied man made to the image of God, piled on the evil of his work, offering a model for error.[64]

Where the Devil envied man's favour with God, Cain envied his brother's favour with God; both committed sins in order to relieve their envy.[65] In this passage Ambrosiaster idiosyncratically took John 8: 44, quoted in the opening of the *Quaestio*, to apply to Cain. John records in this verse how Jesus accused a group of hostile Jews: 'You are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father will you do. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.'[66] The relevance of this verse to Cain lies in the particular accusation that the Devil was a murderer and that Cain was copying the Devil's sin when he murdered Abel. In a chain of imitation, Cain left an example of parricide for future men to imitate.

[64] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 98. 2: 'sed scriptura illum, qui eius fuerit imitator, nomine eius appellat, ut, quia ab opere nomen accepit, omnis qui malum opus fecerit non inmerito diabolus nominetur. salvator ergo hoc loco Cain diabolum appellavit, quia operum eius aemulus, dum invidet fratri, homicidium perpetravit exemplum relinquens crudelitatis parricidii; sicut et diabolus, dum invidet homini facto ad imaginem dei, malignitatem operis sui cumulavit typum praebens errori.' On Cain's imitators, see id., *Qq.* 5, 6, and 90.

[65] Augustine developed the idea of Cain as providing an archetype of sin for later man in his *City of God*, 15. 5: 'The first founder of the earthly city, then, was a fratricide; for, overcome by envy, he slew his brother… It is not to be wondered at, then, that long afterwards, at the foundation of that city which was to be the capital of the earthly city of which we are speaking, and which was to rule over so many nations, this first example—or, as the Greeks call it, archetype—of crime was mirrored by a kind of image of itself [in the slaughter of Remus by Romulus and foundation of Rome].'

[66] Ambrosiaster *Q.* 98. 1, quoting John 8: 44: 'vos de patre diabolo nati estis et desideria patris vestri vultis facere. ille homicida fuit ab initio et in veritate non stetit, quia veritas non est in illo. cum loquitur mendacium, ex suis propriis loquitur, quia mendax est, sicut et pater eius.'

In *Quaestio* 90 Ambrosiaster used John 8: 44 again to elucidate the familial nature of the relationship between Cain's imitation of the Devil, and those who followed Cain's example—the Jews:

> Devil is not a special name, but a common one. For in whomsoever the works of the Devil have been found, he is without doubt to be called a Devil. For the name goes with the deeds that are done, not with nature. And so in this place [John 8: 44] Devil means Cain, the ancestor of the Jews, who wanting to follow his example, destroyed the Saviour . . . So in this place he says that the Devil is Cain, and moreover that the Devil, whose works he followed, is his father; for the son of the Devil is a devil. But that Devil, who is also called Satan, has no father in his malice; for he is his own author in evil.[67]

John 8: 44 thus provided the basis for demonstrating the imitative and familial links between the Devil's cosmic sin, Cain's murder of Abel, and the sin of the Jews in 'destroying' Jesus. Ambrosiaster's use of the scriptural language of kinship between man and God or the Devil is found in a further *Quaestio*, which tackles the question of whether sons of God and the Devil are born as such, or become so. He concludes that: 'So you see that sons are created for the Devil by deeds and profession, whereas they are sons of God who follow the right course in confessing that God is the true father of Christ . . .'[68] The language of adoption rather than birth thus rules this discussion of son-ship.

Tyrannical Old Testament Kings and Roman Emperors

Wicked Old Testament kings and persecuting Roman emperors were commonly stigmatized as tyrants in Christian literature of this period. Ambrosiaster connected Old Testament kings with the rebel

[67] Id., *Q.* 90: 'Diabolus non speciale nomen est, sed commune. in quocumque enim opera diaboli fuerint inventa, sine dubio diabolus appellandus est. operis enim nomen est, non naturae. itaque hoc in loco patrem Iudaeorum Cain significat, cuius imitatores volentes esse salvatorem peremerunt Iudaei . . . hoc ergo in loco diabolum Cain esse dixit, patrem autem eius diabolum, cuius opera secutus est; diaboli enim filius diabolus est. sed diabolus ille, qui et satanas, patrem in malitia sua nullum habet; ipse enim sibi in malo auctor est.'

