Abstract

The present study addresses lay piety in Byzantium from the perspective of its relation to the monastic ideal. My approach builds on work such as Peter Brown’s analysis of early Christian asceticism, *The Body and Society* and John Haldon’s socio-cultural study *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*. The period 600–730 was of great historical significance, as the late antique Roman world and its religion were disrupted by the rise of Islam. It offers a neglected abundance of religious literature, shedding light on an otherwise “Dark” Age.

After a summary of key points in the history of lay piety up to 600, I proceed to analyze it in the early seventh century from the perspectives of the poetry of George of Pisidia, who crafted a model of ascetical and mystical piety for the emperor Heraclius; of the hagiography of John of Thessalonica and Leontius of Neapolis who used stories of local saints to instruct laypeople; and the “edifying tales” gathered by the monk John Moschus in his *Spiritual Meadow*. Around the same time Maximus the Confessor provided an influential synthesis of Byzantine theology. The late seventh-century itinerant teacher Anastasius of Sinai mediated the austere monastic doctrine of his master John Climacus to laypeople, and used his scientific learning to adapt it to the newly Muslim-dominated Near East. In the early eighth century I consider the sermons of Andrew of Crete and Germanus of Constantinople, along with other contemporary testimony to the emerging medieval Byzantine culture. Delivered to mixed audiences of laypeople and monastics, such texts provide a glimpse into the spiritual expectations and celebrations of urban Byzantium.

In the conclusion I consider further the methodological problems of the sources. Many of the details of lay practices can be corroborated elsewhere. The predominantly monastic and clerical authors were aware of facts on the ground and adapted their discourses accordingly. We can thus map certain patterns of lay piety—patronage of monasteries, sacramental participation, devotion to saints, etc.—throughout the period. I end on the threshold of iconoclasm, offering some preliminary suggestions as to how lay piety affected that movement.
For my father
ἐπερώτησον τὸν πατέρα σου, καὶ ἀναγγελεῖ σοι
The love and support of many has gone into the writing of this dissertation. Due to haste I will pass over many and doubtless forget to name some, of whom I beg pardon in advance. I would like to thank, first of all, my dissertation advisors, Peter Brown (along with Betsy, of course!) and John Haldon, for their generous guidance during my time at Princeton. Thanks also to my dissertation examiners, Prof. William Chester Jordan, from whose courses I also benefited earlier in my time at Princeton, and Fr. Andrew Louth from Durham, whom I finally met in November 2013 but whose work I had admired long before then.

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Above all, I thank my father George Marinides, who taught me my first Orthodox theology, Byzantine history and ancient Greek, supported and vicariously enjoyed my studies in the humanities, and has encouraged and admonished me through these long years of dissertating.

NOTE

I have presented material from this dissertation at the following conferences and seminars: Arbeitskreis Patristik Jahrestagung: “Der konstantinopolitaner Hofdichter Georg von Pisidia und seine Ermahnungen an den römischen Kaiser Herakleios” (Heidelberg Germany, 2014); Pappas Patristic Institute Graduate Student Conference: “Some theological prolegomena to a study of Byzantine lay piety” (Brookline MA, 2012); Late Antiquity–Early Islam Roundtable: “A minority within a minority: Anastasius of Sinai and Chalcedonian Christian lay piety” (Oxford UK, 2011); Princeton Mt Menoikleon Seminar: “Of Hierarchies and Holy Men: Framing Lay Piety in Byzantium” (Serres Greece, 2011). I am grateful for the input received from colleagues there.

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1. Introduction

*A double ethic*

Almost seventy years ago Norman Baynes encouraged future scholars to essay a study of the dualism running through Byzantine thought: first and foremost, “of the double ethic which is of primary significance in East Roman life—the two standards, one of the ordinary Christian living his life in the work-a-day world and the other standard for those who were haunted by the words of Christ: ‘if thou wouldst be perfect’.” After noting that the ideal of perfection was borne first by the martyr and then, with the Peace of the Church, the monk, he suggested “when we have set ourselves to illustrate this dual ethic in its consequences and its influence we shall really have made some progress in our understanding of East Roman thought.”

Since then, much research has been devoted to understanding the monastic side of this equation. Yet there has been little systematic study of lay piety as such. The present inquiry seeks to address that scarcity. It is a historical study of Greek theological texts written in the seventh century by authors of the orthodox Chalcedonian tradition: George of Pisidia, John of Thessalonica, Leontius of Neapolis, Sophronius of Jerusalem, John Moschus, Anthony of Choziba, Antiochus of Mar Saba, Maximus the Confessor, and Anastasius of Sinai. I will present their thought regarding the place of laypeople in the Church, particularly in relation to the ascetic ideal exemplified in monastic life. The seventh century, a time of momentous political change and great social stress in the Byzantine world, required these authors to adapt the traditions of late antique Christianity to new situations. Most of them present a monastic point of view, but they were in close and sympathetic contact with laypeople—not only intellectually, but also

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through political and economic relations. Thus their literary production was to a large degree responding to lay beliefs, concerns, and practices, so that from their works we can glean evidence for piety as conceived and practiced by laypeople themselves. Based on this evidence, I will argue that the dual ethic is not an absolute dichotomy, but rather a symbiosis, grounded in a positive dynamic idea of hierarchy that led all believers, monastic and lay, toward God.

Baynes’ dual ethic can be expressed as a more basic theological, in fact ecclesiological, problem: the tension between the imperatives of the Church to be both One and Holy. In other words, how could the professed ascetic excellence of the monastic state be reconciled to union with the seemingly mundane ways of laypeople? Given the status of Christianity as the official and majority religion of the late Roman Empire, such ecclesiological issues had ramifications in the broader society. In light of the ecclesiological and social aspects of the problem, my work draws on two streams of scholarship to address it.

One of these is twentieth-century theological research, including Roman Catholic scholarship related to the Second Vatican Council and Protestant scholarship in connection with the World Council of Churches, which has sought to recover a theology or spirituality of the laity, in reaction to an over-emphasis on clerical or monastic virtuosity. One of the pioneers of this movement, the great Dominican scholar Yves Congar, stated the theological problem succinctly.

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But the principal cause of a certain disparagement of the lay condition has been the
application of ascetic, and often even monastic, criteria in order to place the states of life
in a hierarchy. These terms are equivalent: *laici = saeculares = coniugati.*

The concern about the possible denigration of lay life within a grading of holiness was of course
an important element of the Reformation critique of medieval Catholicism and motivated Luther
to develop his concept of vocation. Since the nineteenth century it has been bound up with cross-
confessional concerns about the secularization of the modern world, involving questions of work,
wealth, family, and sexuality. My own work on the topic has been spurred by reading the
writings of the orthodox ascetical Fathers and observing the growing pains of orthodox
monasticism in North America, where it sometimes comes into conflict with bishops, parish
priests, and laity about the proper place of monasteries, spiritual fathers and mothers, and
asceticism more generally in 21st-century orthodox life.

Several of the leaders of the movement to develop a theology of the laity were avid
students of the Church Fathers and have provided useful overviews of the history of lay
spirituality. But they tend to neglect the East after the Cappadocians and Chrysostom. Their

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condition laïque a été l’application de critères ascétiques et souvent monastiques pour hierarchiser les états
de vie. Ces termes sont équivalents: laici = saeculares = coniugati” (my translation above).

4 This interest marked the great works of Max Weber, *The Protestant Work Ethic and the Spirit of
Routledge, 2001), and Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (New York: MacMillan
coverage of pre-Reformation Christianity make his work more relevant to the present study. His attempt to
understand how medieval Catholicism integrated asceticism with more mundane life in the Church is good to
think with, though outdated; he has little to say about eastern Christendom. Note also the recently-
promulgated “New Evangelization” project within the Roman Catholic Church, which draws on the “Theology
of the Body” promoted by the late Pope John Paul II. For a statement of John Paul’s vision of the place of the
laity, see his encyclical *Christifideles Laici*, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation delivered on 30 December

5 In Congar’s “Laïc et laïcat,” the only Byzantine theologian mentioned after Chrysostom is the
thirteenth-century author St Nicholas Cabasilas (85); Ludwig von Welsersheimb, *Kirchenväter an Laien: Briefe*
emphasis on theology and spirituality also leaves something to be desired, namely the kind of
detailed reading of social and cultural history that enlivens, and often challenges, the doctrinal
norms articulated by theological texts.

Aspects of the problem of the double ethic have also received extensive treatment in Late
Antique studies and to a lesser extent in the contiguous field of Byzantine studies. Much of this
work has focused on the monastic side of the equation, and particularly the phenomenon of the
“holy man.” Given the close relations between monastics and laypeople, such research has
inevitably illuminated the lay as well. Some of these questions have also been addressed in the
context of analyzing the Byzantine world-view, since the spiritual concerns of laypeople were
necessarily implicated in it. Attempts to present lay piety as a distinct subject, however, are
rare.

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_References_

6 Peter Brown's main contributions, successively revising his position, have been “The Rise and
Brown, _Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianization of the Roman World_ (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1995), 55–78. For reactions to Brown's work and further research, see especially Sergei
Hackel, ed., _The Byzantine Saint_, 2nd ed. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001; originally
published 1983) and, more recently, James-Howard Johnston and Paul Hayward, eds., _The Cult of Saints in
Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown_ (Oxford; New York: Oxford
University Press, 1999).

7 “In studying both the most admired and the most detested figures in any society, we can see, as
seldom through other evidence, the nature of the average man’s expectations and hopes for himself. It is for
the historian, therefore, to analyse this image as a product of the society around the holy man.” Brown, "Rise
and Function," 81.

8 Indeed, Baynes' own insights were developed in essays sketching the Byzantine “thought-world”; see especially in
_Byzantine Studies and Other Essays: "The Hellenistic Civilization and East Rome," _1–24, and
“The Byzantine State,” 46–58. In more recent work, the section entitled “The Conceptual World of Byzantium”
in Cyril Mango, _Byzantium: The New Rome_ (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1980), 149–230, is a rather
disseminate account that recalls Gibbon’s antipathy toward Christianity. Alexander Kazhdan and Giles
Constable, _People and Power in Byzantium: An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies_ (Washington, DC:
Dumbarton Oaks, 1982), 76–95, seeks to describe “Homo byzantinus before God”; it is a fair attempt to
My study picks up approximately where Peter Brown’s *The Body and Society* leaves off chronologically.\(^9\) It is more narrowly focused in period and method; I limit myself to a detailed presentation and analysis of the authors and texts of the seventh century. I consider questions concerning the body and sexuality, desert and city, wealth and patronage, but primarily as these were discussed in relation to monasticism and the laity. Following the long development charted by Brown, by the starting point of this study around the year 600 of the Christian era, monasticism had already become established as the theoretical ideal of Christian excellence in both East and West. Most of the authors presented here took this situation for granted, but were concerned to show how lay piety could relate to this monastic ideal—for the good of both monastics and laypeople. And even if monasticism as an ideal was broadly taken for granted, the concrete status and role of monks and nuns in church and society were continually being contested—a debate to which the texts discussed here made significant contributions.

The seventh and eighth centuries were once regarded as the Dark Ages of Byzantium, but for some time now that monolithic stereotype has gradually been dismantled. The period is of great moment in world-historical terms. The interval from about 600–630 saw the “last great war of Antiquity” as the two great superpowers, Rome and Persia, fought a massive war for imperial dominion of the Near East and Mediterranean, ending in a stunning victory for the Romans under

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\(^9\) Two recent articles have done this, but either for a different period or with slightly different interests than my own. Sharon Gerstel and Alice-Mary Talbot, “The culture of lay piety in medieval Byzantium 1054-1453,” in *Eastern Christianity*, ed. Michael Angold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 71–99, is a good survey, but lacks the interest in the conceptual world of the layperson that Mango attempts to address, and deals only with the last four centuries of the Empire. Most recently, Michael Angold, “Church and Society: Iconoclasm and After,” in *A Social History of Byzantium*, ed. John Haldon (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 233–56, handles the middle Byzantine period skillfully (including part of the period I wish to consider), but like Gerstel and Talbot, only scratches the surface of a history of lay piety.

emperor Heraclius. Then from about 630–670 this Byzantine ascendancy was toppled, and the Sassanid Persian empire extinguished, by the rise of the Arab empire inspired by the founding of Islam by the prophet Muhammad. After his initial crisis, from about 670 onward Byzantium was able to establish a new mode of survival, albeit reduced to a rump of its former self. The empire now clung to the northwestern edge of its former domains and fended off attacks from the Arabs and other enemies through a combination of military and diplomatic measures. This broad sketch captures some of the sweeping changes that marked the period, but just as important were the continuities. War and conquest were undoubtedly wrenching and painful events for most of the inhabitants of the Byzantine world, but they were able to draw on a wide array of resources, both material and mental, to subsist, endure, and rebuild, as shown in John Haldon’s study *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture*. Monastics and laypeople within Byzantine territory and outside it continued to draw on their venerable religious heritage at the same time as they relied on well-worn methods of agriculture and commerce.

Yet they were led by force of creativity as well as of necessity to adapt these to their new conditions. The older perception of the seventh century as “dark” was due not so much to a dearth of sources as to looking for them in the wrong places. Several of the classic genres of literature dried up, most notably the ornate histories in Atticizing style of authors like Procopius

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and Agathias that provide much of our knowledge of the sixth century. But as Averil Cameron has pointed out, there is a corresponding abundance of other forms, especially religious ones, that expressed and served contemporary needs. Such works include homilies, polemical treatises, question and answer collections, liturgical texts, and edifying tales. They often convey an anxious sense of trying to understand and react to the shattering of previously-held views concerning the predestined endurance of the late Roman Christian empire. Such sources are being increasingly mined for bits of information, but often they are not studied in their integrity. Andrew Louth has suggested that “to make full use of these ‘untraditional’ sources would, however, involve writing a different kind of history, beginning not from the institutional and political, but rather working outwards from the deeply-considered worldview to be found in such writings.”

The present study, by following the thread of one subject, namely lay piety, through most of the contemporary religious sources in Greek, is intended as a contribution to this project of writing a new history of the seventh century.

What is lay piety?

My use of the term “lay piety” adopts long-standing convention in western medieval and early modern history, but given its rarity up till now in Byzantine history and the differences between the fields, it is useful to clarify and justify my understanding of it. In the first place, it is usual to think of “lay” in comparison and contrast with “clerical,” but taking my cue from Baynes, I instead place “lay” beside “monastic.” While the role of the clergy was certainly important in Byzantium, and would repay further study, it was in fact the holy monk who

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captured the Byzantine imagination and was, as Baynes says, “the realization of the Byzantine ideal.”  

He was a mighty figure who, through extraordinary ascetic effort, had achieved a state of untroubled tranquility and henceforth transmitted God’s favor to his fellow men. These were the laypeople, toiling in a life of socio-economic duty, often struggling just to earn their daily bread and pass on their name to their all-too-mortal heirs. If they could not attain to the heights of ascetic renunciation, they at least hoped to be able to enjoy the blessings of those who had.

Turning to Baynes again: “The Christian faith becomes a religion of mediation, but not distinctively of priestly mediation; the priest in your village, married, with all the anxieties of wife and children, carrying on a trade, it may be, to secure his livelihood—he is far too near to your condition.”  

The priests, who were normally married, constituted a true “secular” clergy, despite the spiritual power inherent in the grace of priesthood.

Indeed, “secular” is the term that most precisely translates a common Greek term for laypeople: kosmikos, a man of the “world,” with all the ambiguity that word holds for Christian thought. Greek synonyms in contemporary sources include biótikos (pertaining to earthly life) and even sometimes politikos (involved in civic life). These are contrasted sometimes with clergy and sometimes with monks. While kosmikos is, I think, the single Greek term that best captures what I am trying to describe and analyze, its more literal English translation of “secular” is unsuitable because of the modern connotations of the term, which do not apply to medieval life. “Secular” does, however, retain something of the ambiguity inherent in the

saeculum/kosmos for medieval Latins and Greeks, the real problematic of the nature of the world

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16 Ibid., 27.
17 Cf. Yves Congar, on the monasticization of western clergy: “There are no ‘secular clergy’ such as those of the East: married priests, with no daily Mass or Breviary obligation, sharing closely in the life and work of the village and its people, essentially responsible for spiritual guidance, maintaining Christian discipline and ministering the sacraments.” In Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of Laity (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1967), 411.
18 See Lampre: κοσμικός 3gh, 4ab (p. 769); βιωτικός 1,2 (p. 298); πολιτικός 1,2 (p. 1114).
and the Christian’s relation to it.\textsuperscript{19} As John Van Engen noted in a review of the state of western medieval history, the category of “worldly” could be variously defined based on context, to different degrees of exclusivity or inclusivity. The world could be conceived, most narrowly, as everything outside the monastery; but it could also be seen as everything outside Christendom.\textsuperscript{20} Ultimately, the world itself was not supposed to be rejected, but redeemed.\textsuperscript{21} But this endeavor required a certain ascetic defensiveness toward its allurements and illusions, if it was ultimately to succeed: renunciation had to precede transfiguration. Renunciation was the domain par excellence of the monk or nun.\textsuperscript{22} With these considerations in mind, I will settle for the usual term “lay.” In fact the Greek term \textit{laïkos}—the origin of our English “lay”—is also used in contemporary sources in contrast with “monastic.”\textsuperscript{23} I will discuss the origins of the concept of laypeople as a distinct order within the Church as part of the historical overview in the next section.

When it comes to categorization, the whole dualism of monastic and lay should be seen as a useful heuristic distinction rather than a strict dichotomy. As Rosemary Morris says, “it would be wrong to consider monks as constituting a separate caste in Byzantine society”; she


\textsuperscript{21} This is expressed well by Congar, \textit{Lay People in the Church}, 400–403. See also Tomáš Špidlík, \textit{The Spirituality of the Christian East: A Systematic Handbook} (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1986), 125–134, 140–150.


\textsuperscript{23} Lampe, \textit{λαϊκός} B2d (p. 790). As an example from the mid-sixth century, see Cyril of Scythopolis, \textit{Vit.Euth.} 49 (regarding the empress Eudocia’s contributions to healing the schism in Palestine): πλῆθος πολύ \textit{λαϊκών και μοναχών τῶν ὑπὸ Θεοδοσίου πλανηθέντων διὰ τοῦ καθ’ ἐαυτὴν ὑποδείγματος ἐπὶ τὴν καθολικὴν ἐπιστρέψασα κοινωνίαν …
refers here to monks of the Middle Byzantine period, but the caution is equally applicable to the seventh century.\textsuperscript{24} Monks and nuns were of course once lay Christians themselves, and they continued to be connected to the world, by prayer for laypeople and by acting as spiritual directors for them and in more mundane ways through economic, familial, and political ties.

“‘Abandoning the world’ thus often meant not the abandonment of human relationships such as family feeling or friendship, or the discarding of claims to leadership in society, but the recasting of them in a different, spiritually oriented context.”\textsuperscript{25} There was also a wide range of monastic lifestyles and practices, which interacted with the world in different degrees, from isolated hermits to wandering pilgrims to strictly-regulated coenobites.\textsuperscript{26}

Since in practice not all monastics were holy men or women, and moreover since we as historians are not well-positioned to judge their inner spiritual state, two simpler external criteria might be useful. The first is celibacy: out of the three well-known monastic vows, this was the only really essential one in Byzantium, as monks leading a more solitary life might not be bound by requirements of obedience to an abbot or strict non-possession. The second is the monastic habit: this special garb would distinguish a monk from a pious bachelor layman and in our sources donning the habit (\textit{schêma}) is a shorthand for making one’s monastic profession. This visual distinction is important given that monks were not, as is sometimes imagined, always confined to the wilderness, but integral parts of Byzantine village and city life.\textsuperscript{27}


\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 1. See also p. 3: “The nexus of relationships involved in spiritual fatherhood was but one of the ways in which monks and laymen came together; but with its political as well as spiritual overtones it was one of the most important. But others … included those of friendship, family connection and communal association on both a local and empire-wide level.”

\textsuperscript{26} For a sketch of these lifestyles in the middle Byzantine period, see ibid., 31–63. Note, however, that all these were already being practiced quite early, if in slightly different configurations and with differing relative popularities at different periods.

One difficulty with the definition up to this point is where to place bishops. In the sixth century Justinian’s legislation required them to be celibate and late in the seventh century this was confirmed by Canon 12 of the Council in Trullo. They wore distinctive clerical garb, and many of them were actually called to the episcopate from a monastery. Thus they were not exactly the humble village priests with whom Baynes contrasted the holy monk. But because of the nature of their work they had to concern themselves with the workaday world of the average Byzantine layman (or at least the politics of the imperial and aristocratic laymen) and thus could not devote themselves to the attainment of a personal ideal of holiness as the monks did. Some would argue that their ideal was, in fact, higher than that of the monk—something to which I will return—so that we could perhaps class Byzantine society into three groups, much as Augustine and, following him, Gregory the Great did when distinguishing three orders of pastores.


28 Justinian, *Cod. 1.3.41,44,47* and *Nov. 6.1, 123.1, 137.2*; George Nedungatt and Michael Featherstone, eds., *The Council in Trullo Revisited* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale: 1995), 82–83. This did not mean that one necessarily had to be a life-long celibate; one elected bishop could also separate from his wife.


continentes, and conjugati. Thus I will avoid forcing them into one category or another, and instead to keep them exactly where they are, as figures bridging the two worlds. In several of the following chapters we will see their role in the shaping of Christian doctrine and education. From a more socio-political point of view, Virginia Burrus notes that the bishops, as urban leaders, “were often the slender bridge between the empire-wide ecclesiastical community and the local congregations and Christian cultures of their regions.” Thus as both an ecclesiastical and a political elite, they served to interpret the patristic and imperial traditions of the Great Church to the laypeople, thus becoming mediators between church, state, and society.