[68] Id., *Q.* 80. 2: 'vides ergo operibus et professione filios creari diabolo; hos autem esse filios dei, qui confitentes proprium esse deum patrem Christi recte versantur.'

Satan when he compared the suppression of David's captain Abner (whom he describes idiosyncratically as a slave) and of his contumacious son Absalom, with God's sending the angel Michael to fight the Devil:

> For Ioab, a co-slave, was sent to pursue and kill the slave [Abner] rebelling against king David, and a campaign was enjoined on the slaves against Absalom, impious against his father; how much more did the efficacy of one of the many holy angels suffice to conquer the tyranny of the Devil, as when we read that [the Devil] could not endure fighting against the angel Michael, but was thrown down onto earth![69]

It should be noted that this passage is prefaced with a caveat, to the effect that earthly examples are unequal to heavenly ones.[70] Ambrosiaster was aware that as typology cannot declare equality between type and antitype, neither can earthly examples be exactly consonant with their spiritual archetypes.

Ambrosiaster rarely mentioned persecuting Roman emperors by name, from squeamishness or stylistic reticence. But in a comment on 2 Thessalonians 2: 7 he identified Paul's allusion to an 'unspeakable wickedness' as the persecutions of Christians launched by particular Roman emperors at Satan's behest:

> The unspeakable wickedness began with Nero, who, fired with zeal for idols, killed apostles at the instigation of his father the Devil, and went as far as Diocletian and most recently Julian, yet he, having launched persecution with a particular craftiness and subtlety, was unable to consummate it, because this was not conceded by [God] above. For Satan used these men as ministers, in order to seduce men under the guise of a crowd of gods; he mocks the manifestation of the one true God as long as the Roman Empire stands.[71]

[69] Id., *Q.* 113. 4: 'servum enim contra David regem rebellantem Ioab conservus eius missus est persequi et trucidare et contra Abessalon in patrem impium servis iniuncta res est: quanto magis ad tyrannidem diaboli vincendam sancti angeli unius de multis suffecerat efficacia, quippe cum legamus quia repugnans contra Michahel angelum perdurare non potuit, sed proiectus in terram est! [Rev. 12: 7–9].'

[70] Ibid.: 'nam quamvis impar sit, si ex terrenis sumamus exempla, tamen ex aliqua parte convenient rationi.'

[71] Id., *Comm. II Thess.*, 2: 7: 'mysterium iniquitatis a Nerone coeptum est, qui zelo idolorum et apostolos interfecit instigante patre suo diabolo, usque ad Diocletianum et novissime Iulianum, qui arte quadam et subtilitate coeptam persecutionem implere non potuit, quia desuper concessum non fuerat. his enim ministris utitur

Here, Ambrosiaster explicitly connected Nero's persecution of Christians with idolatry. The idea that Satan could use the crowd of gods as a way of tricking men into following him was a typical 'demonization' of pagan religion. Despite these vivid accusations against pagan emperors of idolatry, and performing Satan's ministry, Ambrosiaster never identified any emperor past or present as the Devil himself, or as one of his *personae*, such as the Antichrist; in this respect, he was more temperate than Hilary of Poitiers and Lucifer of Cagliari. Indeed, his reading of 2 Thessalonians follows Paul carefully, placing the coming of the Antichrist after the end of the Roman Empire: 'He said that the Antichrist would appear after the end of the Roman Empire.'[72]

As we saw, Ambrosiaster characterized the Devil's archetypal crime as that of idolatry—desiring to be worshipped as God. In his view, pagan emperors not only encouraged idolatry in their promotion of idolatry of the gods; they went further in seeking to be adored themselves:

> For the faith of God enters nobody's mind, unless he has removed from himself the error founded by the transgression of the Devil, and the princes mentioned above cannot accept Christ as king into faith in the one God, unless they have cast from themselves the tradition, through which calumny is cast at the one God—not only an earthly tradition, but also that tradition which was usurped in the heavens by Satan the prince of princes; for the error there [in heaven], by which they plotted among themselves to declare at the Devil's instigation that they were gods there [in heaven], they also put in place here on earth, so that the error here is an image of the error there.[73]

Where spiritual princes in heaven—the Devil and his angelic supporters—declared themselves to be gods, earthly princes also declared

satanas, ut interim sub turba deorum ad seducendos homines unius veri dei manifestationem inludat, quamdiu steterit regnum Romanorum . . .'

[72] Id., *Comm. II Thess.* 2: 8. 1: 'post defectum regni Romani appariturum Antichristum dicit . . .'

[73] Id., *Q.* 111. 15: 'nullius enim mentem dei fides ingreditur, nisi tulerit a se errorem diaboli praevaricatione inventum, et principes supra memorati non possint in unius dei fidem Christum regem recipere, nisi proiecerint a se traditionem, per quam uni deo inportatur calumnia, non solum terrenam, sed et eam, quae in caelestibus usurpata est principe principum satana, quia illic errorem, quem inter se conspirarunt, ut auctore diabolo deos se dicerent, etiam hic in terra disposuerunt, ut hic error illius imago sit.'

themselves to be gods, which must be a reference to emperor-worship. The use of *imago* in this passage is powerfully suggestive given its usual occurrence in the context of discussions of natural man and kings in the image of God; *imago* here emphasizes the fatal closeness between emperors promoting themselves through the imperial cult, and the Devil's earlier attempt to be worshipped as a god.

Contemporary Usurpers

It was standard practice to stigmatize bad Old Testament kings and earlier persecuting emperors, pagan, and Christian-heretical, as tyrannical, even diabolical. This tended to be polemical, however, as in Lucifer's savage attack on Constantius:

> Understand that you are an imitator of the Devil, that you are stationed on his side; recognize that you are searching for death for yourself, you who do not wish to remain in the image of God, in which you were made by God, but you have taken yourself to him [the Devil] by whose envy death entered into the world.[74]

Ambrosiaster went further than this. He did not merely attack obvious historical and contemporary opponents of his own brand of Christian orthodoxy; he actually went as far as to stigmatize contemporary usurpers, not on the grounds of their religious affiliation, but apparently for the mere presumption of their attempting to seize power. Ambrosiaster's portrait of diabolically inspired contemporary political behaviour was couched in the familiar Pauline language of imitation. In his own day, he perceived tyrannical usurpers as not just resembling the Devil, but as actually imitating him:

> [The Devil] was puffed up with elation and wanted to be called God, and of course it's in a similar way that we see in the life of the present that some men have imitated his example: they exult in surveying the soldiery flocked around them, and, with their attendants providing the tinder of

[74] Lucifer of Cagliari, *De Athanasio*, 1. 31: 'Conspicis te imitatorem esse diaboli, in parte esse constitutum illius; cognoscis tu quod tibimet conquiras mortem, tu qui nolueris in imagine dei, quomodo es factus a deo, manere, sed temet contuleris ad illum, cuius invidia mors intraverit in orbem terrarum.'

conspiracy in this purpose, they have wanted to lay claim to the empire for themselves.[75]

Ambrosiaster must here have been alluding to a specific contemporary rebellion. There are a number of western usurpers in recent memory who led military-backed revolts of the sort he describes, such as Julian.[76] However, the usurper closest to Ambrosiaster's *floruit* is Magnus Maximus. We know quite a lot about Magnus Maximus from other sources, including Pacatus' panegyric of Theodosius: he raised rebellion in Britain in 383, overthrew Gratian and held control of the West for some five years before being defeated and executed in 388. Ambrosiaster's failure to name names is not surprising if we consider that he may have been writing before Magnus Maximus' downfall; and if he was writing afterwards, he may have just been following the long-established practice of *damnatio memoriae*, refusing to give a disgraced usurper the oxygen of publicity.[77] However, it should be noted that he was not shy of identifying dead emperors whom he considered to have been in league with the Devil.[78]