But to return to laypeople themselves, we should not view them as forming a monolithic category. Apart from categories based on their spiritual worthiness, which will be discussed in later chapters, the historian must also take into account a broad array of more earthy factors, such as gender and socio-economic class. The pious practices of women and men were circumscribed and shaped by the roles and status that society afforded them (although sanctity, or simple stubbornness when it came to pious customs such as attending night vigils, could sometimes overcome conventional barriers). Emperors and aristocrats differed greatly from peasants and artisans not just in the wealth at their disposal for pious patronage, but also in the leisure time

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31 Georges Folliet, “Les trois catégories de chrétiens. Survie d’un thème augustinien,” Année théologique augustinienne 14 (1954): 81-96. Robert Markus, in an appendix to his “Gregory the Great on Kings: rulers and preachers in the Commentary on 1 Kings,” in Diana Wood ed., Church and Sovereignty, Studies in Church History, Subsidia 9 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 20–21 notes the unusual addition of a fourth group in one of Gregory’s sermons, the ordo amantium. Markus argues that this group does not disturb the normative triple schema, but contains those who, whatever their status, have actually tasted the sweetness of the love of God through contemplation of Scripture, a level of experience beyond the duties expected of the three ordines. This allowance for mystical inspiration conditioning the normal hierarchy is notable in several of the Greek writers who will be considered in this study.


33 See Alice-Mary Talbot, “The Devotional Life of Laywomen,” in Byzantine Christianity, edited by Derek Krueger, A People’s History of Christianity 3 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 201–220.
that they could devote to spiritual exercises and in access to edifying books.\textsuperscript{34} And wealth could render aristocratic women much more independent and even authoritative in spiritual matters than their poorer sisters and brothers.\textsuperscript{35} Related to this are questions of education and literacy and how they affected spiritual theory and practice.\textsuperscript{36}

All these factors imply the question of so-called “popular religion.” While the term is now viewed with some suspicion in Western medieval and early Modern studies, because it ignores both the diversity of lay piety itself and the substantial continuities between the piety of élite clerics and their subjects, it has only relatively recently caught on with historians of Christianity, including two volumes covering parts of our period in the series \textit{A People’s History of Christianity}. The editors, however, seem to be aware of the traps. Virginia Burrus notes that Arnaldo Momigliano and Peter Brown have already questioned such a dichotomy between

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{34} Peter Brown, “Holy Men,” in Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, A.D. 425–600, vol. 14, The Cambridge Ancient History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 797. There is no study, to my knowledge, of the element of \textit{otium} in monasticism, but a good starting point is Dennis E. Trout, “Augustine at Cassiciacum: \textit{Otium honestum} and the Social Dimensions of Conversion,” \textit{VChr} 42, no. 2 (Jun. 1988): 132–146. Cf. Karl Holl, \textit{Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt beim griechischen Mönchtum: Eine Studie zu Symeon den Neuen Theologen} (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’sche, 1898), 200–202, who sees the later Byzantine development of two levels of monastic renunciation, the small habit and the great habit (\textit{mikroschēmoi/megaloschēmoi}) as a means to divide physical and spiritual work between members of a monastery, allowing the “great-schema-monks” more leisure for prayer and study, somewhat similarly to choir monks and lay brothers in the medieval West, although the majority of Byzantine monks, even of the great habit, were not ordained.

\textsuperscript{35} At the same time, the expectations of the age tended to keep nuns and other holy women closer to society, thus allowing them, in many cases, an important role as local and easily accessible sources of holiness and wisdom. See Brown, “Holy Men,” 794–95. For an overview of the possibilities and effects of the choice of celibacy for men and women of various socio-economic conditions, and of the social and economic context of monasticism in the late antique period, see the superb chapter “Affirmations et négations des structures familiales,” in Patlagean, \textit{Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale}, 113–55.

\textsuperscript{36} For a good overview of the gender and class issues, including questions of literacy, see Elizabeth Clark, “Asceticism, Class, and Gender,” in Burrus ed., \textit{Late Ancient Christianity, A People’s History of Christianity} 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 27–45; cf. eadem., \textit{Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 45–69. The study of the impact of literacy on the development of lay piety in the West has been significant, as noted by John Van Engen, “The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem,” \textit{AHR} 91/3 (1986): 548. For Byzantine literacy in general, see Robert Browning, \textit{History, language and literacy in the Byzantine world}, Variorum Reprints (Northampton, UK: Variorum, 1989). See also Warren C. Brown et al. eds., \textit{Documentary Culture and the Laity in the Early Middle Ages} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); only the first chapter addresses the eastern Empire (Peter Sarris, “Lay Archives in the Late Antique and Byzantine East: the Implications of the Documentary Papyri,” 17–35) and it concerns itself with Egyptian papyri, which I have regretfully left out of consideration in this study.
\end{footnotesize}
popular and élite culture, broadly speaking, in Late Antiquity. Working within the framework of lay vs. clerical which I have already discussed above, she acknowledges that “laity and leaders alike were caught up in the complex choreography of processions, festivals, cultic meals, and other performative rites that established the distinct rhythms of time and mappings of space that structured Christian identity in late antiquity.” Derek Krueger more directly addresses my own concerns when, as editor of the next volume, on Byzantine Christianity, he notes the proximity of the lower clergy and monks to the laity and the influence of monasticism on lay piety. As we will see in the course of the present study, leading bishops and monks were in tune with popular practices such as those that surrounded the cult of saints and often tried to defend them against theological criticism, while simultaneously anticipating and correcting perceived excesses or misunderstandings—for example, by insisting that the saints did not grant blessings and inflicted punishments on their own, but only acting as agents of the one God.

So much for a basic working definition of “lay.” What about “piety?” This term tends to be preferred by historians, as opposed to “spirituality” which is more often used by theologians or scholars in religious studies more narrowly defined, and is also entangled in contemporary discussions about the post-modern tendency to be “spiritual” rather than “religious.” The only

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38 Ibid., 12–14.


40 Cf. John Binns, Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ: The Monasteries of Palestine 314–631 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 221: “The modern concept of spirituality needs reinterpretation in order to be applied to the lives of Byzantine saints. It is not a personal and interior dimension which can be contrasted to the hard world of the material order. Instead it describes the means by which the saint expressed the purposes of God in the midst of the society of the time.”
thing approaching a definition of piety that I have found in the secondary literature on Byzantium emphasizes articulation and action: “modes of piety, the ways Christians expressed and engaged in their religious life.”\(^{41}\) This active mindset is met with in the Byzantines themselves: when distinguishing between monks and those in the world, they usually spoke of two ways (hodoi), lives (bioi), manners (tropoi) or ways of life (politeiai).\(^{42}\) But Joseph Munitiz alerts us to another cluster of terms that have to do with the same subject:

> The writings that we tend to classify as “spiritual” are more often entitled “ascetic,” or “mystic,” or even “gnostic” … A favourite adjective to describe such writings is νηπτικός, with its emphasis on “sobriety.” We can be easily confused by the Byzantine tendency to extend “philosophy” to cover works of piety and devotion. For them “gnosis” and “theoria,” and of course “theologia,” came naturally to mind when we would use the word “spirituality.”\(^{43}\)

While such a reminder of the contemporary Byzantine language is helpful, a direct translation of one of these terms to denote the subject of my study would be misleading, both because of the connotations to modern ears and the narrowness of each term taken on its own. Instead I have kept “piety” both because of its currency in modern historical research and because it corresponds quite closely to a term that the Byzantines sometimes used: eusebeia, which the


\(^{42}\) All these terms are found in an apology for monasticism against the iconoclasts inserted in his chronicle by the ninth-century chronographer George the Monk, which is in fact simply a compilation of older testimonia; the terms listed above are found in Eusebius of Caesarea and Athanasius of Alexandria, excerpted in *Georgii Monachi Chronicon*, edited by Carl de Boor, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1904), 334–36. Cf. the overview of the terms bios, diaita, and politeia in the writings of Clement of Alexandria, by Henri-Irénée Marrou, “Introduction générale,” in *Clement of Alexandria, Le Pédagogue*, 28 (Paris: Cerf, 1960).

medieval lexicon *Suda* defines as, among other things, “the science of the cult of God.” The word has a long history in Greek use and even in philosophical reflection, being included with a similar definition in the *Definitions* compiled by the school of Plato. This philosophical vocabulary also came to be used by Hellenistic Jewish writers to express the scriptural virtue of “fear of God” without evoking the questionable ideas of terror and punishment.

The use of the word *epistêmê* (conceptual knowledge, science) in the definition from the *Suda*, captures well the self-conscious and reflective aspect of piety that I wish to investigate, which is also suggested in more specific ways by the terms that Munitiz mentions. This set of terms focuses on the question of cultivation and salvation of the soul, that is, the goal of obtaining eternal life. This is not to demean the real place held by less lofty concerns; we will see how both monastics and laypeople sought to balance the needs of the mundane with the demands of the spirit. In this respect, academic use of the term “spirituality” can indeed be helpful in clarifying the object of this study.

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47 Again, I follow Baynes here, whose above-quoted passages occur in an essay on the thought-world of East Rome.
48 Even the modern popular use of the abstract noun “spirituality” is not completely foreign to Byzantine use of the adjective “spiritual”: “When one does something pleasing to God, he is called spiritual and is not named from the soul” i.e. is called spiritual rather than soulish or “animal,” ὅταν μὲν οὖν πράττῃ τι τῶν τῷ θεῷ δοκοῦντων, πνευματικός λέγεται καὶ οὐκ ἀπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ὀνομάζεται. Under Letter Psi 167 Ψυχικός ἄνθρωπος in *Suda, Lexicon*. The orthodox theologian Dumitru Stăniloae uses the term “spirituality” without comment in his book on the topic, although it is justified in the forward by Alexander Golubov, in
spirituality) is distinguished from dogma by the fact that, instead of studying or describing the objects of belief as it were in the abstract, it studies the reaction which these objects arouse in the religious consciousness. 49 And McGinn amplifies this slightly by emphasis on the relation of belief and consciousness to life and practice: “Christian spirituality is the lived experience of Christian belief in both its general and more specialized forms. ... It is possible to distinguish spirituality from doctrine in that it concentrates not on faith itself, but on the reaction that faith arouses in religious consciousness and practice.” 50 With these broad definitions in mind, my inquiry into lay piety can be phrased thusly: how was the ascetic ideal exemplified by monastics presented to laypeople, taught to them and adapted to their circumstances? What role did they play in this formulation and how did they appropriate and interpret it in their own lives?

The Holy Man

Baynes’ framing of the double ethic influenced Peter Brown’s work on the Holy Man. Since his seminal article, “The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity,” the relation of monks to the rest of society has usually been considered through the prism of an ideal type of the monk, the Holy Man. The lonely and lofty figure of Symeon the Stylite is the most potent symbol of that ideal. Having utterly inured himself to the hardships of ascetic self-denial, his humanity was almost transmuted into an angelic state of being. Yet he maintained a tenuous link with the common nature of men through the evident toll of ascetic exertions on his mortal frame and through performing miracles, often by very physical means such as dust blessed by his

prayers or, after his death, his relics. He was a marginal figure, majestic in his distance from the world. This focus on the individual extreme ascetic has been muted and revised in much of Brown’s subsequent work, which places the holy man within a continuum of religious practice and techniques of holiness, embracing lay Christians and even non-Christians. But the continuing characterization of the phenomenon in terms of the singular, of the holy man, indicates the hold of the ideal type on the imagination of modern scholars and students. This is also promoted by the tendency of hagiographic texts, one of our main sources, to focus on remarkable individuals. They lead us to envision the individual holy man against the crowd of lesser people jostling around him, seeking his blessings and teachings.

One difficulty with both Baynes’s and Brown’s original formulations of the problem is the inherent emphasis on duality. This is primarily intended as a hermeneutical structure that holds two aspects of Byzantine life in creative tension while seeking to elicit the deeper historical meaning of the tension. But the question intrudes itself: is it simply a conceptual distinction, or does it really mark an actual tension, even a dichotomy, in late antique and Byzantine social and religious life? In “The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity,” the first major revision of his 1971 thesis, Brown remarks: “Looking back at what I would now have to abandon and modify in my previous picture of the holy man, I think that the greatest single feature of my portrayal of the holy man in need of revision would be his ‘splendid isolation.’”51 He then moves beyond his initial model of holy man as patron writ large, proposing in addition a model of holy man as exemplar, “as Christ made accessible.”52 In this view, he was a not a totally dissociated stranger, but an embodiment of collective religious values. As such, he represented Christianity

51 Brown, “The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity,” 11. He attributes the emphasis on isolation to Baynes’ formulation of the double ethic. In the last sentence he is quoting Peter Brown, Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1972), 334.
52 Brown, “The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity,” 10.
itself to many Late Romans, especially in rural areas where the institutional imperial and episcopal structures that informed urban life were not as yet so strongly established. His presence signified not the extraordinary as exotic and inexplicable, but rather the extraordinary as a concentration of the ordinary: “Rather than inevitably marking a moment of breakdown and of new departure, ‘Concentrated and intense charismatic authority transfigures the half life into incandescence.’” This exemplar was not present only in the form of the living flesh-and-blood holy man, but also in the written monuments of hagiography. The effect of repetition of holy man narratives on laypeople, through reading and preaching, would be to instill in them certain fundamentals of Christian belief and practice and to inspire them to access holiness themselves, by proper devotion to the person or shrine of the holy man of course, but also by imitation of those elements of the holy man’s life that were feasible for laypeople. Thus the holy man becoming a kind of incarnate theology for the late antique believer, crystallizing the “confident and influential metaphysical formulations of the Christian faith,” which the dogmatic reflection of Late Antiquity produced.

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53 Ibid., 8–10.
56 Brown, “The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity,” 20–21. In these pages Brown suggests the holy men of Late Antiquity as a way “to begin to answer the challenge posed by Dietrich Bonhoeffer almost half a century ago, when he wrote that, ‘It is becoming clear every day that the most urgent problem besetting our church is this: how can we live the Christian life in the modern world.’” He is citing Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, trans. R.H. Fuller (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 60. This is in fact one of the perennial concerns of lay piety. This comparison between dogmatic theology and the lived example of the holy man addresses—the tension between dogmatics and lay piety noted by Baynes, “The Thought-World of East Rome,” 29, 43.
Indeed, the holy man was more accessible than we might tend to think. There was a real continuity of practice between him and pious laypeople.\textsuperscript{57} Even if such feats as perching atop columns were new and exotic, the actual discipline of prayer, fasting, and self-control that took place once the column had been climbed were not qualitatively different from the normal piety expected of Christians from apostolic times.\textsuperscript{58} The holy man’s single-minded dedication to this ascetical discipline was what set him apart, but it also caused him to be an inspiration and model to the laypeople in their own humble attempts to keep a spiritual regimen. In turn, in a society “where the primary division was not that between the monastery and the world, or between the clergy and the laity, but the existential chasm between religious persons and the vast majority who had neither the leisure nor the inclination for such matters, it was usual for any outstanding person or monastic establishment to function as a ‘monastery without walls’ for a wide network of religiously-minded clients ‘in the world’.”\textsuperscript{59}

This last observation reminds us to consider the holy man not just alone, but as part of a larger monastic order. The interval between laypeople and the holy man was not a yawning empty gap, but rather filled in and mediated by the groups of monastic disciples practicing a more moderate discipline. We can thus imagine concentric circles around a holy man: monastic disciples, then pious laypeople with close and frequent connections to him, then a further ring of less closely connected clients, and furthest out those who doubt or resist the holiness of the holy


\textsuperscript{59} Brown, “Holy Men,” 796.
man—a category rare but prominent in the Vitae, mostly for the purpose of demonstrating their comeuppance.60

However quickly such sacrilegious skeptics may be dismissed by hagiographers, we must consider their historical place in Byzantine society. They figure as part of an implicit debate about the role of holiness and wisdom with respect to problems of providence and causation. Hagiographers emphasized a simple pattern of divine governance and intervention mediated by holy men. In contrast, mathematicians, philosophers, and astrologers of various kinds emphasized naturalistic or deterministic causation, which they claimed to be able to explain and sometimes even manipulate it by virtue of their esoteric knowledge. Somewhere in the middle were certain theologians who tried to combine Christian adherence to belief in the providence of God with an allowance for the place of natural causation.61

Such debates give us a glimpse into real intellectual uncertainties about the ideal of the holy man and his place in society.62 But on a more mundane level, even those who possessed an implicit faith in such an ideal did not automatically react to it in ways that we might expect, or in ways that the holy men or their biographers may have wished. As Peter Brown has already noted: “To say that something is the highest ideal, even if this is coupled with a high degree of cultural consensus, does not predict the place this ideal is made or allowed to occupy in social


62 See, most recently, Peter Sarris, Matthew Dal Santo, and Phil Booth, eds., An Age of Saints?: Power, Conflict and Dissent in Early Medieval Christianity (Leiden: Brill, 2011).
life.” It tended to allow a comfortable professionalization of holiness. In addition to relying on the implicit power of the sacraments conferred by the clergy, the layperson could also turn to the blessings of the holy monk or nun. Thus instead of being a challenge and an exemplary model for laypeople, the monastic life could furnish them with an excuse for neglecting a personal pursuit of holiness.

Yet there was also an opposing tendency that refused to identify holiness exclusively with the consecrated ascetic life of monasticism. The *paterika*, collections of edifying sayings and tales circulating widely in both monastic and lay circles, love to recount stories of paradoxical holiness, where one would least expect it. These often have a strict ascetic being directed by a divine revelation to visit an unknown layman or laywoman, in order to be instructed by his or her hidden holiness. This sanctity was sometimes acquired by a strict lay asceticism, a sort of monasticism lived in the world; but it was also sometimes a gift bestowed by God in return for spontaneous acts of goodness, especially in alms-giving.

That this was the case indicates that ultimately, in Byzantium the Christian ideal was not identified solely with celibacy or even with asceticism. Certainly the latter, in moderation, was prescribed even for laypeople and was a normal means to acquire holiness. But the goal of

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65 Peter Brown, “Eastern and Western Christendom in Late Antiquity: A Parting of the Ways,” in *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 11–16. See especially 16: “Paradox, after all, is a device of inclusion. The paradox of sanctity enabled the holy to scatter itself widely throughout Byzantine society.”

asceticism itself was the kind of generous love indicated by alms-giving. In fact, it was often the example of total self-renunciation provided by the holy man that moved others to charitable generosity. Thus even a holy bishop like Rabbula of Edessa had something to learn from the anonymous Man of God, who had fled to Edessa from the luxuries of aristocratic Rome in order to seek God by embracing faceless poverty. From the lay ascetical ethic of active charity articulated in the preaching of John Chrysostom, which underpinned subsequent Eastern Christian social teaching, to the mystical insights of Maximus the Confessor, who described a sublime vision of an integral cosmos redeemed by divine and human love: the goal was the New Testament ideal of agapê.

Lastly, this ideal was only attained through repentance. The monastic life was fundamentally conceived as an ascetical arena of penthos, and it was the fact that the holy man had given himself utterly over to mourning for his own sins and those of the world that he was able to receive the gift of holiness and hence transmit it back to the world from which he had fled. But here again it must be emphasized that the layperson could only access this holiness by tasting something of repentance himself. It may have been occasional bursts of tears, elicited by a holy icon as much as a holy man, but it was understood that these signified a breaking through

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of grace in the life of the believer.\textsuperscript{71} This contrition could not be sustained with the same constancy as monastic life demanded and allowed, but participation in it was sought through the material resources that lay life afforded. This spiritual economy of monastic spiritual patronage and lay material patronage could sometimes be debased into a mere sordid transaction. But it also offered the opportunity of knitting together the Christian community, divided by the duality of monastic and lay life, through a pooling of heavenly and earthly resources.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{71} Brown, “Rise and Function,” 97: “Secondly, the holy man was the professional in a world of amateurs ... For the piety of the average Byzantine was essentially a piety of discontinuous moments of contrition, κατάνυξις.”

\textsuperscript{72} Torrance, \textit{Repentance in Late Antiquity}, covers the spiritual patronage involved, analyzing it as the repentance of a spiritual father on behalf of his spiritual children (whether monastic or lay).
2. A brief history of early Christian lay piety

Elements of the double ethic before monasticism

The monastic ideal crystallized in the Holy Man was accepted as a given by most Christians at the turn of the seventh century when this study properly begins. But in order to clarify the question and raise some issues for discussion in the course of the inquiry, let us take a brief tour through the history of asceticism from the New Testament origins of Christianity up till the end of the sixth century. I take as my main guides Karl Holl, whose 1898 monograph *Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt beim griechischen Mönchtum* still holds up well today as a sympathetic and penetrating analysis of the subject by a scholar who by theological background (Lutheran) was foreign to it; and Peter Brown, whose *Body and Society* provides a useful framework for the six centuries of Christian history preceding my own era.

The adjectival form *laïkos* is not found in the New Testament, but first appears in the late first-century text 1 Clement 40:5. There it is already being used in its habitual modern sense distinguishing laypeople from clergy primarily based on their different liturgical functions, but does not imply any difference in intensity of Christian life and practice. The possibility of a higher standard of Christian dedication was, however, already present in the New Testament, and developed thereafter. Jesus and his Apostles exemplified a radical renunciation of normal social circumstances for the sake of the proclamation of the Gospel. The Gospels contain “hard sayings” demanding the abandonment of family and wealth by those who would be true disciples of Christ; these teachings were variously interpreted by later Christian writers—sometimes by

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74 It is clear from the text that Clement is referring to distinctions within contemporary Christian congregations, although using the model of the Old Testament orders within Jewish worship, *pace* Faivre, “Laïe (λαïκός, laicus),” *RAC* 22 (2008), 826–27.
the same writer in different contexts—in more or less literal and more or less demanding ways. In addition, in 1 Cor. 7, a locus classicus for Christian celibacy, the apostle Paul distinguishes between the married person, distracted by the things of the world in order to please the spouse, and the unmarried person, free to dedicate himself or herself wholly to the things of God.\textsuperscript{75} He also makes provision for consecrated virgins and widows within the early Christian communities. But his exhortations to Christian perfection are not directed only to the unmarried. When he differentiates his precepts, it is along different lines, to address differences in situation and function: Greeks or Jews, men or women, slaves or free, bishops, presbyters, deacons, prophets, teachers, healers, speakers in tongues, and more.\textsuperscript{76} These differences were already generating friction within the churches: Paul emphasizes the need for unity by invoking the image of the human body, where each member has a necessary function for the whole, regardless of its relative “superiority.” Asceticism, however, the discipline of body and mind for the keeping of the commandments, is frequently taught or assumed in the New Testament canon, and never limited to apostles or to celibate Christians.\textsuperscript{77}

The idea of pursuing a higher standard was developed somewhat differently in Clement of Alexandria, whose emphasis on the attainment of the highest knowledge of God through ascetic living and continuous immersion in Scripture led Marrou to call him the first theorist of hesychasm.\textsuperscript{78} We must note however, that the “gnostic” of Clement could still be a family man living in the world; thus he does not map exactly onto the continent ascetic of Paul. In fact, in some ways he was directly opposed, because one of Clement’s primary concerns was to rebut the


\textsuperscript{76} This is paralleled in late medieval sermons \textit{ad ordines}: Congar, “Laïc et laïcat,” 87–88.

\textsuperscript{77} Florovsky, “Ascetic Ideal in the New Testament.”

spiritual elitism, whether ascetical or esoteric, that led Encratite and so-called Gnostic movements to divide the Church into categories of more and less perfect.\(^79\) In response, Clement articulated a theology of the completeness of baptism for all Christians, worked out by gradual life-long training (\textit{askēsis}) that manifested the full reality of the gift once received.\(^80\) He assumed married life as the normal state for Christians and extols the common life of Christian discipline practiced jointly by man and wife. However, he foresees as its ultimate end the overcoming of the division between the sexes in the age to come, in the perfected human being.\(^81\) In a sense, then, Clement acknowledges the superiority of the single life and the overcoming of sexual difference, but he tries to relegate its literal fulfillment to eschatology.

In this he would already have been challenged by fellow catholic Christians of his time, and not just enкратites or gnostics. Indeed, his successor in Alexandria, the famous Origen, was said to have castrated himself, in very literal obedience to Jesus’ saying regarding those who make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven.\(^82\) Though as a more mature exegete he came to regret this rash act, the great theological system that he constructed to reconcile the Scriptures with Hellenic Platonist philosophy provided the theological foundations for conscious ascetical self-cultivation. According to him, the primordial Fall of Man was in reality a falling-away from a primordial unity of minds in God. The human body was a result of this fall, and would thus ultimately be transcended, but in the meantime it served not only as a source of temptation, but as a pedagogical tool to humble the soul’s pride. Asceticism utilized this providential gift to ascend back to the ultimate divine unity. Thus the body was given a certain

\(^80\) This understanding of baptism was developed by later monastic writers such as Mark the Monk and Diadochus of Photike to combat the ascetical doctrines of the Messalian movement, which were perceived by many as a kind of monastic extremism.
\(^81\) See especially \textit{Paedagogus} 4.10.1–3, with a beautiful depiction of the unity in both earthly and spiritual life of a Christian man and wife. See also the study by Jean-Paul Broudéhoux, \textit{Mariage et famille chez Clément d’Alexandrie} (Paris: Beauchesne, 1970).
\(^82\) Eusebius, \textit{Ecclesiastical History} 6.8.1 (henceforth \textit{EH}).
value, albeit an ambiguous one. Sexual activity dulled the acuteness of the spiritual senses, so it was better for body to abstain, in order to serve as a fitting instrument for the mind that yearned for the taste of divine contemplation.83

Origen’s system also involved a certain intellectual élitism. His prolific theological creativity was founded on a harsh ascetical regimen but also on immersion in both sacred and secular lore.84 In his position as head of the catechetical school at Alexandria, he eventually decided to delegate the introductory classes to his disciples in order to focus on more advanced doctrine. The ability to follow him would also have largely been predicated on one’s own ability to spare time and energy from more secular occupations in order to engage in the minute examination of Scripture and the allegorical exposition of the mysteries hidden in its symbolic language. This was not a task limited to bishops; instead it was cultivated in erudite ascetic study circles, similar in many ways to what one might find among contemporary pagan philosophers such as Plotinus. The possibility of attaining a spiritual level greater than the majority of Christian believers through personal dedication and discipline involved a tension with the more formal structures of ecclesiastical order that distinguished laypeople from clergy. Another complicating factor in this mix was the presence of confessors, people who had suffered for their faith but not died. The veneration accorded them, as being nearly equal to the deceased martyrs, could become a challenge to the authority of the ordained clergy.85 Ideally, both charismata would be concentrated in the same person. This seems to be the way that, by the end of the formative period of persecuted early Christianity, Eusebius of Caesarea sees things.

84 Eusebius, EH 6.2–3.
85 During his lifetime, Origen clashed with the bishop of Alexandria, Demetrius, but was supported by bishops of other sees who flocked to him to benefit from his learning (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 6.8.3–4). Origen himself died a martyr in the persecution of Decius.
Baynes cites Eusebius as his first source of the concept of the dual ethic.\textsuperscript{86} The passage to which he refers is worth quoting in full:

The one [Moses] wrote on lifeless tables, the Other [Christ] wrote the perfect commandments of the new covenant on living minds. And His disciples, accommodating their teaching to the minds of the people, according to the Master’s will, delivered on the one hand to those who were able to receive it, the teaching given by the perfect master to those who rose above human nature. While on the other the side of the teaching which they considered was suitable to men still in the world of passion and needing treatment, they accommodated to the weakness of the majority, and handed over to them to keep sometimes in writing, and sometimes by unwritten ordinances to be observed by them. Two ways of life were thus given by the law of Christ to His Church. The one is above nature, and beyond common human living; it admits not marriage, child-bearing, property nor the possession of wealth, but wholly and permanently separate from the common customary life of mankind, it devotes itself to the service of God alone in its wealth of heavenly love! And they who enter on this course appear to die to the life of mortals, to bear with them nothing earthly but their body, and in mind and spirit to have passed to heaven. Like some celestial beings they gaze upon human life, performing the duty of a priesthood to Almighty God for the whole race ... And the other more humble, more human, permits men to join in pure nuptials and to produce children, to undertake government, to give orders to soldiers fighting for right; it allows them to have minds for farming, for trade, and the other more secular interests as well as for religion: and it is for them that times of retreat and instruction, and days for hearing sacred things are set apart. And a kind of secondary grade of piety is attributed to them, giving just such help as such

lives require, so that all men, whether Greeks or barbarians, have their part in the coming of salvation, and profit by the teaching of the Gospel.\footnote{Eusebius of Caesarea, \textit{Demonstratio Evangelica} 1.8 (henceforth \textit{DE}).}

There is a definite hierarchy here between those able to receive the perfect New Testament law and the rest of the faithful, who straggle behind, still partially in the land of the Mosaic law, it is implied. The life of the laity is called a second grade (\textit{bathmos}) of piety. Elsewhere in the paragraph it is called “more humble,” or perhaps “inferior” (\textit{hupobebêkôs}). It is considered a state of infirmity, occasioned by the world and by the passions, requiring a therapeutic response on the part of the apostles. At the same time it is considered the state of nature, as it were, the common and customary life of humanity. The other, perfect way of life exceeds it by rising above nature, winged by divine love.

Yet Eusebius does not give to celibacy an absolute value. Christianity, for him, is a return to the primal holiness of the Old Testament Patriarchs, true friends of God, after the necessary but regrettable phase of the Mosaic Law.\footnote{The patriarchs as proto-Christians are discussed in \textit{Dem.Evang.} 1.2, and Christ’s full implementation of Christianity in 1.7.} Those ancient saints did well to engage in intercourse and raise large families, since the earth needed to be peopled, particularly by children who had been raised in godly Hebrew homes. Moreover, life was simpler back then, so that they could balance contemplation with child-rearing. By contrast the world, according to Eusebius, is now properly populated and, in any case, “perishing and running down and reaching its last end.”\footnote{\textit{DE} 1.9.} Now life involves too much stress, so that Paul’s counsel to refrain from marriage in order to avoid anxious cares is in order. Such eschatological expectation is quickened by the sight of
crowds of people running to hear the gospel teaching. For them the Church was able to provide celibate clergy, free from distractions and able to devote themselves to preaching and teaching. These “fathers” thus begat not a handful of children carnally, but a multitude spiritually.

The emphasis here is not on individual ascetic striving, but the service of the Church in catechesis and teaching. This kind of celibacy is primarily clerical, but with an emphasis more on the preaching of the word than on the celebration of the sacrament. Eusebius is content, however, with the idea that a man can beget a few children early in life and, with that task out of the way, be ordained as a celibate cleric. In his relaxed attitude on this point he seems to take a middle place between Clement’s devotion to marriage and Origen’s lofty conception of virginity.

Yet by the time Eusebius penned this carefully-considered portrait of a double ethic in Christianity, it was on the verge of becoming obsolete. The rumbles of the monastic earthquake were just beginning to be felt. Eusebius’ high-pitched doctrine, based on a distinctive view of history and on an intellectualist asceticism, was smoothed down by Byzantine thought to the stark double ethic that Baynes noted. But the idea of a celibate clerical order devoted to the service of religion, as well as that of erudite ascetics engaging prolifically in exegesis, did not wholly disappear.

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90 Eusebius here probably implies, or has at the back of his mind, Mt. 24:14, where Jesus says: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”
91 DE 1.9.
92 This is supported by reference to Old Testament figures who only had a few children (relatively) early in life, such as Enoch, Isaac, and Joseph (DE 1.9).
93 Eusebius did, however, have a high regard for stringent self-discipline. This is evident in his insertion in the Ecclesiastical History of Philo’s description of the Therapeutai, a Jewish ascetical community in Alexandria, mistaken by Eusebius for an early Christian group—precisely because their way of life accorded so well with his idea of Christian excellence (EH 2.17). It is even clearer in his description of the rigors that the young Origen imposed on himself (EH 6.2–3). He also mentions the flight of Christians into the wilderness during various persecutions, but almost always as a form of martyrdom, without developing the idea of permanent residence there (6.42.2–4). See also the story of bishop Narcissus of Jerusalem, who fled to the wilderness to escape slander (6.9.6).
94 Cf. Socrates, Ecclesiastical History 1.11, telling of a debate over mandatory clerical celibacy at the First Ecumenical Council, in Nicea in 325. It was resolved conclusively by the intervention of bishop
The rise of monasticism

St Anthony, the father of monasticism, was of course not the first monk. In addition, there in Syria there flourished the institution of bnay/bnat qiyama, which included single celibates or continent married folk following ascetical regimens but remaining part of their local communities, offering liturgical and philanthropy services.\(^{95}\) The Life of Anthony itself tells mentions other local solitaries who had already been cultivating ascetic discipline for quite some time before he made his renunciation; papyri provide further evidence for such early monks or renunciants in Egypt.\(^{96}\)

But Anthony’s importance as a symbol of the advent of monasticism cannot be underestimated. The Life of Anthony is the foundation charter, as it were, of Christian monasticism and establishes, right at the outset, the monastic ideal that shaped later Byzantine society.\(^{97}\) It presents Anthony as a devout young Christian peasant in Upper Egypt. His meditation on the Scriptures, and particularly the example of simplicity and charity provided by the apostolic community of Jerusalem described in Acts 3–4, prepares in him a desire for that

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\(^{96}\) E.A. Judge, “The earliest use of *monachos* for >monk< (P. Coll. Youtie 77) and the origins of monasticism,” *JAC* 20 (1977): 72–89.

\(^{97}\) Holl, *Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt*, 139. Cf. the quotation of Gregory of Nazianzus at the start of the next section. For an up-to-date overview of Anthony and scholarship about him, see Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 57–113.
pristine holy society. His thoughts are spurred into action by subsequently hearing the words of Jesus to the rich young man in the Gospel, calling him to perfection through the renunciation of all earthly goods in order to follow Jesus. This leads Anthony to adopt a strictly ascetical way of life, living in poverty, labor, and constant prayer on the edge of his village, and consulting other ascetics nearby for counsel and examples. What eventually sets him apart from these predecessors is his withdrawal to the deep desert. While foreshadowed by the flight into wildernesses of some persecuted Christians in the previous centuries, this step was an original development, in that it was a deliberate and permanent move into geographical isolation in order to single-mindedly cultivate ascetic discipline as a path to Christ.

This is the defining character of the new class of monks, setting its stamp on the dual ethic. How can we perceive it here at its origins, as the rise of monasticism begins to set the question in its classic Byzantine form? As Holl notes, the *Life of Anthony* emphasizes the necessity of asceticism for the ethical struggle to keep the commandments of God. Furthermore, the struggle to mortify the flesh is not conceived as an end in itself: it results in spiritual purity, the tranquil equilibrium of body and soul, and the gift of working miracles. But while recognizing the genuinely evangelical elements of this doctrine, he suggests that it places a great question mark next to non-monastic piety. If strict asceticism is so necessary, then what about the large number of laypeople who do not take up such a struggle? This is a motif that runs through much of Holl’s analysis.98

Anthony himself mitigated somewhat this tension in his own career. Once he had attained to the natural state of dispassion, he was able to minister to all comers and thus become “a physician given by God to Egypt.”99 Nor was this all a one-way relation, with Anthony and other

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99 *Life of Anthony* 87.3.
holy monks conferring benefits to needy laypeople. Anthony’s early asceticism was supported by his lay neighbors, bringing him food and nursing the wounds sustained in demonic assaults. The *Apophthegmata Patrum* also offers another perspective on Anthony: when he asked God if there was anybody who was his equal, he received this response: “In the city there is someone like you, a doctor by profession, who gives all his money to the needy, and the whole day long he sings the Thrice-Holy Hymn with the angels.”100 This poignant anecdote captures that Byzantine fascination with holiness in unexpected places that we noted above.

Anthony’s example soon attracted disciples and imitators, so that “the desert became a city,” filling in the middle ground between the isolated holy man and the secular world with a range of monks with different lifestyles and attaining to different states of holiness.101 These forms, ranging from extreme isolation to loose forms of organization such as the *skete* or *lavra* with its scattered cells around a common church and refectory, and to the highly-regimented common life in the *coinobion*, also played a role in mediating the dual ethic. Even the looser forms of organization located farther out in the desert developed economic ties with the settled land. Pachomius expressly founded his communities to provide the opportunity for monasticism to weaker people who could not endure the rough asceticism of the anchorites.102 Although coenobites were still monks and thus qualitatively different in their way of life from laypeople, their presence in organized communities necessarily brought them closer to the world, both by simple distance and by the fact that they were deeply implicated in the economic fabric of their localities. They soon developed dedicated philanthropic institutions such as hospitals, hospices,

100 *Apophthegmata Patrum collectio alphabetica*, Anthony 24 (PG 65: 84b).
and almshouses, thus tying them even more closely into lay life. These large monasteries, located on fertile ground near the river, could hardly be said to be located in the “desert.” But the withdrawal into the wilderness characteristic of the anchorite maintained its hold on the imagination and provided the literary form of monastic withdrawal, now often mapped onto the retreat into the high walls of the coenobium. The desert and the cloister became the normative forms of monasticism, with their emphasis on poverty and obedience, in addition to the celibacy that had always been expected of dedicated Christian ascetics. It was in such communities that various elements of monastic discipline, such as the techniques of warfare with the thoughts (logismoi) and the cultivation of pure prayer (which had been sketched out in the looser ascetic circles of earlier teachers such as Origen), received their mature form. Yet the older practice of monks living in or near towns and cities individually or in small groups continued to flourish and even produced some famous holy men.

Early monasticism is often described by modern scholars as a lay movement. Given the emphasis placed on defining “lay” earlier in this chapter, it is necessary to consider what exactly this might mean. The push to broaden our sense of the origins of monasticism makes this difficult, since as we have seen the forerunners of monasticism in Origenian study groups or the Syrian bnay qyama often included clerics. If we limit ourselves to the classics of early Egyptian monasticism, it is clear that the majority of monks were not of the ordained clergy. They were neither as indifferent to sacramental communion nor as hostile to the clerical hierarchy as is


104 It is in fact to an ascetic of this kind that the first attested use of the term “monk” is applied: Judge, “Earliest use of monachos,” 72–89. Later ecclesiastical and imperial legislation tried to severely restrict, though not completely eliminate, this urban form of monasticism; cf. Canon 42 of Trullo, discussed in the penultimate chapter of the present study.

sometimes assumed; the normal rhythm of the sketes and coenobia included regular Eucharistic liturgies. They were, however, well aware of the spiritual dangers which ordination could pose for the monk—the disturbance of his retirement, for one, but also the more subtle temptation of vainglory. And while the majority of monks do not seem to have tried to directly challenge clerical authority, there was bound to be friction as the monks gained a reputation among the broader population for holiness, miracle-working and spiritual counsel, and as their numbers grew. Pachomius had to defend his large-scale monastic experiment before a local synod. Nor should we forget other formidable ascetics who fell afoul of orthodoxy, such as the supporters of Arius in Alexandria and Hieracas, an encratite leader in Egypt. One reason that the received narrative of the rise of monasticism has been so successful is that it is largely the story of how orthodox Nicene bishops such as Athanasius tapped the monastic movement for talented bishops, for support against heretics, and for spiritual practices with which to instruct their lay flocks; that is, of how they integrated monasticism into the lifeblood of the Church.

Be that as it may, as monasticism grew to be a major movement in church and society, even unordained monks were no longer simply considered to be laypeople. Their way of life set them clearly apart. In this respect it would be useful to differentiate between the religious life as a function and as a way of life or state. The first, by definition, belongs to the clergy, while the second can characterize both clergy and monastics. Clergy might be expected to live a more intense spiritual life in accordance with their liturgical tasks, but as already mentioned with reference to Baynes, in Byzantium it was the monk whose way of life was his defining feature.

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Empire and Desert

Early monasticism is often seen as a movement of protest against the increasing temptation for Christianity to compromise with the world in the wake of toleration and the imperial favor of Constantine. Yet Anthony set out for the desert long before Constantine came to power, perhaps even before he was born. Christianity in his time was already quite comfortable. Despite suffering brief periods of brutal persecution, as under Decius and lastly under Diocletian and Maximian, Christians could be expected to be among the educated classes of Alexandria (the audience of Clement’s writings) or the substantial landowners of an Egyptian village (in the case of Anthony himself), and could even appeal to the imperial power to enforce a decision in an intra-Christian dispute involving property (to deprive Paul of Samosata of church buildings after he was synodically deposed).\textsuperscript{110} This suggests that the picture of monasticism as a flight from the dangers of worldliness, once the Church was legalized under Constantine, needs to be nuanced. Certainly, the imperial favor bestowed on the Church by that emperor and his successors marked a tremendous quantitative increase in the pressure exerted by material prosperity on the life of the Church. But the spiritual concern that underlies monasticism was already acutely relevant in Anthony’s pre-Constantinian situation. The dual ethic arose, in its concrete social form, from the Constantinian revolution in the fortunes of the Church; but its problematic predates that transformation. We must remember, in this regard, to be wary of hindsight; the imperial Church was not a foregone conclusion in 312, nor for that matter in 363.\textsuperscript{111} By doing so, we can observe the early development of monasticism, by Anthony and his

\textsuperscript{110} Eusebius, \textit{EH} 7.30.19.

\textsuperscript{111} Even Eusebius, with all his enthusiasm for Constantine and sons, only foresaw the partnership of Church and Empire as leading to greater prominence for the Gospel and the abolition of the most obnoxious pagan practices such as bloody sacrifice to idols, not the wholesale conversion of the Roman world (Peter
contemporaries in Egypt and elsewhere, as the piecemeal experiment that it was—thus appreciating better both the fundamental spiritual urge that drove them, and the historical contingency of the particular historical shape that the urge took.

Despite these cautions, there is a great deal of truth to the idea of a historical antinomy between Empire and Desert.\(^\text{112}\) The late Roman experiment in establishing a Christian Empire, initiated by Constantine and continued piecemeal by subsequent emperors and churchmen, was in many ways a response to the imperative to redeem the world. Eusebius’ *Life of Constantine*, is one of the earliest attempts to deal with the challenge of articulating a lay piety in an imperial mode, combining personal sanctification with empire-wide benefaction. In contrast, the monastic experiment might be perceived simply as an attempt to flee the world. But the latent sectarian tendencies of monastic renunciation were countered by the urge for monastic communities to embody a new and holy Christian society, based on the model of the early apostolic community that inspired Anthony’s renunciation. The “Desert a City” was not cut off from the “Empire a Church,” as we will consider the various ways Anthony’s desert ideal was worked out by succeeding Church Fathers.\(^\text{113}\) This close relation relationship always involved an opportunity for mission and a risk of compromise, and thus remained an antinomy, never a synthesis.