Ambrosiaster's Devil did not have horns, a tail, and a plethora of other bestial attributes.[79] He was a spiritual prince (Ambrosiaster stays close to Paul here) who had lost God's grace by attempting to usurp him. But he was not a typical tyrant. He was capable of persuasion, deceit, and disguise (even as a good angel); he acted with finesse, and was not always a cruel persecuting opponent in the classical style of tyranny. Ambrosiaster not only presented the Devil as having fallen from his privileged spiritual proximity to and

[75] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 2. 2: 'ipsa elatione inflatus voluit dici deus, hac scilicet ratione, qua etiam in praesenti vita exemplum eius quosdam imitatos videmus, qui contemplatione adgregati circa se militis extolliti satellitibus in hac re fomitem conspirationis praebentibus imperium sibi vindicare voluerunt.'

[76] Usurpers from the mid-fourth century included Magnus Magnentius, Vetranio (350), Silvanus (355), Julian (360), and Procopius (365), all of whom led significant armies.

[77] See Wardman, 'Usurpers', 222, who talks of a 'conspiracy of allusiveness.' On *damnatio memoriae*, see E. Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation: Damnatio Memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture* (Leiden, 2004).

[78] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. II Thess.*, 2: 7, names Nero, Diocletian, and Julian.

[79] For a more vivid bestial image of the Devil, see e.g. Athanasius, *Life of Antony*, 6, 9, 23–5, 40–1, 53, 66; id., *To the Bishops of Egypt*, 1–2.

heightened understanding of God; he also linked his presumption and usurping ambitions with his 'imitators' on earth, who were usurping aspirants to imperial power. All were linked by the sin of idolatry—the crime of wanting to be treated like and adored as God. Ambrosiaster presented Satan as a model imitated by these men, in the same way that he depicted kings as in the 'image' of God. Admittedly, there is a difference between the overall category of kings, who are naturally in the image of God and reflect his singular rule, and the sub-category of usurpers, who voluntarily imitate the sinful example of Devil. That is, there is a difference between involuntary reflection and voluntary imitation. This distinction allowed Ambrosiaster to state that people should obey kings even if they were undeserving personally of this honour, since it was their office which reflected and received Divine honour.[80]

A series of searches on the *Patrologia Latina* database[81] turned up a number of matches for *diabolus*/*satanas* appearing in conjunction with *tyrannus* and its cognates in the fourth and fifth centuries, either as adjectives or substantives. However, apart from a number of anonymous works which cannot be dated with any certainty, the datable works cluster around the period of Ambrosiaster's *floruit*[82] and afterwards,[83] not before. In the years after Ambrosiaster's *floruit*, *tyrannis* became a standard description of the Devil's style of rule, and *tyrannus* a popular description for the Devil. It is just possible that Ambrosiaster's insistent usage caught on, or at least that his

[80] Ambrosiaster, *Q.* 35.

[81] <http://pld.chadwyck.co.uk/>.

[82] e.g. Chromatius of Aquileia (whose *floruit* overlaps with Ambrosiaster's), *Tractatus in Mattheum*, 17.3, referring to the Devil 'qui nobis more tyrannico dominabatur', and Ambrose, *Expositio Evangelii Secundam Lucam*, 4. 30 (composed at some point between 377–89) who described the Devil as *malus tyrannus*.