As a corollary to these observations, we should be cautious in handling the rhetoric that, very soon, made of the monk a successor of the martyr. Anthony’s urge to perfect his asceticism by suffering martyrdom in Alexandria during the last spate of the Great Persecution shows that

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\(^\text{113}\) Not least as an arbitrator between Church and State: Brown, “Rise and Function,” 93. But sometimes also as a challenge: “In Byzantium there was a proliferation of little centres of power that competed with the vested hierarchy of Church and State.” Ibid., 95.
martyrdom was still something distinct from monasticism, as it had been distinct from earlier Christian asceticism. In this I disagree with Baynes, who saw the double ethic foreshadowed in the perfection ascribed to martyrdom in the early Church. The theological significance of the ideal of martyrdom—both as a state of suffering and an inspired state—for the meaning of monasticism cannot be doubted, but its historical effect on society is very different. The opportunity, even the expectation, of becoming a martyr was conceivably open to all Christians in the first three centuries, whatever their different characters in respect of status within the Church, ascetical or clerical. Martyrs were a small class of persons created posthumously, albeit with a tremendous effect on the consciousness and practice of their brethren still in the body. Monks, on the other hand, became a permanent category within the Church Militant, influencing and influenced by the rest of society in a way dictated by their continuing bodily presence and bodily needs. In our study of the seventh century, however, we will begin to see the reappearance of martyrdom as a pressing concern, as Christians again faced political and religious situations where piety, both lay and monastic, could involve the choice of compromise or death.

Basil of Caesarea: Monastic and lay legislator

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114 Later in the period covered by this dissertation, we will see how martyrdom re-emerged as a means for laypeople to attain ultimate perfection under Islamic rule in the former Near Eastern provinces of the Roman Empire.

115 I do not wish to suggest hereby that martyrs were not concretely present in the earthly Church, or that they did not continue to have an intense give-and-take with the living. For example, the living consciously sought to influence them by their supplications; while the earthly reality of the martyrs was also less consciously, or at least less explicitly, influenced by the contestation of their cults—through their shrines, biographies, etc.
Gregory Nazianzene remarked that Athanasius of Alexandria, by writing the *Life of Anthony*, “set forth, in the form of a narrative, the laws of the monastic life.” Gregory, with his intensely personal and inward-looking vision of ascetical life, seems to have found nourishment in the example of the lone Anthony struggling to subdue his passions in the desert. His close friend Basil of Caesarea, the second-greatest figure after Anthony in the traditional account of eastern monasticism, seems to have had a rather different view.

Basil’s condemnation of the anchoritic life in the *Long Rules* is famously categorical. Even suggestion by some monks that the most approved of the brethren might be allowed to withdraw a little into the wilderness outside the community in order to labor in great solitude is rejected in no uncertain terms. This fact helps us translate correctly an important passage from Gregory’s encomium of Basil that summarizes his monastic synthesis. The old translation in the *NPNF* series says that he “he founded cells for ascetics and hermits, but at no great distance from his cenobitic communities,” knowingly or unknowingly depicting the actual practice in later Byzantine monasticism, itself based partly on a spurious work attributed to Basil. In fact, he is describing the way that Basil created a place for tightly-knit, self-contained communities of monks—*askêteria* and *monastêria*—on the margins of towns and cities, which then served as an example of retirement and recollection for those “mixed” and “social” virgins (both men and

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118 *Toû tòvnu èpímuioj bìou kai toû mýngadou máxymuon proû ùllhlous ws tà pòlla kai diástam;nwv, kai oûdètèroj pàntos hé to kàldov h é to fàyloj ánepmikton èchontov- ánla tou mé hìsayhio mèn òntov mállon kai kathedstikátos kai òthei súnagontov, ouk èttóroj de dia to tìs àrètès ábassánistov kai ásugkritisn- toû de pràktikwntèroj mèn mállon kai xhìsmwntèroj, to dé thoriwdoj ou phèuyotov, kai toûtov òrístà katèllalxen ùllhlous kai sunekráxovn- áskhìtria kai monastèria demàmènonv mév, ou pórewo de tòn koinònìkòn kai mýngadov, oude èòspere técwv tìnì mèsw tàsts dialeabov kai áp' ùllhlów xhìsas, álla plèstovn súnàfias kai diàxwýças- ìna mète to filowòsouf ìkoìnìhtovn hì múte to pràktikov àfýlòsouf- èòspere dè gè kai thàlassa tà par' èautovn ùllhlów òntídòntènes, eîs múia dòxan thèov suneðróxov.

119 This balance of coenobitic and eremetic lifestyles is neatly evoked by the “deutero-Basilian” *Diataxei* (*Constitutiones asceticae*, PG 31: 1321–1428).
women) who, following the ancient tradition of urban, active asceticism, continued to be involved in the great ecclesiastical and philanthropic institutions that were gradually transforming the Greco-Roman city.\textsuperscript{120}

In creating this synthesis, Basil was not reacting to Anthony, at least not directly. Rather, he was seeking to preserve the monastic impulse in the face of the excesses of the radical followers of Eustathius of Sebaste, whose aggressive rejection of marriage and social norms led to their condemnation by the Council of Gangra, the canons of which are an important monument to the tensions faced by contemporary bishops in seeking to balance praise of virginity with affirmation of marriage.\textsuperscript{121} Basil’s own ascetic development was long and complex and closely connected with the more moderate Eustathius whom he came to know, first through his family and later through close personal collaboration. Anthony’s radical renunciation, by its very solitary nature (even when replicated by many individuals), did not gravely threaten the institutions of the world or the laypeople who lived in it. The early Eustathian movement, on the other hand, was constituted of more cohesive groups of ascetics who remained in close proximity to the towns and villages of Asia Minor and who could thus harm or hinder the larger Church on a larger scale. Basil’s achievement—already prepared by Eustathius’ own adaptation to the criticisms of his early activities—was to harness this potential and render it fully orthodox.\textsuperscript{122}

In this orthodox integration of monasticism into the larger Church, Basil emphatically de-emphasized the idea of monasticism as a status set apart.\textsuperscript{123} “Christianity has a single way of life,

\textsuperscript{120} Andrew Louth, “On Being a Christian in Late Antiquity: St Basil the Great between the Desert and the City,” unpublished paper (provided to me by the author). For Basil’s philanthropy, see Susan Holman, \textit{The Hungry are Dying: Beggars and Bishops in Roman Cappadocia} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

\textsuperscript{121} For the sources see CPG 8553–8554; English translation: NPNF Series 2, vol. 14, 92–102.

\textsuperscript{122} Elm, \textit{Virgins of God}, 134–36.

\textsuperscript{123} The text that was often used in past scholarship to demonstrate a strong sense of “two ways of life” in Basil’s thought, and of marriage as simply a “concession to lack of self-control,” the \textit{Sermon on the Renunciation of Worldly Life}, has been demonstrated to be spurious: Jean Gribomont, “L’Exhortation à renoncement attribuée à saint Basile,” \textit{OCP} 21 (1955): 375–98.
with one goal, the glory of God,” Basil remarks in the *Long Rules*.\textsuperscript{124} Everywhere, in both his ascetical works and his more general *Moralia*, he emphasizes the definition and duties of the Christian as such, enjoining a kind of evangelical maximalism as the one high standard.\textsuperscript{125} Basil does think monasticism to be the most exalted state, but precisely insofar as it is the easiest and most practical working out of the demands of the gospel on *every* Christian, married or single.\textsuperscript{126} This monasticism is defined primarily by a quiet practical withdrawal to within easy distance of the rest of the Church, and not by physical self-exile in the wilderness nor by a sharp ideological compartmentalization from lay life.

An integral view of ecclesiology is intrinsically promoted by Basil’s Pauline emphasis on the monastic community as an interdependent body, in the image of the early apostolic community of Jerusalem. Holl thought that the monasteries were still cut off from the broader life of the Church, little more than self-enclosed *ecclesiolae*. But Basil’s emphasis on the common goals of monastic and lay life, his provisions for charity, hospitality, and other ministries by the monasteries to their non-monastic neighbors, and the way that they were bound to the episcopal philanthropic institutions, themselves located on the edges of the towns and largely staffed by monastics, makes that idea untenable. Finally, Basil’s own preaching to lay

\textsuperscript{124} Response to Question 20 (PG 31:973): Μονότροπός ἐστιν ὁ τοῦ Χριστιανοῦ βίος, ἕνα σκοπὸν ἔχων, τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ.


\textsuperscript{126} Gribomont, influenced by the Vatican II-era reaction against clericalism, argued that the earlier versions of his *Ascticon* were not directed to definable, clearly monastic communities. Silvas, *Asketikon*, refutes this claim based on careful work on the *Small Asceticon*, as reconstructed from corroboration of Greek texts with the early Latin translation of Rufinus, and shows that Basil always had a clear sense of distinct monasteries.
congregations shows his vision of all urban life being formed by earnest asceticism into a sober and harmonious Christian society. 

Basil’s relentlessly social emphasis was balanced by the more personal and inward-looking visions of the two Gregories, his friend, of Nazianzus, already mentioned and his younger brother, of Nyssa. The former was in some ways more deeply impressed by the ideal of paideia nurtured in the Hellenic polis than Basil. But he was pessimistic about the blessings of civilization, whether comely children or monuments of stone, implicated as they were in the temporal cycle of birth and death. Even to the idea of a Christian city he could say “no thanks,” after suffering the intrigues of episcopal councils. His monastic ideal was idiosyncratic for the times, harking back to the deep study of sacred and secular lore and the intense friendship of kindred spirits that marked the circle of Origen. The other Gregory had not been exposed to the glory of Athens. He was less eloquent than his Nazianzene namesake and less practical than his brother, but modern opinion tends to think him the most profound thinker of the three. He articulated at greater length than Nazianzene the tragedy of man’s condition, caught in birth and death and civilization, and the liberation from it promised by virginity, despite being the only one of the group to be married. His writings on theological anthropology and the mystical love of God exerted great influence on theologians of succeeding generations, such as Maximus the Confessor, whom we will consider in a later chapter.

*John Chrysostom and the politeia of Christ*

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127 Cf. his Hexaemeron and his two Homilies on Fasting (CPG 2835, 2845–46).
129 On Gregory’s life and thought, see John A. McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), and on his dislike of extreme asceticism p. 28.
The details of Basil’s imposing vision for the laity were, however, filled in by the more voluble arguments of John Chrysostom, his younger contemporary. His tremendous homiletic output offers at once the most exalted theory of lay married life, and the most complete prescriptions for practice of same.\textsuperscript{131} Chrysostom has unjustly been maligned by modern scholars, especially of the feminist bent, as a dour monastic misogynist. Such evaluations rely almost exclusively on a combination of selective quotation of his early works and prejudice against his definitely hierarchical view of the nature of things.\textsuperscript{132} But his works must be read as a whole and with appreciation of the rhetorical context of genre and audience. When allowance is made, furthermore, for a development of Chrysostom’s thought, as he moved from the fervor of the ascetic Bible school of Diodore and the struggles of solitary monasticism in the mountains, to priesthood and preaching in Antioch and finally episcopal responsibility and close spiritual friendship with the deaconess Olympias in Constantinople, we remark a progressive broadening and enrichment of Chrysostom’s thought on lay piety.\textsuperscript{133}

The foundation of his teaching on this topic is, as with Basil, the emphasis on the essential unity of monastic and lay piety. In a characteristic passage, Chrysostom anticipates the common objection of his Antiochian congregation that “I am a layman, I have a wife and children, that is for priests, that is for monks.”\textsuperscript{134} He has no time for such excuses; with his

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{131 We would presumably know more about the views of other bishops and theologians on lay piety if we had more of their sermons; but then again, the impressive preservation of Chrysostom’s output probably mirrors the quality of his thoughts and words in comparison to others.}


\footnote{134 Κοσμικός εἰμι ἄνήρ, γυναῖκα ἔχω καὶ παιδίς, ταῦτα τῶν ἱερέων ἐστι, ταῦτα τῶν μοναχῶν. \textit{Adversus Judaeos} 8.4 (PG 48: 932). Interestingly, we see here how monks could slip from an originally “lay”}
constant emphasis on willpower, he urges laypeople to order their lives and households in order to enable them to live like monks. On the one hand, this entails taking the local monks in the region of Antioch as exemplars of simplified, purified living, in contrast to the leaden weight of the vice-ridden civic Hellenism of Antioch.135 This has been dubbed a democratization of asceticism—which might be true enough in the narrow perspective of late fourth-century Antioch, but in the long term could also be viewed as a return to the normative Christianity of the good old apostolic days, as Chrysostom himself often argued.136 But despite his rhetorical diatribes showing the (im)practical benefits monastic simplicity might have on quotidian lay life, he was not merely seeking to simplistically re-invent the lay life in the image of the monastic.

The growing sympathy for lay realities which Chrysostom developed from the start of his clerical ministry enabled him to build an integral ideal of specifically lay piety. If the content, the what of salvation was the same for both ascetic and artisan, yet the practical means of achieving it, the how of holiness, could differ somewhat. Thus Chrysostom was not too shy to speculate on how the sexual act and its accompanying pleasure forged a union of the spouses, he waxed eloquent on the pure pleasures of domestic and neighborly harmony, and he even argued in several cases that the lay vocation was more useful insofar as holy laypeople were a more effective and more constant witness to Christianity, living as they did in the midst of the world.

 movement, as has been mentioned above, into a clericalized status, at least in the eyes of the laypeople themselves. As Jaclyn Maxwell, Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity: John Chrysostom and his Congregation at Antioch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 133 observes, this contrasts with Chrysostom’s attempt to lump them together in order to encourage asceticism among the laity. We might also add the supposition that he would be concerned to head off challenges to priestly and episcopal authority from monks, although this probably did not concern him much until his difficulties with the resident monastic population at Constantinople.

than the withdrawn monks.\textsuperscript{137} And last but not least, there was Chrysostom’s persistent, almost monotonous emphasis on almsgiving as the primary virtue, distinctly superior to mere bodily virginity and thus in some ways the great equalizer between monks and married.\textsuperscript{138}

This eloquent program for lay piety was not without its own internal tensions, but the more significant clash lay with the ingrained habits of Chrysostom’s Christian flock. He was “teaching to the converted,” at least in the sense that they were already Christian and generally proud to be so.\textsuperscript{139} This self-conscious Christianity was not merely nominal but expressed itself in pious habits such as relatively frequent attendance at church (and general appreciation of the sermons Chrysostom preached there), widespread observance of fasting during Lent, devotion to the cult of the martyrs, and reverence for monks and virgins: the recipe, in a nutshell, of much of conventional medieval piety. But it was precisely this conventionality that Chrysostom attempted to combat, because it kept laypeople from piety in spirit and in truth. Attendance at church was often an excuse for gossip about neighbors or the clergy, or to ogle members of the opposite sex; applause for sermons only reflected a tickling of the ears and not a change of morals; fasting was marred by being practiced in company with the large local Jewish population, or matched with indulgence in dice or adult entertainment; devotion on a given feast day became an excuse to forget piety at other times; and lastly, the awe accorded to the monastic state became the pretext

\textsuperscript{137} On sexual intercourse, see Homily on Colossians 12.5 (PG 62: 388).
\textsuperscript{138} John himself realized that his listeners might grow weary of preaching about almsgiving, but that did not deter him: “And perhaps one of you will say, ‘Every day you discourse on avarice.’ If only I were able to speak about it every night, too!” (Hom. 76 in Ioannem, PG 59:413), cited in the helpful study by Richard Newhauser, The Early History of Greed: The Sin of Avarice in Early Medieval Thought and Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 38; cf. idem, 45–46 for Chrysostom’s teaching on curing avarice through monastic renunciation or through lay almsgiving.
\textsuperscript{139} “Teaching to the converted” is the title of Ch. 4 of Maxwell, Christianization and Communication, for whom I am indebted to much of what follows. She develops in much greater detail the thoughts broached by the chapter in Brown, Body and Society. Cf. also Laurence Brottier, “Jean Chrysostome: un pasteur face à des demi-chrétiens,” Topoi: Orient-Occident Suppl. 5 (2004): 439–57, focusing on how Chrysostom sought to inculcate Christian virtue through theatrical language, not as a mere ploy but developing a real alternative of “spiritual theater” based on the contemplation of Scripture.
for avoiding assiduous spiritual cultivation of one’s own soul.\textsuperscript{140} Chrysostom’s central intuition in emphasizing the unity of lay and monastic ways of life was his urge to overcome the easy compartmentalization of life into profane and sacred spheres. If monasticism is extraordinary simply because it seeks to apply the gospel in all parts of life, then a lay piety which seeks to sanctify all of life in the world must be considered radical as well.\textsuperscript{141}

Chrysostom’s critique of the complacency of late antique Christians made headway only with difficulty. He certainly earned the love of the masses of common folk with his fiery solicitude on their behalf, and his sermons include as much evidence of their attempts to apply some of his lessons as of their failure to do so. But the resistance of Graeco-Roman civic ideology—a literally \textit{urbane} culture—to the austere exigencies of the \textit{politeia} of Christ as envisioned by Chrysostom was exemplified by the treatment he eventually received at the hands of a coalition of hostile elites—imperial, aristocratic, episcopal, and even monastic—as reforming archbishop of the New Rome.\textsuperscript{142} Though the gradual evolution of the late antique into the medieval city and the more abrupt changes enforced by plague and invasion may have contributed to a natural flowing of lay piety into the channels hewn by Chrysostom and colleagues, yet many of his complaints were echoed in the late seventh century by an ascetically-minded preacher such as Anastasius of Sinai, as we shall see.

\textit{Law: Justinian's legislation and patronage}

It was not only through preaching and persuasion that the fusion of secular and sacred in the Christianized late antique world was taking place, but also through legal means. Already in

\textsuperscript{140} Maxwell, \textit{Christianization and Communication}, 148–61.
\textsuperscript{141} The seventh-century writer Leontius of Neapolis had a similar intuition, though he developed it differently, as we will see in Ch. 3.
the early fourth century, episcopal synods such as the one at Gangra in Asia Minor attempted to bring the growing monastic movement under tighter canonical control. The imperial majesty followed, but the actual Christianization of (imperial) law and the increasing prominence of law within Christianity proceeded quite slowly.\footnote{The first instance being Valens’ law of 370 attempting to force monks, real or alleged, back to their neglected civic burdens; see Noel Lenski, “Valens and the Monks: Cudgeling and Conscription as a Means of Social Control,” \textit{DOP} 58 (2004): 93–117. For an overview of the late antique legislation regarding monks, see Charles A. Frazee, “Late Roman and Byzantine Legislation on the Monastic Life from the Fourth to the Eighth Centuries,” \textit{ChHist} 51, no. 3 (Sep. 1982): 263–279.} The first comprehensive and empire-wide legal package concerning monks and their relation to episcopal authority was only issued in 451 at the Council of Chalcedon. Its canons were not immediately enforced for various reasons, but they nevertheless became normative for the subsequent Byzantine orthodox tradition, and even for the monophysites who had not accepted the dogmatic decisions of the Council.\footnote{Hatlie, \textit{Monks and Monasteries of Constantinople}, 40.}

The Fourth Ecumenical Council and its decisions had the full backing of the contemporary eastern rulers Marcian and Pulcheria, but it remained till the next century for Justinian I to integrate both the doctrinal and canonical aspects of Chalcedon into an integral, universalizing vision of maximum earthly order based on a \textit{symphonia} of Church and State. The importance of monasticism in this vision was announced by such definite statements as, “The solitary life, and the spiritual contemplation following on it, is a sacred thing and raises souls from here to God; and it not only benefits those who enter into it, but also grants to everyone else a fitting benefit through its purity and the supplication to God it fosters.”\footnote{\textit{Prooim.} Nov. 133. The \textit{prooimion} to Novel 5 only refers to the monk’s benefits to himself, not to society as a whole.} Given this importance, and considering that he had already legislated with respect to bishops and priests, Justinian felt justified in issuing laws respecting the monastic polity as well, although he was quick to emphasize that he was in agreement with preceding canonical and patristic decrees on
the relevant issues. These and other measures were intended to ensure that monks and nuns were themselves pure, so that their supplications would continue to be effective in bring down the divine benefits upon their compatriots. Further measures ensured that they were enabled to do this without external disturbance. Such legal enactments seem to enshrine an already-existing niche that monastics had carved out for themselves in the socio-economic framework of the later Roman Empire. Furthermore, Justinian reinforced and systematized the regulation of private religious foundations of any kind, whether monasteries, churches, or philanthropic foundations, strengthening the legal authority of bishops over such institutions against the jealously guarded rights—or neglected duties—of the founders and their associates, whether lay or monastic.

The massive legal façade of the Justinianic imperial venture has always impressed, but it is difficult to say how much of an effect it actually had, despite its undoubted significance for expressing and reinforcing certain beliefs regarding the relation of monks to bishops, to laypeople, and to secular authority. Probably more effective and more lasting was the

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146 Thus he reinforced episcopal oversight of monastic activities (Chalcedon); he prohibited all but coenobitic monasteries (Basil of Caesarea), although making an allowance for a small number of tried and tested monks to live as solitary heschists in the vicinity of these monasteries (a provision already made in the deuto-Basilian Constitutiones asceticae and evident in the practice of various famous contemporary monasteries). Double monasteries were forbidden (following ancient concerns about mingling of male and female celibate ascetics, but contradicting the arrangements of Fathers such as Pachomius and Basil for male and female monasteries side-by-side, with tightly controlled relations). Cf. Holl, Enthusiasmus, 192–99 and Hatlie, Monks and Monasteries of Constantinople, 45–54; on double monasteries see Daniel F. Stramara Jr., “Double Monasticism in the Greek East, Fourth through Eighth Centuries,” JECS 6, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 269–312.

147 Among other things, slaves who had taken refuge in the tonsure were given a certain protection, if not full immunity, by a combination of legal process and statute of limitations; property of monks was protected from secular depredation or alienation; and ascetics were not to be mocked in theater shows (Frazee, “Late Roman and Byzantine Legislation on the Monastic Life,” 272–76). For Justinian’s attempts to enforce monastic poverty, see Avshalom Laniado, “The Early Byzantine State and the Christian Ideal of Voluntary Poverty,” in Charity and Giving in Monotheistic Religions, edited by Miriam Frenkel and Yaacov Lev, 15–43 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009).


149 On the other hand, the negative views of monks and nuns suggested by the need to ban satirical depictions of them by actors and actresses are echoed in a more serious form in an anonymous contemporary treatise On Political Science that considers them unproductive members of the body politic (Hatlie, Monks and
substantial patronage bestowed on monasteries by Justinian and Theodora and, to a lesser but still significant extent, by lesser grandees of state and church. Such largesse helped support burgeoning monastic philanthropic projects in Constantinople, often imported by eastern monophysite monks (persecuted at home but patronized in the capital) to a city where lay and episcopal charity had previously been the norm. Their presence as a dissenting doctrinal body died out subsequent to the reign of Justinian, but their ethos of intimate involvement with the poor did not. Thus an old tradition of monastic engagement with the world was preserved in the Byzantine Great Church, which might have otherwise been lacking due to the loss of the eastern provinces to the Persians and then the Arabs and the corresponding final separation of the monophysites.

Dionysius the Areopagite

Justinian often imposed his top-down vision of Christian Empire with a heavy authoritarian hand. A rather different point of view of taxis, the great Byzantine obsession with order, is found in the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. He purports to be the Athenian disciple of the apostle Paul, but modern scholars agree that he was a Syrian writing in the late fifth or early sixth century. Dionysius in fact coined the word “hierarchy.” In modern ears this term often bears connotations of rigidity and oppression, but Dionysius it is a positive and dynamic ordering, alive with divine vitality. Monks and laypeople are envisioned as part of the great chain of being, consisting of an angelic and earthly hierarchy, whereby the illuminating energies of God proceed outward into the world in order to gather it up into his mystical unity. The emphasis here is not on the superiority of one rank to another, but on their common

participation, each according to its ability, in the divine light. In this schema, unity is the ultimate goal, but it is achieved by the condescension of God who out of love allows his light to be refracted in the multiplicity in the world. Created beings are not only passive recipients in this process, but co-workers with God in initiating those who are lower in the hierarchy: they are both purified and purifier, illumined and illuminator, perfected and perfecting, to use the classic triad found in Dionysius.

The bishops’ role and character as the embodiment and principle of the ecclesiastical hierarchy is described in lofty terms:

Our own hierarchy is therefore said to embrace every one of its sacred constituents …

Indeed, if you talk of “hierarchy” you are referring in effect to the arrangement of all the sacred realities. Talk of “hierarch” and one is referring to a holy and inspired man, someone who understands all sacred knowledge, someone in whom an entire hierarchy is completely perfected and known.\footnote{Ecclesiastical Hierarchy 1.3, edited by Günter Heil and Adolf Martin Ritter, Corpus Dionysiacum 2 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991), 65–66 (henceforth Eccl.Hier.); translation from Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works, translated by Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem (New York, Paulist Press, 1987), 101.} The other clergy, priests and deacons, are also placed above monks, in a first, clerical triad of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The monks finally make their appearance at the head of the second, lay hierarchy, with the fully initiated and purified laypeople below them, and those in various stages of penance and purification in the lowest place. These levels of the second triad are each linked to one of those in the first triad, guided by the latter in the understanding of Scripture and theology that is proper to their spiritual condition. The order of penitents, which is differentiated even within itself, is entrusted to the deacons for purification. The middle order is already purified and entrusted to the priests for instruction. The members of this order are described in very positive terms, which depict them as possessing a high spiritual state. But the highest state
is reserved for the monks, whom Dionysius describes with reference to their relation to the
hierarchs:\footnote{152}

     But of all the initiates the most exalted order is the sacred rank of the monks which has
been purified of all stain and possesses full power and complete holiness in its own
activities. To the extent that is permissible, it has entered upon sacred contemplative
activity and has achieved intellectual contemplation and communion. This order is
entrusted to the perfecting power of those men of God, the hierarchs … [they are often
called] “monks,” because of the purity of their duty and service to God and because their
lives, far from being scattered, are monopolized by their unifying and sacred recollection
which excludes all distraction and enables them to achieve a singular mode of life
conforming to God and open to the perfection of God’s love.\footnote{153}

Thus the actual name, “monk,” is interpreted etymologically by Dionysius to emphasize the
single-minded spiritual drive of such men. He then proceeds to describe the rite of monastic
consecration, reflecting on the theological significance of the words and actions undertaken.

Having described how the officiating priest “reminds him of the rules governing a fully perfect
life and openly asserts that he must surpass the median way of life,”\footnote{154} Dionysius explains:

     This is why that which is entirely open to those of the middle order is often forbidden to
monks, because theirs is a single-minded type of life and they have the duty to be at one
only with the One, to be united with the sacred unity, to imitate so far as they may the life
of the clerics to whom they are much more akin than are the other ranks of initiates.\footnote{155}

\footnote{152 For an overview of monasticism in Dionysius, see Renê Roques, “Eléments pour une théologie de
l’état monastique selon Denys l’Aréopagite,” in Théologie de la vie monastique: Études sur la tradition
\footnote{153 Eccl.Hier. 6.1.3 (Luibheid and Rorem, 116).}
\footnote{154 Eccl.Hier. 6.2, (Luibheid and Rorem, 117).}
\footnote{155 Eccl.Hier. 6.3.2, (Luibheid and Rorem, 117-18).}
In the last phrase Dionysius implies certain almost sacral qualities for monks, placing them as close as possible to the clergy. Elsewhere, though, he makes it clear that they are not to presume to have any authority over the clergy, but only to follow their lead in being uplifted to divine contemplation.\textsuperscript{156} They are supposed to possess an exalted state of holiness, able to enjoy the perfect contemplation of the things of God through the agency of the hierarch. But they themselves cannot presume to perform any initiating function and so are firmly put in their place as “laypeople.”\textsuperscript{157}

These writings, going under the name of the first-century Dionysius, soon won great popularity among eastern Christian theologians. They presented a way to reconcile unity and difference in church and cosmos. The dynamic concept of hierarchy that they introduced is crucial to understanding later Byzantine thought. Among the greatest interpreters of Dionysius in that tradition was Maximus the Confessor, who forms the subject of Chapter 7 of the present work.

\textit{Grace: Spiritual direction by the Old Men of Gaza}

Despite the importance of Justinian’s instinct for codification and formalization and Dionysius’ lofty theory of hierarchy, the more informal and low-level developments taking place in the same period arguably had a more significant effect. In addition to the establishment of charitable ministries by individual monastics and layman, this informality also entered the eclectic Byzantine ascetical tradition from another eastern source, the monastic tradition of Palestine, and more specifically of Gaza. As we close this chapter, it is fitting that we look there to return to the phenomenon of the holy man in Late Antiquity, on the cusp of the Middle Ages.

\textsuperscript{156} Eccl.Hier. 6.3.1 (Luibheid and Rorem, 117).
\textsuperscript{157} In his long Epistle 8, To Demophilus, Dionysius rebukes a monk who broke ranks by presuming to challenge a priest’s decision (Heil and Ritter, 171–92; Luibheid and Rorem, 269–80).
But these are not the pioneering holy men of the heroic age of Anthony and Symeon Stylites. Rather the Great Old Man Barsanuphius and the Other Old Man John take their place as one particular culmination of an already old and solid tradition. Barsanuphius (a Copt whose formative monastic experience had been in Egypt) and John were securely placed in a very “Justinianic” monastic setting: mature hesychasts, immured in the vicinity of the coenobium of Abba Seridus, for which they acted as ultimate spiritual directors.

It is here that we can most clearly see the idea of the holy man as the center of concentric circles opening out from the monastery to the lay world. The abundance of preserved correspondence of Barsanuphius and John allows us to see this integral society of clergy, monastics, and laypeople in Gaza from within, as it were, avoiding many of the traps that hagiography and other more or less “edited” genres present. What emerges is a pattern of discipleship: the Old Men as sympathetic teachers and wise intercessors—rarely as wonder-workers, it should be noted—for a motley mix of pious Christians. The concerns of monks are not always wholly spiritual—for example, one continues to fret about his poor health and its effect on his ascetic regimen even after several reminders that asceticism primary concerns the

\[\text{\footnotesize 158 I omit discussion of the other great monastic figures of sixth-century Palestine, Sabas and his associates, as depicted in the hagiographical masterpieces of Cyril of Scythopolis (see Holl, Enthusiasmus, 171–91 and all of Binns, Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ). The early seventh-century history of the Judaen monasticism forms the subject of Ch. 4 of the present study.} \]

\[\text{\footnotesize 159 Claudia Rapp, ““For next to God, you are my salvation”: reflections on the rise of the holy man in late antiquity,” in The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, edited by James Howard-Johnston and Paul Hayward, 63–81 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). This is not to say that the correspondence of Barsanuphius and John as we have it is not selective or touched up. But it is clear from the immediacy once sense in the letters that they generally reflect the real written concerns of the questioners and the oral response of the Old Men as dictated to Abba Seridus. The critical text of the Questions and Answers is in Barsanuphius and John of Gaza, Correspondance, edited by François Neyt and Paula de Angelis-Noah, translated by Lucien Regnault, SC 426, 427, 450, 451, 468 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1997).} \]

inner struggle for purity and humility, not the outer physical labor. The laymen do not feel shy about bringing up mundane matters—regarding crops, livestock, family and social interactions—as well as questions that demonstrate attempts to live ascetic Christian lives in the world.

The Old Men unfailingly encompass both sets of concerns in their sometimes humorous, but unfailingly sympathetic replies. And in fact many of the seemingly earthly concerns do touch on spiritual problems. How can I get rid of locusts on my property without driving them onto my neighbors’ fields, thus bringing down both their wrath and God’s? Should I let my Jewish neighbor use my winepress? Can I accept the invitation of a friend, who also happens to be an important personage, to his pagan festival celebrations? The tendency of both common concerns to imply more profound ones shows the difficulty of separating out the secular from the sacred; and the tendency of lay Christians to want to partake of holiness, both by their own ascetical efforts and through recourse to the monastery of Abba Seridos or to the Old Men for guidance and prayers shows the fluidity of lay-monastic boundaries. Barsanuphius and John sometimes felt the need to solidify those boundaries, reminding laymen that they should not assume restrictions or presume distinctions intended for monks or clergy. But, paradoxically, this often was done through lightening the emphasis on canons and rules. One layman was told not to presume to impose on himself rules made for monks, whereas another layman adopted certain ones with the spiritual father’s blessing, and others were urged to go the whole way and receive the monastic habit.

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162 See the overview in the introduction to SC 468, pp. 1–32 (the volume contains all of the correspondence directed to non-monastics, in this case including bishops as well as laypeople).
would be the next abbot. In most cases, the Old Men turned their correspondents’ attention away from external rules and inward toward the cultivation of patience and humility that the rules were intended to promote.

In this kind of hierarchy, where the holy man possessed an ultimate authority, but refused to impose it beyond what the freedom of the questioner would accept; where lay, monastic, clerical, civic, secular, sacred all interacted and overlapped; where one ascended upward by plunging downward into the depths of inner lowliness; in all this we see better than in the laws of a Justinian or even the eloquence of a Chrysostom what an imperfect, but harmonious Christian politeia of lay and monastic was. But at the same time it was largely through the efforts of potentates and preachers over the past centuries that this mature rendition of the dual ethic was able to function. The Empire and the Desert were dependent on each other. The crisis of Empire soon after threatened to sweep away this autumnal glory of late antique Christianity. It is the preservation and transformation and creative renewal of this weighty tradition in difficult circumstances that I hope to clarify in the chapters which follow.

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166 Torrance, Repentance in Late Antiquity, 126 esp. n. 25.
3. Emperor and Monk: Paradigms of the pious ruler in the early seventh century

Sources and Context

Ever since Constantine, emperors constituted an important but nebulous ecclesiastical class in Byzantium. Gilbert Dagron’s monograph *Emperor and Priest* has catalogued the long medieval debate as to what, if any, sacerdotal qualities emperors possessed. Since the present study is not an examination of the clerical order, we will not enter into this debate except insofar as it might touch on the main problem of lay piety. Our categories are much more clear, for, no matter how great a given emperor’s theocratic pretentions might have been, none was ever heard to claim that he was both emperor and monk. As we discussed briefly in the previous chapter, there was always a certain tension between desert and empire. Apart from the particular temptations inherent in imperial office, even its positive duties seemed to preclude the way of life led by the monks.

Yet from early in its Christian phase imperial piety manifested monastic influences. Fourth-century emperors such as Constantine and Theodosius sought the prayers and oracles of desert fathers such as Anthony and John of Lycopolis. By the fifth century, monastic customs had begun to infiltrate the palace. Theodosius II is said to have turned the imperial household into a virtual monastery with its time measured by the hours of prayer, while his sister Pulcheria gloried in her vow of virginity, which she maintained despite a pro forma marriage to Marcian.

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for reasons of state. Then in the sixth century Justinian and Theodora patronized both orthodox and monophysite monks, with some of the latter even granted quarters in the palace. Justinian himself lived a very ascetical life, as described by Procopius.

He did not sleep, at least for the most part, and never took his fill of food or drink; rather, he tasted it with hardly more than his fingertip, and then was done with it. Such things seemed to him like a distraction imposed on him by Nature, and he regularly went without food for two days and nights, especially when it was required during the period leading up to the feast called Easter. At that time, as I said, he would habitually go for two days without food, surviving on sips of water and some wild herbs. He would sleep for only one hour, if that, and spent the rest of the time continuously making his rounds.

Procopius, of course, turns this image of imperial asceticism on its head by attributing it not to true godliness but to hypocrisy and demonic malice, but it is clear also in other sources that Justinian maintained a rigorous lifestyle that gave him time both for imperial business and for theological discussion. Yet though his virtues as Christian emperor were praised in a general way by such court orators as Paul the Silentiary, his ascetic habits did not constitute part of the panegyrical program in this period.

The early seventh century saw a major change in this regard. In embarking on a study of imperial lay piety in this period, we must be cognizant of the context in which it was expounded, primarily the exigencies of court propaganda. This was not, except for a few brief years in the

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173 For references see Kaldellis, *Secret History*, 59 fn. 104.
174 Cf. *Descriptio Sanctae Sophiae*, ll. 1–354 and 921–1029. For a translation of these two passages, which portray Justinian and Patriarch Eutychius of Constantinople most directly, see Peter N. Bell, *Three Political Voices from the Age of Justinian* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 189–212.
630s when all seemed to be going well for the Romans, a triumphalist propaganda of eternal Roman victory, as it had been in the time of Justinian. Though his successors increasingly relied on the symbols of invisible divine aid as material power slowly slipped from Roman hands, rhetoric up through the reign of Maurice continued to show a sunny optimism.175

Such triumphalism held little place in the dark days of the Persian invasions. Instead we find a search for ways to explain difficult circumstances in spiritual terms, making the most of catastrophe. Thus, viewing the reign of Maurice in retrospect, Theophylact Simocatta and other later sources seek to portray him as a good but flawed emperor. His terrible downfall could be explained as a divine judgment freely accepted by him in order to ensure his soul’s salvation. Maurice is thus transformed into a tragic but ultimately saintly character. His death and the interval of Phocas’ usurpation gave enough distance for Heraclius’ court historian to begin the process of molding Maurice into a model of lay piety of a certain sort.

Before examining Maurice’s piety, let us consider what kind of challenges a specifically imperial piety might face. If laypeople were considered to be almost unavoidably entangled in a thick mesh of worldly sin, this was exponentially so for emperors, whose double burden of power and privilege subjected them to all the temptations that corruption, flattery, and absolute power could bring to bear on the ruler of the civilized world. In such an atmosphere, a ruler received the benefit of the doubt if he at least avoided intentional cruelty and made a decent attempt to govern responsibly, preferably covering the gap with humble recognition of one’s sinfulness combined with compassion for the poor. Thus Zeno’s corruption of a virgin was

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supposedly pardoned due to his liberal almsgiving, while Tiberius’ deathbed acknowledgement of his faults serves to set the seal of approval on what was a difficult and flawed reign.\textsuperscript{176}

Maurice held an ambivalent place in this regard. As a result of his harsh financial measures, designed to salvage the imperial treasury after the liberality of Tiberius, he was plagued by accusations of avarice, which even his favorable historian Theophylact, rehabilitating him in the reign of Heraclius, is unable to hide. He was associated, in a popular slogan, with a branch of the Messalian heresy that rejected normal Christian almsgiving.\textsuperscript{177} The epithet may have been associated with a rumor that charged him with the blood of three thousand Roman soldiers whom he had allowed to be captured by the Avars as a punishment for poor discipline, and then refused to ransom, even when the price was reduced.\textsuperscript{178} This crime may well have been manufactured under the reign of Phocas, as propaganda to justify his usurpation, but Maurice’s unpopular attempts to economize on military pay, which had led to two mutinies, the second of which led to his downfall, would have made it believable to many.\textsuperscript{179} His unpopularity extended even to places that had benefited from his occasional generosity, such as the monastery of St

\textsuperscript{176} The anecdote about Zeno is found in John Moschus, \textit{Prat. 175} (PG 87c:3044b), where he is said to have “dealt unjustly” with the girl; the sin is spelled out more explicitly as above in Anastasius Sinaita, \textit{Qu. resp.}, 41.4 (Munitiz, 95). Tiberius’ deathbed mention of his faults is found in Theophylact Simocatta, \textit{Hist.} 1.1.5–6 (Whitby and Whitby, 19–20). It should be noted, however, that both these sources stem from the Heraclian period and so may reflect a stronger sense of imperial sin than had previously been the case.

\textsuperscript{177} Theophylact, \textit{History} 8.9.3 (Whitby and Whitby, 223); Theophanes, \textit{Chronographia} A.M. 6094, De Boor 288 (Mango and Scott 413). M. Graebner, “ΜΑΥΡΙΚΙΕ ΜΑΡΙΚΙΑΝΙΣΤΑ”. A Note,” \textit{Byzantina} 11 (1982): 181–88. On p. 186 Graebner mistranslates part of the heresiological report of Timothy of Constantinople and thus obscures the fact that the Marcianists opposed alms to the materially poor because they claimed that they themselves were the truly deserving poor, the “poor in spirit” (from Mt 5:3).


\textsuperscript{179} Peter Schreiner, “Der Brennende Kaiser: Zur Schaffung eines positiven und eines negativen Kaiserbildes in den Legenden um Maurikios,” in \textit{Byzance et ses voisins : Mélanges à la mémoire de Gyula Moravcsik à l'occasion du centième anniversaire de sa naissance} (Szeged: Generalia, 1994), 25–31 and esp. 26–27 arguing that the rumor of betrayal stemmed from the circle of Phocas, but contra Michael Whitby, “Theophanes’ Chronicle Source,” 336 n. 115 (arguing against the earlier scholars whom Schreiner cites).
Theodore of Sykeon in Galatia: the monks, upon hearing Theodore’s prophecy of Maurice’s impending downfall, thought it served him right.\textsuperscript{180} The anonymous Syriac Life stands in stark contrast. Given its East Syrian (“Nestorian”) provenance, it falls outside the strict parameters of the present study.\textsuperscript{181} Whether it stems from a Greek original is still an open question; but even if it does not, its presentation of imperial lay piety is not wholly foreign to Greek Byzantine sensibilities and thus makes for useful comparison.\textsuperscript{182} It presents Maurice as a thoroughly just and pious emperor. He divides his time between ensuring that justice is done and copious amounts of prayer, for a total of eleven hours of private or liturgical devotions (more than most monks would have managed!).\textsuperscript{183}

Given the varied traditions about Maurice’s life, his end was frequently reworked in the Byzantine chronicle tradition.\textsuperscript{184} Debate continues on the ultimate source(s) for the tragic plot of Maurice’s downfall-cum-salvation, but for our purposes here the accounts of Theophylact (the extant text closest in time to the events), Theophanes, and the Syriac Life will suffice.\textsuperscript{185} Wortley, whose discussion is still the most complete analysis of the “legend of Maurice,” argues that a primary purpose of the accounts in Theophylact and Theophanes is to tie up historical loose ends, to find some kind of historical explanation (as understood by those authors) for the shocking demise of Maurice.\textsuperscript{186} This characterization of Maurice was dictated, in Theophylact’s case, by the anti-Phocas polemics of Heraclius’ reign, and in Theophanes’ case by his reliance on

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[180] George of Sykeon, \textit{Vita Theodori Sykeotae} 119.
\item[181] \textit{Histoire de saint Maurice, empereur des Romains}, ed. Lucien Leroy and François Nau, PO 5 (1910), 773–78.
\item[183] \textit{Histoire de Saint Maurice} 1 (Leroy and Nau 773–74).
\item[185] In addition to the above-cited works, see the reconstruction of Paul Speck, “Eine Gedächtnisfeier am Grabe des Maurikios. Die \textit{Historiai} des Theophylaktos Simokates: der Auftrag; die Fertigstellung; der Grundgedanke,” \textit{Ποικίλα Βυζαντινά} Varia 4 (1993), 175–254.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
earlier sources such as Theophylact, combined with his own historical vision. Both were moralizing historians, in keeping with both antique and Christian traditions of historiography. The Syriac Life, on the other hand, serves no such historical purpose, at least as the text has come down to us. Instead it can be categorized as a brief stand-alone vita, or perhaps a long multi-part edifying tale (narratio animae utilis).

The account of Theophylact is the simplest. Maurice philosophically accepts his fate and even recalls his son Theodosius, whom he had previously sent to seek the aid of the Persian shahanshah Khusro. As his sons are first killed before his eyes, he philosophically (again) accepts the misfortune and acknowledges God’s justice in all that has come to pass, before himself being beheaded. He is characterized as surpassing the laws of nature—a characteristic achievement of martyrs and monks. Theophylact then proceeds to report the rumor that “some time before his slaughter, the emperor Maurice had by letter supplicated in the more venerable churches of the inhabited world that the Lord Christ, one of the supermundane Trinity, might exact repayment for his misdeeds in this present mortal and perishable world.”