[83] e.g. Augustine, *Sermon*, 56, describing how '[Christ] dignatus est per se ipsum descendere, et nos de tyrannide et de superbia diaboli liberare'; Gaudentius, *Sermon*, 12, explaining that the Devil 'principatum violenter tenuit, et exercuit tyrannidem'; Prudentius, *Hamartigenia*, 175: 'quae docet e tenebris subitum micuisse tyrannum', 720: 'vocat hinc Deus, inde tyrannus', and id., *Contra Symmachum*, 875–6: 'operitur nescia caeli / mens hominum saevos vivens captiva tyranno.' Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Institutis*, 12. 4, 'et ut gravissimae tyrannidis ejus potentiam agnoscamus'; Valerian of Cimiez, *Homily*, 3. 3: 'quam indicit tyrannicae, hoc est diabolicae, dominationis superbia . . .'; anon. / Maximus of Turin, *Sermon*, 22: 'Eusebium vero linguam suam et expugnationem diabolici erroris armavit adversus tyrannum fidei'; Leo I, *Letter*, 120. 3: 'saevissimus tyrannus ecclesiae.'

political colouring of the Devil chimed with a wider perception in Western authors that the Devil's sin was not just pride, but political arrogance carried to tyranny. Ambrosiaster's insistence on the Devil's tyranny and on the diabolical nature of earthly usurpations, suggests that defaming an opponent (earthly or spiritual) was best achieved by using staple political insults. Although a canny rhetorical ploy playing on the language of political invective, it also served to evoke a universe divided between rival leaders, where rebels sought to entice men away from God's camp: 'God conquers the princes and powers who, so it is generally agreed, are raised up against the faith of Christ with the aim of usurping its empire, and infiltrating the thoughts of humans with a view to calling them away from the dominion of God.'[84]

[84] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. II Cor.*, 10: 5: 'per haec deus vincit principes et potestates, quos constat, ut sibi usurpent imperium, extolli contra fidem Christi cogitationibus se hominum inserentes, ut avocent eos a dei dominio . . .'

Conclusion

Augustine commends himself to the post-Freudian reader through the intimacy he assumes with his audience in his writings. In Brown's words: 'Augustine makes plain, throughout the *Confessions*, that the evolution of the "heart" is the real stuff of autobiography.'[1] Ambrosiaster fails to engage us with any intrusions of the personal into the text, let alone a revelation of 'the heart.' But his writings are a rich repository of the theological, political, ecclesiastical, and social thought of a late Roman Christian. They provide a window into the preoccupations and intellectual horizons of a writer who, although not possessing a biography to be ransacked for insights into his works, influenced writers in his own time and indeed throughout the Middle Ages. It is important to recognize and preserve the very intertwining of the political and theological when reading Ambrosiaster. His own analysis of the political was inspired by scripture, expressed in biblicizing language, and supported by lengthy quotations from the Bible; in his usage, *historia* almost always refers to a scriptural example.

It is clear that Ambrosiaster's texts were circulated under false names and anonymously from a very early date. Although less shadowy writers like Augustine and Jerome did engage with different parts of Ambrosiaster's writings, they did not have to hand his entire corpus, whether under his own name or someone else's, but received his works piecemeal and responded to each part on its own merits. This explains why Jerome condemned some Ambrosiastrian traits (such as presenting Melchizedek as the Holy Spirit and resisting the

[1] P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (London, 1967; rev. edn., 2000), 28.

production of the Vulgate) but did not attack the substance of the five Ambrosiastrian *Quaestiones* which Damasus sent to him. If Jerome, whose sojourn at Rome coincided with Ambrosiaster's *floruit* there, did not know the identity of the author of texts which baffled, irritated, and provoked him, then the likelihood that modern historians can recover an identity for him seems slim indeed. However, through a detailed re-examination of the evidence within Ambrosiaster's works for a time and a place, we can establish a *floruit* for him, and an intellectual and ecclesiastical context for the production of his eclectic *Quaestiones* and *Commentaries*.

Some of his *Quaestiones* were indubitably delivered to an audience of Christians. Their oral traits, ethical nature, and references to readings which his audience had apparently already heard, strongly suggest that he preached. This adds another dimension to our understanding of Ambrosiaster, which thus far has been limited to appreciating him as a polemicist. Although some of his *Quaestiones* attack pagans, Jews, and heretics, others are pious, prayerful disquisitions which imply homiletic origins. Many seem to have been responses to the subtle curiosity of well-educated, elite Christians. Ambrosiaster may well have been a presbyter at a Roman church, possibly at one of the outlying cemetery churches where the presbyters had more autonomy. They performed what was typically, within the city walls, the episcopal function of celebrating mass, and preached regularly.