Theophylact is careful to report this pious act of seeking intercession as hearsay. Two centuries later, Theophanes expands on this basic narrative, drawing on other sources. He picks up both the damning rumor of Maurice’s refusal to ransom the soldiers, perhaps from a pro-Phocas source, as mentioned above, as well as a much more detailed version of Maurice’s quest for propitiation. Such a great sin—essentially, murder, compounded by the betrayal of the trust of citizens and soldiers in their supposedly benevolent ruler—requires an extreme penance.

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188 The expression “Thou art just, Lord, and thy judgment is just,” combines echoes of Ps. 118:137, Job 3:2, and Prayer of Azarias (from the LXX Daniel) 3–4.
189 Hist. 8.11.1–6 (Whitby and Whitby, 226–27).
Maurice writes not just to the patriarchal thrones and the churches, but also to the monasteries and lavras in Palestine, along with gifts of money, candles, and incense. He then has a dream-vision where Christ gives him the choice of being requited here or hereafter; when Maurice chooses to suffer in this age, the divine voice hands him and his family over to Phocas. Soon after, the imperial agent tasked with obtaining the intercessions of the desert fathers returns with their reply that God has enrolled his and his family’s souls among the saints at the cost of their loss of the throne; “when he heard this, Maurice glorified God greatly.”

In the Syriac Life, Maurice also experiences a vision, but in this case due to his persistent supplications to God that he be punished in this life for his venial sins so as not to be deprived of the perfect good in the afterlife. This stark distinction between the merely upright and the perfect, and the assumption that some heroic act was needed to bump him up from the first to the second category, is characteristic of a certain strand of Syriac piety, a particular expression of the double ethic we are examining the Greek tradition. In this account Maurice is set afloat bound on a blazing boat in the middle of the Bosporus; the fire burns his fetters first, giving him time to lift his hands in prayer and thanksgiving to God before he is consumed by the flames. Thus he has a good end to his “contest”—the Syriac word is a transliteration of the Greek ἀγών, the common term for both martyric and ascetic exploits.

Thus the difference is between a perfect, martyred emperor-monk in the Syriac and a more-or-less flawed but repentant ruler in the Greek. The latter seems much more grounded in

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191 Chronogr. 284–86 (Mango and Scott 410–11). He also quotes Ps. 118:137 directly, rather than the mix of scriptural verses in Theophylact (see above n. 152).
192 Histoire de Saint Maurice 2–5 (Leroy and Nau, 774–76).
193 The dichotomy is the main theme of the anonymous fourth-century Book of Steps and is monasticized in the Ascetical Discourses of Philoxenus of Mabbug. Robert Kitchen has discovered it in the late seventh-century East Syrian ascetical master Dadisho of Qatraya as well (“Talking About the Desert Fathers: Dadisho Qatraya’s Commentary on the Paradise of the Fathers,” unpublished paper from the Oxford Patristics Conference, 2011). My thanks to him for sending me the paper.
194 Histoire de Saint Maurice 11 (Leroy and Nau, 778); cf. Lampe ἀγών (p. 25).
the perceived possibilities of imperial piety: it reflects the acknowledgment that politics was
dirty, with the concomitant expectation that suitable penance might bring the emperor salvation
in the afterlife, but not exaltation there. In the Syriac, Maurice’s own prayers elicit visitations by
an angel who lays his choice before him and accepts his resolve, whereas in the Greek he relies
on the prayers of the various patriarchs and of holy monks. Again, it seems a contrast between
the ideal (the Syriac emperor-saint) and the possible (the Greek repentant ruler). In the latter, the
emperor cannot be a monk, so he must rely on the intercessions of monks to be forgiven and
saved.

But even in the Greek tradition, the emperor’s noble, philosophic end makes of him an
exemplary figure—at least in some aspects. Wortley notes that the Greek tradition runs into
problems reconciling Maurice’s terrible end with his reputation as a good ruler. The addition of
the story of the unredeemed prisoners of war actually makes matters worse, “for who could
possibly respect a ‘good shepherd’ who under any circumstances whatsoever would deliberately
sacrifice his own sheep to the wolf?” We might extrapolate from this appeal to the “good
shepherd” motif and wonder whether Maurice’s choice would not have appeared rather selfish to
later Byzantines: by choosing to be toppled from the throne, he gained his own soul, but at the
expense of the widespread violence and oppression in the Roman world that marked the reign of
the tyrant Phocas.

The question is, admittedly, rather abstract. From what we can glean from contemporary
sources, as discussed above, Maurice, though successful in foreign policy, was deeply unpopular

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195 Although Theophylact does not mention monks in the passage on Maurice’s death, earlier he
describes various pious practices of his, such as sleeping in the hard wooden pallet and threadbare blanket of
the late patriarch of Constantinople, John the Faster during Lent: such contact relics convey the deceased
bishop’s ascetical blessing (Hist. 7.6.1–5, Whitby and Whitby 186). Other sources report similar devotion to
holy monks and priests, as well as to the relics of martyrs (see Whitby, Emperor Maurice and his Historian,
22–23).

at home. The generally positive image of Maurice in modern scholarship is partly the result of hindsight, partly of the propaganda of Heraclius.\footnote{Olster, Politics of Usurpation, is a salutary challenge to the older view, although he probably goes too far in criticizing Maurice's rulership. The problem was perhaps primarily, as he himself argues, the decay of the late Roman state organization. The appeal to an emperor's sins and virtues by contemporary authors was, to a degree, a way of grappling with the underlying structural issues that our modern methodology, aided by hindsight, allows us to analyze more intensively.} It is clear that Phocas ruled with an iron and bloody fist, especially later in his reign when the threats to his power increased. But the borders in both east and west appear to have held relatively firm until the revolt of Heraclius led to civil war.

*George of Pisidia and his milieu*

Enter Heraclius and his panegyrist George of Pisidia, with a decidedly different vision of imperial piety.\footnote{On Heraclius, see most recently the monograph by Walter Emil Kaegi, *Heraclius: Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and the edited volume G. J. Reinink and Bernard H. Stolte, eds., *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation*, Groningen Studies in Cultural Change 2 (Leuven: Peeters, 2002). See also the two basic studies by Irfan Shahid, “The Iranian Factor in Byzantium during the Reign of Heraclius,” *DOP* 26 (1972): 293–320, and “Heraclius ΠΙΣΤΟΣ ΕΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΩ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ,” *DOP* 34/35 (1980–1981): 225–37, discussing the famous change in imperial nomenclature that occurred during Heraclius' reign, but ranging widely into other elements of the history of the period and of the long-term development of the Roman state. For the general problems of the imperial image in this period, see John Haldon, “Constantine or Justinian? Crisis and identity in imperial propaganda in the seventh century,” in *New Constantines*, ed. Paul Magdalino (Aldershot, UK: Variorum), 95–108.} George’s earlier poems on Heraclius were written under the shadow of the Persians overrunning the East and the Avars overrunning the Balkans, culminating in a joint siege of Constantinople in 626. As recent research has emphasized, Heraclius was himself partly to blame for this state of affairs. His rebellion against Phocas was not a triumphant sailing to Byzantium: it lasted two years and involved bloody fighting, especially in Egypt where at one point the forces loyal to Phocas seemed to hold the upper hand. The Egyptian campaign, added to the extreme factional and religious violence that had roiled the eastern cities during the same period, led to a fatal weakening of the frontier, which allowed the Persians to make deep inroads. Heraclius, attempting to counterattack soon after his usurpation, was at first dogged by army
units maintaining loyalty to the old regime in Asia Minor and then suffered a major defeat at Antioch. This left Jerusalem open to Persian attack; the city was sacked, large parts of it were burned, and many of its citizens were killed or deported to Persian territory. Then in 619 Egypt fell to the invaders, depriving the empire of its greatest source of food and income. Heraclius’ desperate measures to confiscate church plate as a substitute for these lost provincial revenues decreased his popularity even further. The empire seemed on the brink of collapse, despite the new emperor’s best efforts.\(^\text{199}\)

In such an atmosphere, neither Justinianic triumphalism nor Maurician resignation could be taken seriously. The pressure of circumstances leads George to creatively reinterpret and reweave traditional strands of Greco-Roman imperial piety with Christian themes in a new synthesis. George himself was a career ecclesiastical official.\(^\text{200}\) He was born at an unknown date in Pisidian Antioch in southern Asia Minor and made his way to Constantinople at an unknown date; he was probably already there around the time of Heraclius’ accession in 610, since his first extant poem is a celebration of the new emperor’s arrival from Africa.\(^\text{201}\) There he served as a deacon of the Great Church of Hagia Sophia and moved up the *cursus honorum* from the post of *skevophylax* (sacristan, one of twelve, according to the limits imposed by a Novel of 612) to *referendarius* (liaison with the imperial court, also twelve) and finally to *chartophylax* (keeper of


\(^{200}\) For an overview of George’s life and work, see Agostino Pertusi, *Giorgio di Pisidia Poemi I: Panegirici epici* (Ettal, Germany: Buch-Kunstverlag, 1959), 11–16. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, 16–35, usefully updates this account based on more recent work. I disagree however with several points of his presentation; some of these will be treated below where they are relevant to the main argument.

the patriarchal archives, held by only one person at a time).\textsuperscript{202} His above-mentioned first poem was an attempt to catch the emperor’s attention and win favor for himself; perhaps he was also conveying the wishes of the patriarch Sergius, who had been installed under Phocas, for harmonious cooperation with the new ruler.\textsuperscript{203} Certainly George’s position as \textit{referendarius} would have put him in close touch with the imperial court, although we do not know when he attained that rank. He may have been promoted when he received his first known imperial commission, the \textit{Persian Expedition}, around 622, as a reward for his labors but also to give him access to information useful for his panegyrical presentation of the emperor.\textsuperscript{204} We do not know the date of his death, but it was presumably before 638, since another \textit{chartophylax} is attested in that year.\textsuperscript{205}

\textsuperscript{202} Pertusi, \textit{Giorgio di Pisidia}, 12–14; Howard-Johnston, \textit{Witnesses}, 17–18. The information on his career is derived from the manuscript headings to his various works and a short entry in the \textit{Suida} lexicon (Adler, \textit{Suidae lexicon} 1, 517). His hometown is named by Michael Psellus, in an opusculum comparing the merits of Euripides and George, with a preference of the latter: \textit{De Euripide et Georgio Piside judicium}, l. 100 (in A.R. Dyck, \textit{Michael Psellus: The essays on Euripides and George of Pisidia and on Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius}). The \textit{Novels} of Heraclius dealing with ecclesiastical affairs in Constantinople are edited and commented on by Joannis Konidaris, “Die Novellen des Kaisers Heraclius,” in \textit{Fontes Minores} 5, ed. Dieter Simon (Frankfurt, 1982), 33–106 with the text of the first one, probably closest in time to the beginning of George’s career in Constantinople, at 62–72. See also Thomas, \textit{Private Religious Foundations}, 113–14 for commentary on the increased pressures on the ecclesiastical establishments of the capital exerted by clerical refugees fleeing the invasions of the provinces.

\textsuperscript{203} George’s angling for patronage has been discussed by Marc Lauxtermann, \textit{Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometers} (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2003), 38–39 and Howard-Johnston, \textit{Witnesses}, 17, but I am not aware of anyone who has yet connected it with patriarchal realignment. My speculation would depend, of course, on assuming that George was already a deacon of the Great Church when he wrote the poem; but he may have received the post, with its corresponding dependable salary, as compensation for the poem.

\textsuperscript{204} \textit{De expeditione persica} (CPG 7828), ed. Pertusi, \textit{Giorgio di Pisidia}, 84–136. For the dating and the status as an imperial commission see Howard-Johnston, \textit{Witnesses}, 20, esp. n. 13. Note however that according to Pertusi, \textit{Giorgio}, 13 fn. 1, the title of \textit{referendarius} is only found in the headings of manuscripts of the \textit{Hexaemeron}, a later work that is probably to be dated between 628 and 630, as argued by Mary Whitby, “The Devil in Disguise: The End of George of Pisidia’s \textit{Hexaemeron} Reconsidered,” 127–29 against David Olster, “The Date of George of Pisidia’s \textit{Hexaemeron},” \textit{DOP} 45 (1991): 159–72.

\textsuperscript{205} Olster’s attempt to date the \textit{Hexaemeron} to 638 runs up against this difficulty, as well as the literary arguments marshalled by Whitby. MacCoull has tried to date \textit{Against Severus} to the same year, based on a reference to \textit{ektheses}, because of the promulgation by Heraclius of a Christological decree known as the \textit{Ekthesis} in that year. But \textit{ekthesis} is a generic term (= decree), and moreover the use of the plural militates against that specific document (although allowance should be made for poetical usage). The latest work that can be securely dated is \textit{On the Restitution of the Cross}, which must have been written soon after that event, which most likely took place on March 21, 630—i.e. about twenty years after the supposed date of \textit{On...}
George’s career finds interesting parallels in two other contemporaries who also wrote on behalf of the regime. Theodore the patriarchal syncellus (chamberlain, approximately) wrote a Homily on the Avar Siege of Constantinople in 626 or 627, celebrating the great Roman victory in that battle and attributing it to the direct intervention of the Mother of God, represented as a warrior-saint and placed almost on the same level as her Son. His position made him one of the patriarch’s most important lieutenants and his work shows parallels with that of George on the same events. It is a rather detailed narration of the siege, presented as the fulfillment of Old Testament stories and prophecies of the victories of the Jews over various enemies, from the Assyrians to the mysterious Gog and Magog. Then there is Theophylact Simocatta, whose account of Maurice’s end we have already discussed. He was a lay official from Egypt, who received a good literary education at Alexandria and went on to study law in Constantinople, some time in the reign of Phocas or early in the reign of Heraclius. He practiced law for some time, may have been an imperial referendarius (there were eight of these, in contrast with their patriarchal counterparts), and is known to have born the titles apo eparchôn (ex-prefect—unclear whether this was honorary or actually indicated service as a prefect), antigrapheus (magister


206 De obsidione Constantinopolitana sub Heraclio imperatore, in Analecta Avarica, ed. Leo Sternbach (Kraków: Sumptibus Academiae litterarum, 1900), repr. and trans. Ferenc Makk, Traduction et commentaire de l’homélie écrite probablement par Théodore le Synelle sur le siège de Constantinople en 626 (Szeged: Attila József University, 1975).


208 Theodore also wrote a Homily on the Virgin’s robe, one of the major relics that defined Constantinopolitan civic identity: Inventio et depositio vestis in Blachernis, in François Combéhis, Historia haeresis Monothelitarum (Paris, 1648), 751–88. The homily contains historical information about the “Avar treachery,” an attempted ambush of Heraclius by the Avars when he went to negotiate peace terms with them early in his reign. For more on this event, see Paul Speck, “Interpretation of the Bellum Avaricum and the tomcat Μεχλεμπέ,” in Understanding Byzantium: Studies in Byzantine Historical Sources, ed. Sarolta Tákacs, 205–231 (Aldershot, UK: Variorum, 2003).
scriniorum, head of one of the major government departments), and finally theios dikastês (sacred i.e. imperial judge). He was an accomplished author (though his florid style has not found many admirers today) on both secular and sacred subjects. His History is of course the main source for the reign of Maurice, and it exhibits much more ease incorporating Christian ideas and information than his recent predecessors in this genre of classicizing historiography. Furthermore, the work is dedicated not to Heraclius, but to the patriarch Sergius. His Ethical Epistles and Natural Questions are minor exercises in Hellenistic belles lettres, with little or no specifically Christian content. His brief dialogue On the Predestined Terms of Life is still mainly a literary exercise but this time in a wholly theological vein, replete with scriptural quotations and some patristic citations. The dialectical opponents, the fictional Theognostus and Theophrastus, represent caricatures of bombastically polemical monks and priests, respectively, but are intended as satire of excesses rather than condemnation of the monastic and clerical orders themselves.

These three figures indicate the religious climate at both the imperial and patriarchal courts. The period is remarkable for the apparent harmony between the two. George the cleric obtained patronage from the emperor and Theophylact the layman from the patriarch. The theological learning that the latter displayed in his works indicates that the poems of George, mixing and matching scriptural and classical references with dazzling and dizzying virtuosity,

209 Michael Whitby, The Emperor Maurice and his Historian: Theophylact Simocatta on Persian and Balkan Warfare (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 29–32; Howard-Johnston, Witnesses, 142–46. Some of the positions are not certain, namely referendarius and theios dikastês, because they rely on an official seal and an inscription in Sardis, respectively, which cannot be attributed to Theophylact the historian with full certainty.

would not have fallen on unappreciative ears among the educated lay élites of the capital and the empire.²¹¹

George’s works have long been used by historians as a major source for reconstructing the dates and events of the reign of Heraclius. Others have examined them more for what they tell us about imperial ideology and theological culture. George himself is an important transitional figure in the history of Greek literature. He was well-educated in classical forms of poetry with their reliance on mythological imagery and strict rules of prosody based on syllable length. But he chose to develop them in new ways that combined with a thoroughly Christian world-view and the rhythms of contemporary spoken Greek with its shift toward accentual meter.²¹² He also uses iambic trimeter in his quasi-epic poems in lieu of the traditional unwieldy hexameters of epic. In fact these poems are difficult to categorize generically: though containing epic passages, these are made to serve the main theme and structure, which is panegyrical.²¹³ Nor should a sharp distinction be made between “historical” and “theological” poems, as has often been done in the past.²¹⁴ There is certainly a difference in emphasis between the poems which recount the military exploits of Heraclius and his lieutenants—namely On the Return of Heraclius from Africa, On the Persian Expedition, On Bonus the Patrician, On the Avar War, Heracliad, and On the Recovery of the Cross (in roughly chronological order as far as we can tell)—and those which focus on theological themes—On the Resurrection, Against Severus, and

²¹¹ For the general intellectual level of the early seventh century and later, see the useful concluding review of Theophylact as a historian within his cultural context in Whitby, Emperor Maurice, 311–358. For the reception of George's poetry see the conclusion of the present chapter.
²¹² Frendo, “Poetic Achievement”; cf. Lauxtermann, Byzantine Poetry, 26ff., which discusses the epigram form of poetry in the Byzantine period, which forms part of the corpus of George's poems but which will not be discussed here.
²¹⁴ Olster, "Date of George of Pisidia's 'Hexaemeron','" 159–60.
On the Six Days of Creation (or Hexaemeron). But Heraclius’s military exploits are always placed within a larger spiritual vision and the theological meditations are rounded off by applying them to the emperor and his family. Mary Whitby, in particular, has elucidated George’s program for imperial piety. In the rest of this chapter I build on her work to suggest that a key component of George’s vision for Heraclius is asceticism, with the result that the idealized Heraclius comes close to the monastic ideal. Since George’s theological thought is quite consistent, I will present this theme as a whole rather than attempting to trace its development through the twenty or more years of his active writing career.

A New Model Emperor

George’s poetry on Heraclius is marked by a reinterpretation of two key concepts from the monastic tradition, which had in many ways already reinterpreted them from their older pagan context: the cluster of ideas surrounding phrontis/merimna (care, worry, anxiety) and that surrounding eros/pothos/epithymia (eros, yearning, desire). The idea of care is, as we saw briefly in the previous chapter, largely a negative one in the monastic tradition. Following on Luke 10:41–42, monks sought to simplify their life so as to flee any worldly care that might distract them from the contemplation of God. Anxiety is supposed to be a characteristic of the married state, where care for wife and children distract from single-minded devotion to God (cf. 1 Cor.

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215 Howard-Johnston, Witnesses to a World Crisis, 17–27. George also wrote epigrams and a prose encomium of Anastasius the Persian (a figure discussed in Ch. 6 of the present study); see ibid., 19 and 26.  
216 Mary Whitby, “Devil in Disguise,” esp. 115 and 128–29, which are a corrective to Olster’s view of George as simply a propaganda mouthpiece without any real theological convictions.  
218 For an overview of his development, see Mary Whitby, “George of Pisidia’s Presentation.”
7:32–34). Thus lay piety was at a distinct disadvantage vis-à-vis the freedom and ascetic leisure (amerimnia/scholē/otium) that monastics were supposed to enjoy.\textsuperscript{219}

The idea of the ruler sacrificing his own comfort to take on the \textit{cura imperii} is an ancient one. It is starkly expressed in a famous bust of the mid-third-century emperor Decius in the Capitoline Museum, where the creased forehead, knit brow, and weary gaze seem to indicate a ruler well aware of the heavy responsibilities of an empire under siege.\textsuperscript{220} It continued to be expressed by Byzantine rulers.\textsuperscript{221} This idea is paralleled on a spiritual level in the New Testament when the apostle Paul mentions, among his many labors, “the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety (merimna) for all the churches” (2 Cor. 11:28 RSV). It is continued in patristic authors such as Origen, Eusebius, and Basil in their description of the character of bishops as assuming the \textit{phrontis} of their flock.\textsuperscript{222} Even in a monastic context there is a need for certain people (especially the abbot, but also the various leading officers of the monastery and those sent on errands outside) to sacrifice their own freedom from cares in order to secure it for the rest of the brethren. In addition to the material administration implied in many of these roles, in the language of spiritual fatherhood that developed in late antique monasticism from earlier episcopal and teaching contexts, the elder agrees to take on the burden of his disciples’ sins and spiritual struggles.\textsuperscript{223}

\begin{footnotes}

\item[220] “Der sorgenvolle, auf den modernen Betrachter fast ängstlich wirkende Gesichtsausdruck wird dabei gewöhnlich als eine besonders authentische Darstellung des inneren Zustandes der Menschen dieser von Krisen geschüttelten Zeit verstanden. [...] der realistische Stil dient dieser Aufgabe; er ist seit der Zeit Caracallas Zeichen für Harte, Disziplin und Ausdauer; die mimische Formel der Brauen fügt noch zusätzlich das (bei Caracalla fehlende) Motiv der Sorge (\textit{cura imperii, cura rei publicae}) hinzu.” Fittschen and Zanker, \textit{Katalog der römischen Porträts}, 2.2, 131–132. See the image on the first page of this chapter.