We can tell something about Ambrosiaster's intellectual background and competence from his works. He was not a philosopher, and this is particularly clear when one considers his exegesis of Paul compared to that of his Neoplatonist Roman predecessor, Marius Victorinus. None the less, his writings do show some passing acquaintance with the buzzwords of eclectic philosophy in the late fourth century. He co-opted and 'biblicized' the Stoic theme of natural law, and alluded to more exotic, Hellenistic themes in his insistence on the imitation of heaven by earth, and on the king as the image of God. Ambrosiaster was also able to deploy classical tags when necessary, most obviously (if breathlessly) in *Quaestio* 115, but they are not a hallmark of his style.

Overall, his mode of allusion was not to specific writers and texts but to ideas which may well have reached him through everyday conversation with other educated Romans. That is, even if Ambrosiaster did not

cite others' writings openly or frequently, he was still a product of the *paideia* and literary culture to which intellectual Christians of this period, not yet beneficiaries of a sophisticated church education system, were inevitably indebted. His own education was likely to have been in forensic rhetoric; many late Roman clerics—to which class he (if a presbyter) would have belonged—had received this training whether or not they ever went on to practise law as advocates or *iurisperiti*.

The vital background to Ambrosiaster's concern for the specifically political must be sought in his attitude towards the relations between man and woman, and mankind and the beasts. He asserted that the creation of a single man, Adam, was a deliberate reflection of God's own singularity. Furthermore, woman was not created in the image of God and had to be reformed into the image of God through faith. Ambrosiaster's attitude towards slavery was more evasive. He deployed the Stoic paradox by which every wise man was free and every fool a slave to spiritual ends to show how slavery could be considered as a state of mind. However, he did address in passing the issue of how Christians should deal with the institution of slavery. In this respect he moderated the master's control over his slave, describing it as partial: a master had mastery only over his slave's body and not over his soul, which was God's alone.

Moving away from the social towards the ecclesiastical, we sense again that Ambrosiaster's monarchical political theology shaped his discussion of the separate and different ranks and responsibilities of the three grades of the priesthood. His elevation of the bishop was a function of his theological concern for the maintenance of the singularity of God's rule in the church and creation; in one instance, he explicitly compared the bishop's relationship to Christ with the king's relationship to God. There was also an exegetical basis for Ambrosiaster's attitude towards contemporary church politics. His elevation of both bishop and presbyter over the deacon was partly determined by the typological example of levites and priests in the Old Testament, which he adduced as prescriptive for the conduct of contemporary church ministers. He saw both continuity and development from the apostolic era, drawing parallels between the grades of ministry described at Ephesians 4: 11–12 and their contemporary equivalents.

Ambrosiaster elevated and linked the monarchical principle of rule (which he described in explicitly royal terms) in the church and in the empire. His justification of kingship was based on an appreciation of political institutions having been bestowed on post-fall humanity by God. However, unlike Augustine, who was to be overwhelmingly negative about 'unnatural' political relationships (as opposed to the 'natural' social ones of family), Ambrosiaster did not present kings and emperors as only the punishment and remedy for sin; they were themselves in the image of God, and God's representatives. In his separation of the office and person of king, Ambrosiaster used the distinction between the office and person of a priest. This allowed him to explain why we should obey even bad rulers; the institution is given by God, and even if its ruler is, for instance, a pagan (with reminiscence probably of Julian, and also of earlier persecuting pagan emperors), he holds rank of God.