\item[222] E.g. Origen, \textit{Contra Celsum} 8.75; Eusebius \textit{Vita Constantini} 3.62 (quoting an imperial letter); Basil, \textit{Ep.} 156.2.9–12.

\item[223] Both these phenomena are clearly in evidence in the monastery of Abba Seridus at Gaza, where he undertook much of the day-to-day management of the monastery, while the Great Old Man Barsanuphius and
\end{footnotes}
In the rhetoric of Theophylact Simocatta and George of Pisidia, the emperor Heraclius possesses the characteristics not only of an emperor, but of a priest. Some would argue that Theophylact describes him as “the great high priest and president of every quarter of the civilized world,” although this may refer rather to patriarch Sergios of Constantinople. George, using more allusive language, in one passage describes Heraclius as having “the authority of leading our mystical rites.” Elsewhere he paints a vivid portrait of the emperor as arch-shepherd:

In the faithful manner of an arch-shepherd—who, beholding his flock surrounded by rapacious beasts, is at a loss where to turn to fight, yet nevertheless labors, running everywhere so that he might somehow snatch away the flock from them—thus you are at a loss beholding the believing race of the rational flock every day surrounded by the unbelieving beasts, yet nevertheless you labor and constantly run around, to and fro, everywhere toiling, striking, pursuing, dashing out, returning, so that somehow by bringing yourself forward as a ransom, you might free the flock from bloodshed.

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the Other Old Man John took on the monks’ spiritual burdens (and that of people outside the monastery as well): see Alexis Torrance, *Repentence in Late Antiquity: Eastern Asceticism and the Framing of the Christian Life* c. 400–650 CE (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 152–57.


In *restitutionem sanctae crucis* 43–44: νῦν τῆς καθ’ ἡμᾶς, ὦ βασιλεῖ, μυσταρχίας / ἔχεις τὸ κύρος ... That this is a reference to spiritual authority seems confirmed by the evocation of the apostle Paul as μῦστα τῶν ἀποφρήτων λόγων a few lines before (restit. 39). All citations of George’s poems in this chapter refer line numbers (preceded to canto numbers where applicable).

The image of ruler as shepherd is notrestricted to religious contexts, but the actual use of the
term ἀρχιποιμήν is exclusively Christian, and moreover used elsewhere primarily of Christ
himself, as good shepherd par excellence, and derivatively of bishops.²²⁷ In the passage just
quoted above, the terms merimna and phrontis are not explicitly used, but the idea of a ruler
expending great mental and physical exertions for the sake of his subjects certainly is.²²⁸ By
expressing Heraclius’ sense of responsibility for his subjects with this implicitly Christian and
sacral language, George transforms him into a quasi-priestly figure and his merimna into a care
for both physical and spiritual concerns. Especially noteworthy in this passage are the final two
lines, where Heraclius takes on the Christ-like characteristics of being a ransom for his flock.

Another passage demonstrates even more clearly the nature of Heraclius’ merimna, both
in its sacrality and in the various defining characteristics it possesses:

For it is impossible to find a place neglected by your care for us, but you run over all of
them as if in a circuit of cosmic illness, yourself set everywhere as a surgeon, for the
common wounds of the ailing afflicting yourself with the misfortunes of others—having
more troubles yourself than those who are troubled. For you have always shared in our
toils, bearing the weaknesses of all in their stead: danger from barbarians, fear from
enemies, outwardly hostilities, inwardly cares, sweat by land, turbulence by sea, conflict
with usurpers, attacks by subject peoples, winter storm and heat wave and the wearisome
sleepless nights that fell upon you in the meantime. In short, your body, your mental

²²⁷ A TLG search for the root ἀρχιποιμή- turned up only one possible non-Christian use, in Aelius
Herodianus and Pseudo- Herodianus, De prosodia catholica 3.1, p. 16, and then only in a list of words designed
to show the shift of accent from the ultima to the penultima when a prefix is added.
²²⁸ Anxious cares are explicitly mentioned in a similar passage that also uses present participles to
enliven the depiction of Heraclius marshalling his troops expertly, at exped. pers. 2.52-56: ὅσας μὲν οὖν
μετήλθες ἐν βραχεὶ χρόνῳ / ἄλλας ἐπ‘ ἄλλας φροντίδων τρικύμιας, / πράττων, μεριμνών, εὐτρεπίζων,
προγράφων, / ὅπως τὸ πλῆθος τοῦ στρατοῦ συναρμόσῃς / εἰς πολλὰ τῆς γῆς ἐσικεδασμένον μέρη.
powers, your heart, your whole self you have nailed to toils, so that the communal body
not suffer toils.\footnote{In Bonum patricium 84–101: τόπον γὰρ ἀργὸν τῆς ἀφ’ ἡμῶν φροντίδος / οὕκ ἔστιν εὐρεῖν, ἀλλ’ ἐπιτρέχεις δόλους / ὡς ἐν περιόδῳ κοσμικής ἀρρωστίας, / καὶ πρὸς τὰ κοινὰ τῶν νοσούντων τραύματα / χειρουργὸς αὐτὸς πανταχοῦ κατεστάθης, / θλίβων σεαυτὸν συμφορὰς ἀλλοτρίας / ὁ τῶν πανούντων τοῖς πόνοις ἔχων πλέον• / ἀεὶ γὰρ ἡμῦν οὐσίωθης τοῖς πόνοις / τὰς ἀντὶ πάντων ἀθενείας βαστάσας, / ἐκ βαρβάρων κίνδυνων, ἔκ ἔχθρων φόβων, / ἐξοδεύεις ἔχθρας, ἐνδοθέν τὰς φροντίδας, / ἰδρώτας εἰς γῆν, ἐν ἥλιον συγχύσεις, / μάχας τυράννων, προσβολὰς υπηκόων, / χειμώνα και καύσωνα καὶ τὰς ἐν μέσῳ / παρεμπεσοῦσας φορτικὰς ἀγρυπνίας• / ἀπλῶς τὸ σῶμα, τὰς φρένας, τὴν καρδίαν, / ὁλὸν σεαυτὸν προσκαθήλωσας πόνοις, / ὅπως τὸ κοινὸν σῶμα μὴ φέρῃ πόνους ...}

Firstly, in regard to sacrality, there is an explicit allusion to 2 Cor. 7:5 in the contrast “outwardly … inwardly,” but the whole passage more loosely echoes Paul’s enumeration of his apostolic toils in 2 Cor. 11:23–30, including the verse 28 regarding “my anxiety for all the churches” mentioned above. Secondly, in the context of 2 Corinthians, Paul emphasizes his own personal toil and weakness—although obviously not divorced from its ultimate pastoral purpose; whereas George focuses more explicitly on the universal nature of Heraclius’ labors, as taking up the cares, misfortunes, and painful toils of the commonwealth. Thirdly, the metaphor of Heraclius as surgeon working on the body politic has an ancient classical pedigree, but by this time must also inevitably suggest the Pauline image of the Church as body of Christ (e.g. 1 Cor. 12:12ff.) and its patristic outworking in the comparison of wise pastors to skillful surgeons, knowing when to use more or less drastic measures to attain the cure of the patient.\footnote{For precedents see Nissen, “Historisches Epos,” 307–8 and 328, and for the political body in sixth-century panegyric see Cameron, “Images of Authority,” 12.} Fourthly, the last line emphasizes the all-consuming nature of the emperor’s \textit{merimna}: not just physical labors, but mental acuity, heartfelt commitment and investment of his whole self in his Herculean task—and again the Christ-like image of being “nailed” to his toils.

The physical and mental labors of simultaneously campaigning in the east and arranging for the defense of Constantinople and indeed the entire realm are enumerated frequently, and are
made to lend Heraclius an other-worldly air: 231 “But as if fleshless and alone seeming to possess either a bronze body or an iron heart, you departed, you campaigned, you again took up arms, one for all.” 232 This could be the description of any heroic warrior of antiquity, but in a Christian context the word “fleshless” and even the metallic metaphors have an ascetic ring, aligning Heraclius’ labors with the self-mortification of monastic holy men. 233 The parallels go further, because such exertions serve as a penance for sins, whether the emperor’s own or those of the commonwealth. In an ingenious physiognomic reading of the emperor’s now-wizened appearance, George turns the disadvantages of aging into a proof of spiritual redemption:

Whence did the gold-like mane of your hairs change into an opposite dye? The snow of your cares dyed it. And whither was transported the whiteness of your limbs? The sun’s burning removed it. That is not at all unlikely; but for my part I conjecture that while the sweat of toils was pouring out, the whiteness moved into your heart.” 234

Heraclius himself humbly acknowledges the shortcomings of his past life and hopes that his labors atone for them: “You did not just get the battles right, but together with them you got your soul straight, and even more so: for you yourself, enumerating the measure of your life to us, declared that ‘although I lived so long in carelessness, I have lived these days for God.’” 235

This leads the poet to pray that the atonement suffices: “Render the sweat which has dripped from him

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232 Heracles 1.172–75: ἀλλ’ ὡς σάρκος καὶ μόνος δοκῶν ἔχειν / ἣ σῶμα χαλκοῦ ἢ σιδηρᾶν καρδίαν / ἀπῆλθες, ἐστράτευσας, ὥσπλῆσι πἀλιν / εἰς ἀντὶ πάντων ...


234 Her. 1.140–47: πόθεν μετήλθεν εἰς βαφὴν ἐναντίαν / ἢ τῶν τριχῶν σου χρυσομίμητος κόμης; / ἐβαψεν αὐτὴν ἢ χιον τῶν φροντίδων; / και ποι μετέστη τῶν μελῶν ἡ λευκότης; / πύρωσις αὐτὴν ἀντανείλεν ἠλίου. / ἀπεικός ούδὲν, ἀλλ’ ὁμιος στοχάζομαι, / ἐν τῷ διαχείσθαι τοὺς ἰδρώτας τῶν πόνων / ἡ λευκότης μετήλθεν εἰς τὴν καρδίαν.

235 pers. 3.341–46: οὐ γὰρ μονήρες τοὺς ἀγῶνας τῆς μάχης, / ψυχὴν δὲ τὴν σὴν συγκατώρθωσας πλέον* / αὐτὸς γὰρ ἡμῖν ἔξαρθμων πολλάκις / τοῦ σοῦ βίου τὸ μέτρον, ἐτράνους ὅτι / «βιοῦς χρόνον τοσοῦτον ἐν ῥαθυμίᾳ / ἔξησα ταύτας τῷ θεῷ τὰς ἡμέρας». 76
purification for his previous sins.” This should not be understood as a reference to any specific sin; certainly not to Heraclius’ second marriage to his niece Martina, which was highly unpopular, according to the later account of Theophanes. Instead it marks a momentous change in panegyrical rhetoric. For the first time, the struggle against besetting venial sins, which formed the subject of much contemporary ascetical literature, was openly attributed to a living emperor. Of course everyone knew before that emperors were sinners just like everyone else (if not more so!), not least the emperors themselves. The presentation of Heraclius as actively struggling against his own sins humbles him to human level, while his victory over them exalts him to the level of holy monks. Thus the increased ritual dependence on “images of authority” that Averil Cameron noted from the reign of Justin II onward, and which she argued constituted an attempt to exalt imperial power by humbling it before the divine majesty, finds an ethical, ascetic complement in the reign of Heraclius.

Just as the monastic heroes did not limit their struggles to physical mortifications, Heraclius’ virtues also involved a mental discipline and excellence. This is expressed by George with some of the same martial metaphors that had, since the earliest years of Christianity, been invoked to describe the contests of the saints. Although frequently invoking mythological precedents (not least the labors of the emperor’s homonym Herakles), he also distances his hero from them, or rather shows how he transcends them. Instead of frivolously praising a renowned warrior or hunter, George will extol the godly emperor’s panoply of scripture, and his acute

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236 pers. 3.407–8: ποίησον αὐτῷ τῶν φθασάντων πταισμάτων / ἱδρώτας, οὐς ἔσταξεν, εἰς καθάρσιον.  
237 Mary Whitby, “Defender of the Cross,” 255–57. Howard-Johnston, Witnesses, 32–34, argues that such a generic reference to sin went horribly wrong for George, being taken as a criticism of the imperial marriage, and claims that this caused the cessation of imperial patronage between the Persian Expedition of 622 and the Heraclias of 628. But Whitby’s arguments already refute his reasoning in advance.  
238 The confession of sin by an earlier emperor, Justin II, is vividly depicted in John of Ephesus, Ecclesiastical History, 3.5, in the scene where the intermittently mad Justin hands over authority to his Caesar, Tiberius. But this is hardly a panegyrical setting, and John was hostile to Justin for his persecution of monophysites. Cameron, “Image of Authority,” 15–16, mentions this passage briefly as a sign of the increasing emphasis on the emperor as a slave of God, but does not deal with the penitent element that I emphasize here.
memory whereby he hunts out the sacred words and rejoices in his catch; instead of taming wild beasts, Heraclius masters his own anger and subdues the visible enemies of the common good, Medes and barbarians; instead of a horse, Heraclius rides on his active and swift thought, “covering the earth and bearing toward heaven.”²³⁹ In the last quotation, the emperor’s virtue fulfills its imperial function of ruling the terrestrial sphere, but also promises spiritual greatness—for Heraclius, but also presumably for all, since he is elsewhere lauded as inaugurating a new creation.²⁴⁰ In a complex image at Heraclias 1.195–200, George lauds Heraclius for truly making his robe eternally purple, blood-stained by his sweat—thus equating his toils with the honorable wounds of battle (the boast of an active military prince) but also with the even more honorable wounds of martyrdom (just as sweaty monastics were often compared to blood-stained martyrs); but then says that the robe, though purple, is white and growing ever brighter white with use—thus bringing to mind both baptismal purity and eschatological splendor. He then transitions this reflection on Heraclius’ personal status to the theme of world renewal: “Hail, general of cosmic rebirth.”²⁴¹

In an ideal combination of Christian and imperial virtue, Heraclius leads the way to this new age more by example and persuasion than by force. The continuation of the previous passage speaks of a bow bent by an inclination to philanthropy that sends forth honey-dripping words which wound sweetly.²⁴² Elsewhere, his mind is sharp and fiery, but instead of scorching

²³⁹ Africa 4–26: the last line reads πληρῶν τε τὴν γῆν καὶ πρὸς οὐρανὸν φέρων. The theme of ruling the passions and external foes is repeated at pers. 3.409–10: λάβοι κατ’ ἐχθρῶν διὰ τὰ νικητήρια, / στήσοι τρόπαια καὶ παθῶν καὶ βαρβάρων, following immediately after the prayer for purification of sins through sweat cited in the previous note.
²⁴⁰ For George’s emphasis on spiritual and not just temporal renewal, see Whitby, “Devil in Disguise,” 127–29. This is emphasized even more by Maximus the Confessor, as we shall see later.
²⁴¹ Heraclias 1.201: χαῖρε, στρατηγὲ κοσμικοῦ γενεθλίου. George prays for Heraclius’ reward to be eternal life at Heraclias 2.31–33: ἀλλ’ ὀχήματος τύχοις / ᾣῳς τρεχούσης εἰς ὁδὸς ἀφθαρσίας.
²⁴² Africa 27–29: καὶ τόξα τείνεις ἐκ φιλανθρώπου ῥοπῆς / ἀεὶ προπέμπων τοὺς μελισταγεῖς λόγους, / ὑφ’ ὄν ἕκαστος ἥδεως τυτρώσκεται.
black what it touches like material fire, it warms and whitens—thus both nourishing the commonwealth and purifying it. His care is providential, almost god-like, leading George to call him “the master who does all things beneficially.” Thus, echoing Hellenistic political philosophy and the ideas of Eusebius of Caesarea, the master of the earth mirrors the ultimate Master. The doctrine of the emperor as *imago Christi* had been emphasized even more in the late sixth century, setting the stage for its application to Heraclius.

Accomplishing this virtuous *merimna* by taking on the toils of the commonwealth so whole-heartedly requires the denial of one’s own private desires and cares: “He transferred practically all his own concerns to our own concerns, thinking that he was in danger of his own soul unless he were to suffer every danger on our behalf.” This is enumerated with specific reference to Heraclius’ family life: “The naturally-implanted flame of pity for your mother did not check you; at that time your children, the pearls of life that charm the soul, did not hold you back bound by your soul’s affection.” Thus his physical stamina is tied to his mental fortitude and emotional self-control, further strengthening the link between the ascetic virtues of emperor and monk.

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244 *Bellum avaricum* 96: ὅ πάντα πράττων συμφερόντως δεσπότης.


246 Cameron, “Images of Authority,” 11 and 16.


248 *Her.* 165–68: οὐ μητρός οίκος πυροῦν ἐμφυτὸν πνέων / ἐπέσχεν ὑμᾶς· οὐ τὰ τέκνα σου τότε, / οἱ ψυχαγωγοὶ μαργαρίζοντας τὸ βίος, / στοργῇ διεθέντα ψυχικῇ παρεκράτουν. Cf. *avar.* 255–58. But elsewhere (*Bonum* 116–27), George is not above rousing the emperor’s paternal affection as a lure to summon him back to defend Constantinople in person!

Heraclius’ assumption of cares and resilience is linked, in a passage describing his rescue of a ship broken on the rocks, with his “sympathetic mindset (phronēma).” The episode is an insignificant side-plot in the narrative of one of Heraclius’ early campaigns against the Persians and one suspects that George had little in the way of tangible successes with which to spin his panegyric. But he easily draws out the obvious metaphors between rescue of a real ship and salvation of the ship of state. This suggestion of sympatheia is just one hint of George’s rich spiritual-political interpretation of the second concept to be examined here, that of eros/pothos/epithymia.

The idea of pothos figures prominently in various ancient accounts of the life of Alexander the Great, where the emotion is described as a vague but poignant yearning of curiosity and ambition that leads him to seek new lands to conquer. This is a wholly individual, not to say self-centered, urge, which however has positive effects such as glory and the spread of Hellenic civilization. There is a reciprocal pothos of Alexander’s troops for him, expressed when they seek to visit and gaze upon their mortally ill leader; but this affection is counter-balanced by the pothos that the same troops feel for hearth and home and kindred, which famously leads them to resist Alexander’s plans for yet further conquests. Alexander’s pothos was a powerful political force, but as a virtue, in the ancient sense, it possesses all of the ambiguity of the wrath of his hero Achilles.

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250 pers. 1.221–22: ὦ συμπαθὲς φρόνημα καὶ ψυχῆς τόνος / καὶ φροντὶς ἀρκέσασα τοῖς ὀλοις μία.
252 Cf. to Heraclius’ detachment from such natural affection, but also the use of it by George of Pisidia to urge him back home, discussed just above.
253 Cf. Themistius, Or. 13 (Ἐρωτικός ἢ περὶ κάλλους βασιλικοῦ), 175–76, where he characterizes Alexander as some earthborn demon who rejoices in murder (ed. Glanville Downey and Heinrich Schenkl,
The theme of love of a leader for his followers is, of course, fundamental to the Gospels’ portrayal of Christ, especially in the Gospel of John.²⁵⁴ It is developed further by Paul, even sometimes using the terminology of *pothos*.²⁵⁵ In both the Gospels and the Apostle, the dual commandments of love of God and love of men are so intricately interwoven so as to become essentially a hierarchy within one great commandment. Leadership is conceived of as a humble and kenotic *diakonia* rather than an arrogant, self-serving *exousia*. The idea can be harmonized with Hellenistic notions of the ruler’s *philanthrôpia*, although not without the difficulties inherent in all attempts to forge a Christian political theology.²⁵⁶ In the patristic tradition, the language of *agapê* and *eros* (and various related terms) tends to not be clearly distinguished.²⁵⁷ The impulse to love tends to be conceived of as one, although it can be directed toward various more or less suitable goals.²⁵⁸

This, in addition to the freedom of poetic license, sets the stage for George of Pisidia’s rather free use of the various terms. We find in him the terms *eros, pothos, epithymia, aplêstia, horexis, philanthrôpos zesis*, and *pathos* used to describe essentially the same powerful impulse to serve the common good in subjection to God. But, as in the New Testament and patristic tradition, George distinguishes between this love as directed ultimately toward God and its

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²⁵⁴ Luke also quotes Jesus using the strong language of *epithymia* in telling his disciples how much he wished to eat the Last Supper with them: Lk. 22:15.
²⁵⁵ Cf. Rom 1:11.
complementary manifestation as love for the common good and for specific worthy persons made beloved by nature or virtue.

The overriding divine goal of Heraclius’ love is announced in George’s early poem on Heraclius’ sailing from Africa to overthrow the tyrant Phocas, and set in contrast to the daunting challenges of campaigning and the related separation from kindred which we have already noted: “For you did not tremble at the sea-passage, nor were you drawn back then to the pity of your mother; for some love toward God possessed you aflame to quench the tempest by which the commonwealth was coming to ruin.” Another passage that follows from the previous discussion of *phrontis* shows how the divine inspiration of Heraclius’ love serves to ensure its political effectiveness and thus elicit a corresponding response from his subjects. George is praising Heraclius’ sound practical judgment: “Because of this fears do not agitate us, cares do not slacken our eagerness, neither do misfortunes sting, nor does labor afflict; for a pious love, running round us amidst the necessities and adversities, even more braces the sinews and firms the exertions of our flesh.”