It is no surprise that a dogged exegete of Paul who had such a strong sense of the importance of obedience to divinely ordained kings should follow Paul's injunction to 'be subject to the powers that be' unswervingly. With regard to his exegesis of this passage in Romans 13, the negative side—at least to modern eyes—of Ambrosiaster's doctrine of submission to political authority is his invocation of fear as a key instrument of earthly politics. He presented both the ruler and law as encouraging good behaviour by exerting terror. Fear and terror were, however, important features of late antique government and law. The fear of vicious physical torture and punishment was a deterrent to criminals as well as being a means of exacting justice. Overall, Ambrosiaster's earthly and heavenly political vision is a late, indeed final, expression in Latin of a monarchical political theology which was superseded some three decades later by Augustine's anti-political, social, and civic construction of the two *civitates* in his *City of God*.

Ambrosiaster included the Devil in his political theology. He described Satan in openly political terms as an unsuccessful rebel and usurper who had set a malign spiritual example for men aspiring to political power on earth. Diabolical biography had, by the time of Ambrosiaster's writing, developed away from the idea of the Devil's first sin as sexual (embodied by 1 Enoch) towards pride. The various guises in which the Devil appeared to early Christians demonstrate

his importance and ubiquity, often underestimated by modern scholars, perhaps for reasons of distaste, taboo, or even fear. Ambrosiaster portrayed the Devil as the archetypal tyrant and usurper, but was prepared to cede that his reign over sinful man was legitimate. He developed a 'ransom theory' of atonement in which God had to liberate men from the Devil by just means, not by force, since the Devil had acquired rights over man who had freely chosen to sin and thus enslave himself.

The language of imitation was further transformed in Ambrosiaster's depiction of the relationship between the Devil and sinful man. Paul urged 'imitation' on believers: imitation of himself, and of Christ. However, in Ambrosiaster's usage imitation was often perverse: sinners either imitated the Devil generally, as demonstrated by Adam's idolatrous ambition and by Cain's envious commission of murder, or in a specifically political fashion, as seen in the imitation by usurpers and tyrants of the Devil's rebellion. Ambrosiaster appears to have been more preoccupied by usurpers than by persecuting emperors. This is probably a function of his own historical circumstances, in which the former, not the latter, were prominent. Diabolical imitation had a long and rich afterlife, culminating in the early modern idea of the anti-king and anti-state,[2] as well as having an important part to play in witchcraft theory.[3]

Much more work needs to be done on Ambrosiaster. Most urgently, a reassessment of the texts themselves needs to be undertaken, since the present editions of his works in CSEL are patchy and problematic. It would be useful to redress the balance of patristic reception, which has focused overly on the works of canonical and 'orthodox' writers (Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, to name but three), to look at the range of anonymous, pseudonymous, and marginalized 'heretical' works which suffered in transmission from having a nameless or stigmatized author. Future directions for research must also include an examination of the circulation, reception, and deployment of Ambrosiaster's work in the Middle Ages

[2] See S. Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997).

[3] See I. Bostridge, *Witchcraft and its Transformations c.1650–c.1750* (Oxford, 1997).

onwards. We know that they were widely read from an early date, but have little coherent understanding of the extent and nature of their influence. Finally, various areas of Ambrosiaster's thought, from his theology to his attitude to heresy, deserve to be investigated further.

While we might not be able to recover a name and a detailed biography (of the sort sought by scholars for so long) for Ambrosiaster, we can provide a rich intellectual and historical context for his works, which in turn enables us to determine something of their place and force in his age. I return to Peter Brown's biography of Augustine, which I cited in my introduction. The closing paragraph of his biography runs as follows:

> There was nothing left of Augustine now but his library. Possidius compiled a full list of his works; he thought that no man could ever read them all. All future biographers of Augustine have come to feel something of what Possidius felt in that empty room: 'Yet I think that those who gained most from him were those who had been able actually to see and hear him as he spoke in Church, and, most of all, those who had some contact with the quality of his life among men.'[4]

Because we have no record of 'the quality of his life among men', and we can never hope to write a psychological biography of his life approaching Brown's of Augustine, Ambrosiaster is, to some extent, his works.

[4] See Brown, *Augustine*, 433.

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