Here the intention of rescuing the commonwealth from ruin broached in the earlier poem is substantiated by reflection on Heraclius’ detailed provisions for military matters (more explicit in the lines immediately preceding those quoted), which are summarized and sanctified by being subsumed into the emperor’s “pious love.” The all-embracing nature of this love as a kind of fire was indicated above in the passage from *On Heraclius’ Return*. The fervor it imparts allows Heraclius to overcome all challenges—“O

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260 pers. 2.185–90: ἐντεύθεν ἡμᾶς οὐ ταράττουσιν φόβοι, / οὐ φροντίδες χαυνοῦσι τὴν προθυμίαν, / οὐ συμφοραί δέκνουσιν, οὐ θλίβει κόπος• / ἔρως γὰρ ἡμᾶς εὐσεβῆς περιτρέχων / εἰς τάς ἀνάγκας καὶ περιστάσεις πλέον / νευρῶν συνιστὰ τοὺς τόνους τοῦ σαρκίου.
philanthropic fervor, superior to all overpowering necessity”\textsuperscript{261}—and even to be addressed in quasi-mystical language, “For you are entirely fire united to God.”\textsuperscript{262}

George depicts this as a profound impulse, a “philanthropic passion.”\textsuperscript{263} It is expressed in military endeavors in terms meant to evoke the powerful conquering urge of Alexander— “But you developed such an appetite of pious insatiability as to pass over into the very bowels of iniquitous Persia”— but also to claim superiority over the Macedonian king— “What generals or Stageirites did you have accompanying you as you went up against the land of fortunate barbarians?”\textsuperscript{264} Furthermore, the passion of Heraclius is superior to that of Alexander inasmuch as it is wholly guided by intellect and reason, or rather wholly united to them.\textsuperscript{265} Thus, while “pious insatiability” leads him to campaign in Persia, the “voraciousness of his mind” leads him to simultaneously take all care for the safety of the capital city Constantinople.\textsuperscript{266}

The passages just cited from \textit{Heraclias} and \textit{Bellum avaricum} both emphasize Heraclius acting alone, as a unique hero, a monarch. As Alexander was imagined by Greco-Roman historians, he is the privileged instrument of God, possessed of a special mystical relation to the

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{261} \textit{Her.} 1.175–76: ὥς φιλανθρώπος ξέσις / πάσης ἀνάγκης δραστικής υπερτέρα.
\item \textsuperscript{262} \textit{Her.} 2.219: ὅλος γὰρ ἐὰν τῷ Θεῷ συνημμένος.
\item \textsuperscript{263} \textit{pers.} 1.99: ἐκ φιλανθρώπου πάθους.
\item \textsuperscript{264} \textit{Her.} 1.156–60: ἂν ἐίς τοσαύτην εὔσεβοῦς ἀπληστίας / ὑδρείη ἡλθης, ὡστε καὶ τῶν ἐγκάτων / ἐντὸς παρελθειν τῆς ἀθέσμου Περσίδος. ποίους στρατηγοὺς ἢ Σταγειρίτας ἔχον / ἐπήλθης εἰς γῆν εὐτυχούντων βαρβάρων; The reference to generals and Stageirites reminds one of the likes of Parmenion, Ptolemy, and Aristotle, while the fortunate barbarians seems to allude to Alexander’s planned expedition against Arabia Felix (modern-day Yemen), forestalled by his death. The allusion should probably be seen as a literary flourish and not be taken to refer to an actual expedition against the Arabs by Heraclius himself. But Quercius, in his note on l.160, tries to explain it as a reference to the Persians (PG 92: 1311d).
\item \textsuperscript{265} George is probably not explicitly making the comparison with Alexander’s \textit{pothos} as irrational. In any case, many ancient writers tried to see Alexander as a paragon of prudence and wisdom, e.g. in Plutarch’s \textit{On the Fortune and Virtue of Alexander}; cf. Richard Stoneman, “The Legacy of Alexander in Ancient Philosophy,” in \textit{Brill’s Companion to Alexander the Great}, ed. Joseph Roisman (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 325–345. Nissen, “Historisches Epos,” 304, compares this work of Plutarch to Georges’ portrayal of Heraclius.
\item \textsuperscript{266} \textit{avar.} 302–6: οὕτως ἄκεινητος ὃν ὁ δεσπότης / τάχει λογισμῶν καὶ φρενίων ἀπλησίας / πόρρωθεν εὔγας τῇ Πόλει παρίστατο / καὶ ταῖς μερίμναις πανταχοῦ συνήν μόνος / ὧς εἰς λογισμὸς ἀντὶ πάντων ἀρκέσας. The “voraciousness” mentioned here is explicitly contrasted with the vice of gluttony at \textit{pers.} 3.58–59: ὥ σκολος γὰρ ὑμῶν οὐκ ἐδεσμάτων πόθον / ἄλλα ἐίς τὸ σώζειν εἶχε τὴν ἀπληστίαν. This might be an allusion to Jesus’ divine nourishment at Jn. 4:31–34.
\end{footnotes}
Deity. But just as the histories of Alexander also showed his reliance on close friends and companions in a striking passage George develops the theme of the love between Heraclius and his deputy in Constantinople, the patrician Bonus.\textsuperscript{267} He portrays the latter as willingly accepting the heavy duties of responsibility for the City, “not out of necessity, for how could a soul suffer compulsion when it wounds with yearning and is itself wounded?”\textsuperscript{268} This is the paradoxical language of erotic love, which goads with its sweet wound but does not compel. But the conceit of necessity is developed ingeniously with reference to the general’s labors in common with his lord:

But where toils concur more, tending toward the same goal, there the fervor of those who yearn is more enflamed, and the adverse necessities contribute to them a guarantee of more secure longing, and the toils escape the notice of the lovers, since in the relation they conceal themselves or are concealed.\textsuperscript{269}

This reflects George’s preoccupation with the theme of love overcoming the hardships that weigh upon pious leaders. The metaphor continues through a comparison to carnal union between a man and a woman:

For if the material intercourse of bodies makes the divided flesh one, how should one express the union of soul, where spirit concurs with spirit and, through the combination of the immaterial organs, from the noble intellectual intercourse one soul is present in two bodies?\textsuperscript{270}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{267}{Cf. Nissen, “Historisches Epos,” 304.}
\footnotetext{268}{\textit{Bonum} 12–13: οὐκ ἐξ ἀνάγκης· πῶς γὰρ ἄν πάθοι βίαν / ψυχὴ πόθῳ τρώσασα καὶ τετρωμένη.}
\footnotetext{269}{\textit{Bonum} 14–20: ἀλλ’ ἐνθα μᾶλλον συντρέχουσιν οἱ πόνοι / εἰς ταύτα συννεύοντες, ἐνταῦθα πλέον / ἡ τῶν ποθοῦντων θερμότης ἀνάγκης· / καὶ πίστιν αὐτοῖς ἀσφαλεστέρου πόθου / ἡ τῶν ἀναγκῶν εἰσάγει περίστασις, / καὶ λανθάνουσι τοὺς φιλοῦντας οἱ πόνοι / ἐν τῇ σχέσει κλέψαντες ἢ κεκλεμμένοι.}
\footnotetext{270}{\textit{Bonum} 21–27: εἰ σωμάτων γὰρ ὑλικὴ συνουσία / τὴν σάρκα ποιεῖ τὴν διεστίθασαν μίαν, / τὴν ψυχικὴν τις πῶς ἐνωσὶν ἐκφράσει, / ὅπου τὸ πνεῦμα συντρέχει τῷ πνεύματι / καὶ τῶν ἀγαθῶν συντεθέντων ἀργάνων / ἐκ τῆς νοητῆς εὐγενοῦς συνουσίας / ψυχὴ μία πρόσεστι σώμασιν δύο; The cliché of one soul in}
But this is then turned into a contrast; whereas blameworthy carnal love is quickly ignited but just as quickly quenched, true spiritual love remains despite all difficulties:

For the firm eros which lays hold of the mind, uniting the substance of their mutual love, knows not hesitation, does not proffer fear as a pretext, does not think about uncertain adverse circumstances, is not afraid of the wheel of fortune; but as being united inwardly in the heart, it often sails and journeys together, and reckons everything far to be near, and reckons itself to be present with the absent, and everywhere demonstrates the shared relation. For it is not torn, it is no way parted, but rather it is inward while being outside, as your master is in you, though he seem to be at a distance.\textsuperscript{271}

This daring language takes the whole long history of Hellenic reflection on love—both philosophical and romantic—and applies it to the friendship of the ruler and his right-hand man. Their personal relation of love in turn enables them to accomplish great deeds for the good of the commonwealth, as the ancient philosophers had speculated and the Theban Sacred Band supposedly realized in practice.\textsuperscript{272} We should not read too much into the homoerotic overtones of this tradition and this language; George is using it selectively to emphasize spiritual love over against carnal love.\textsuperscript{273} And in contrast to the intense but erratic and often destructive loves and two bodies recalls Gregory Nazianzene’s eulogy for Basil of Caesarea and other ecclesiastical writings, thus contributing to the spiritual tone of the description here.

\textsuperscript{271} Bonum 36–48: ὃ δ’ αὖ βεβηκὼς καὶ φρενοκρατής ἔρως, / συνουσιώσας τὴν φιλάλληλον σχέσιν, / οὐκ οίδεν ὅκνον, οὐ προβάλλεται φόβον, / οὐ τὰς ἀδήλους ἐννοεῖ περιστάσεις, / οὐκ εὐλαβεῖται τὴν ἐπὶ σφαῖρας τύχην, / ἄλλ’ ὠσπερ ἔνδον συνυπελεῖ τῇ καρδίᾳ, / καὶ συμπεριπλεῖ καὶ συνοδεύει πολλάκις, / καὶ πάντοτε μακρὸν πλησίον λογίζεται, / καὶ τοῖς ἀπόσιν συμπαρὰν λογίζεται, / καὶ πανταχῶς δείκνυσι τὴν κοινὴν σχέσιν• / οὐ σχίζεται γάρ, οὔτε μὴν μερίζεται, / ἄλλ’ ἔστιν ἐκτὸς ἔνδον, ὡς ὁ δεσπότης / ἐνεστὶν ἐν σοὶ, κἀν δοκῇ διεστάναι.

\textsuperscript{272} Cf. Themistius, Or 13 (see n. 227).

\textsuperscript{273} Note, however, that in all of George’s corpus, Heraclius’ wife is not mentioned at all, whereas love for his mother and for his children occurs rather frequently. This might be due to the fact that his second wife Martina often accompanied him on campaign, and thus could not be an object of distant yearning. I think that George’s reticence is more likely due, however, to the controversy surrounding Heraclius’ marriage to Martina; since she was his niece, this fell within the prohibited degrees of marriage. As a high official of the Great Church and a disciple of the Patriarch Sergius, George would be likely to share in ecclesiastical
devotions of Alexander the Great, the friendship between Heraclius and Bonus is founded on enduring spiritual foundations.

The love of Heraclius and Bonus between themselves and together for the common good is, according to George of Pisidia, recognized and reciprocated by the people of the Roman Empire. Later in the panegyric On Bonus, George appeals to Heraclius’ paternal affection to compel him to return in person to Constantinople—whereas elsewhere, as we have seen, he lauded his aloofness from such natural attachments. But this familial appeal gives way immediately to the concerns of the whole community: “For the community, loving its two luminaries as if they were its two eyes, was afraid lest, by the deprivation of the piercing sun and also of the moon which emits light by it, the City suffer a double eclipse in one.”^274 This devotion to the emperor is earned not simply by his efforts to restore the fortunes of the empire, but also by the manner in which he does so. Heraclius rules with equity and kindness, in contrast with the alleged reign of terror under Phocas. We have already seen how his arrows are words that wound with sweet honey.\(^275\) The metaphor of honey is approached somewhat differently in a passage on Heraclius’ application of the laws:

For if you were to find somewhere a limb worthy of blows, you would extend the laws, like a bee sting, to instill fear, but you spare its use by all means; and the sting often shoots out to strike and again is retracted, and the active urge is checked by compassion and remains idle. Even though it possesses a sharp impulse, it is piously dulled by you,

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^274 Bonum 128–32: δέος γὰρ εἴχεν, ὅσα διπτῶν ὁμμάτων / ἡ κοινότης ἐρωστὶρων δύο, / μὴ τῇ στερήσῃ τοῦ διαυγούσης ἡλίου / καὶ τῆς σελήνης τῆς δι’ αὐτοῦ φωσφόρου / πάθοι διπλῆν ἐκλειψίν εἰς μίαν Πόλις. This reference to two luminaries within the Roman Empire may be an implicit rejection of the metaphor of the Roman Emperor and Persian Shah as the two eyes of the world, hitherto a favorite diplomatic formula: Canepa, The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

^275 Africa 27–29.
and thenceforth, as it were from a philanthropic passion, the sting drips honey rather than bitterness.  

The phrase “philanthropic passion” was quoted above but here we see its context. The ferocity of the laws is wisely managed by Heraclius, so that it is effective more by threat than by application. The humanity-loving impulse of Heraclius is so powerful that it penetrates even the impersonal severity of the laws: the image of love dripping like honey from a bee-sting thus becomes a strange but effective metaphor for the emperor as *empsychos nomos*.

The emperor’s prerogative of *oikonomia*, tempering strictness with philanthropy, is most clearly expressed in a speech that George has Heraclius deliver to his demoralized and disorganized army:

> Our relationship and the manner of my kingship have matched us together as brothers; for we do not ordain that our authority shine forth in fear so much as through love. For it is a law for us to counteract the inhuman violations, which the tyranny had armed with the force of the laws, with philanthropic violation; and to so many violations to oppose this one, which is wont to do violence to the well-legislated laws because of blameless necessities.

Why would such a legal reflection be located in a harangue? Armies of any age are prone to use the brute force afforded them by their weapons to oppress civilian populations. Presumably the

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276 *pers. 1.91–99:* εἶ που γὰρ εὕροις ᾧ ἤξιον ἀνθρώπης μέλος, / τοὺς μὲν νόμους, ὡς κέντρον, ἀπλοῖς πρὸς φόβῳ, / φείδῃ δὲ πάντως• καὶ τὸ κέντρον πολλάκις / πληξαὶ προσημηδὲ καὶ πάλιν συστᾶλεται, / τὸ δραστικόν δὲ συμπαθεῖ κρατοῦμεν / ἐμείνεν ἄργον• κάν γὰρ ἢξιαν ῥοπῆν / ἐχει, δὲ ὑμῶν ἐνομοῦς / ἀμβλῦνεται, / καὶ λοιπὸν, ὡσπέρ ἐκ φιλανθρώπου πάθους, / στάξει τὸ κέντρον ἀντὶ πικρίας μέλι. “Passion” is a common translation for “pathos,” but perhaps should be translated “emotion,” as in much recent work on the subject by classicists (Sorabji, Konstan, Graver, et al.).

277 For the concept of *empsychos nomos*, see Baynes, “The Byzantine State,” 56–57.

278 *pers. 2.88–97:* ἐμοὶ μὲν ῥάμας ὡς ἀδελφοὺς ἂς σχέσεις / καὶ τῆς βασιλείας ὁ τρόπος συνήρμοσεν• / ἐξουσίαν γὰρ οὐ κοσμοῦν ἐν φόβῳ / ὅσον προλάμπειν ἐν πόθῳ θεσπίζομεν• / νόμος γὰρ ἥμιν ταῖς ἀπανθρώποις βίαις, / ἢ τῆς τυραννίς τοῖς νόμοις ἀνθωπλάσει, / ἀντεισάγειν νῦν τὴν φιλανθρωπίν βίαν, / καὶ ταῖς τοσαῦταις ἀντιτάξαί τίνης μίαν, / ἢ ταῖς ἀνάγκαις ταῖς ἀνεμβλητοῖς ἄει / τοὺς εὖ τεθέντας ἐκβιάζεται νόμοις.
Roman army under Phocas had grown even more cruel, aided and abetted by the example and approval of Phocas and his henchman Bonosus.\textsuperscript{279} The speech would then have been a warning, especially in the context of Heraclius’ fervently religious preparations for war, that such rapaciousness under pretext of the laws would no longer be tolerated; but it also may have served as an assurance that the soldiers themselves would not be prosecuted by Heraclius for their crimes, up to and including their prior support for the tyrant.\textsuperscript{280} By thus restoring \textit{eutaxia} to the army, he made it an effective force for fighting the enemy while also ensuring that it would not itself prey on the Romans. These were some of the concrete results of Heraclius’ imperial virtue of \textit{eros}.

\textit{A program for imperial lay piety?}

This virtue and the related one of \textit{merimna} thus provide a specific framework for the piety of the most important layman in Byzantium, the emperor. Borrowing language and motifs from the ideal ascetic piety of the monks, George melds it creatively with older Greco-Roman motifs of philosophical and royal excellence, in order to address the needs of the moment for a cogent program of imperial restoration. But those very needs have deeply marked the resulting production. The motifs of imperial triumph have not disappeared, but in the earlier works the court poet must content himself with small insignificant present victories which are padded out and projected onto the future by means of the detailed re-imagination of imperial piety. Even in the later poems, George’s theological point of view does not allow him to forget the ultimate

\textsuperscript{279} This is subject to the aforementioned caveats about Phocas’ bad reputation argued by Olster, \textit{Politics of Usurpation}.
\textsuperscript{280} All of section 2 of \textit{pers.} concerns with the reorganization and purification of the army.
spiritual objectives that the surprising success against Chosroes seems to make possible: a world-
wide spiritual renewal and perhaps the inauguration of the new age.\textsuperscript{281}

In addition to these thematic virtues of \textit{merimna} and \textit{eros}, George enumerates other
traditional ones with more or less traditional interpretations. We have already seen how
Heraclius rules his passions inwardly as he dominates barbarians outwardly. He also solves
Homer’s difficulty in personifying excellence in one single hero: whereas Achilles possessed
courage and Odysseus prudence, Heraclius demonstrates all four cardinal virtues.\textsuperscript{282} But the
comparison is not limited to pagan worthies. Heraclius is a new Elias, nourished by cares rather
than by the food borne by a raven.\textsuperscript{283} In the long concluding prayer of \textit{De expeditione persica},
the poet asks God to grant the emperor the zeal of Elias and the success in generalship of
Moses.\textsuperscript{284} All of this is made more impressive by the fact that Heraclius attains such spiritual
stature in a time of stress, blossoming with the divine flowers of his labors among the thorns of
war.\textsuperscript{285}

What are we to make, then, of George’s vision of lay piety, sketched as it is in the
slippery context of panegyric? He claims that “having thus poured myself out insatiably toward
speeches, I desire for you a good insatiability.”\textsuperscript{286} I do not think that this is merely the clichê of a
propagandist. George had a mature philosophical-theological vision that, while never divorced

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\textsuperscript{281} Mary Whitby, "Devil in Disguise," 127–29. This is a corrective to Olster’s argument for seeing
George’s theological rhetoric as almost wholly politically-driven: "Date of George of Pisidia’s ‘Hexaemeron’,
172. A similar caution is expressed in the writings of Sophronius and especially Maximus (to be discussed in
later chapters), showing that an author as closely connected to the emperor as George could still maintain a
certain theological detachment from the imperial project.

\textsuperscript{282} \textit{Her.} 1.66–81.

\textsuperscript{283} \textit{Her.} 2.135.

\textsuperscript{284} \textit{pers.} 3.411–25. This is followed by a prayer for the imperial heirs, which is largely a catalogue of
the virtues expected of them, and thus another sketch of imperial lay piety.

\textsuperscript{285} \textit{pers.} 1.82–88, 3.374–80; \textit{avar.} 261.

\textsuperscript{286} \textit{Her.} 1.219–20: οὔτως ἀπλήστως ἔκχυθείς πρὸς τοὺς λόγους / στέργω δι’ ὑμᾶς τὴν καλὴν ἀπληστίαν.
from the political context of his time, is proof of a genuine interest in piety for its own sake.  

We must remember that panegyric was often not supposed to be descriptive, but prescriptive: it was a sort of mirror of princes, to suggest in an acceptable way what ought to be rather than what was. The feeling of pouring oneself out in one’s words is understandable to anyone who has tried writing something substantial, and the act of writing itself serves to stimulate and shape thought. In the course of elegantly—sometimes brilliantly—combining classical allusions with the newer currency of Christian themes, George was able to forge a new synthesis that allowed for the qualities proper and necessary to the lay office of the emperor while also imbuing it with some of the sacrality characteristic of monks and patriarchs.  

George’s experience of insatiably writing about Heraclius’ virtues could easily lead him to a strong affection for his brainchild, and consequently to a sincere wish that his addressee and patron would in turn take these suggestions to heart, and hunger and thirst after the piety proper to an emperor.  

Another question that arises is the purpose of the ascetic, even monastic, parallels. There is no evidence that George was a monk; in any case, even if he were celibate and tonsured, his active life as a high official of the patriarch would not give him the leisure for a cloistered, contemplative life. Some of my observations in the course of presenting the texts may be relevant here. As already mentioned, the purification from sins brought about by Heraclius’ labors—penance through sweat—marks a further Christianization of authority in the Roman Empire. By humbling himself the emperor is exalted. The confession of sin renders him more

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287 In this I side with Mary Whitby against Olster, as in n. 61 above.
288 In this chapter I have not discussed George’s equally idealized portrayal of Patriarch Sergius, which would shed light on that of Heraclius, but see Whitby, “Defender of the Cross,” 266–69.
289 James Howard-Johnston expresses a positive appreciation of the creativity and poetic achievement of George of Pisidia in the first chapter of his recent Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). However, I believe that he overrates the world-historical genius of George, and I find his highly speculative reconstructions of his life and relations with the emperor unconvincing. For a more measured appreciation of George and a critique, with reference to older evaluations, see Frendo, “Poetic Achievement,” 159–62.
human, brings him closer to his subjects. This was necessary especially necessary for Heraclius, who was viewed by many as being too aloof and too distant (often literally). Yet his indefatigable endeavors cleanse him and raise him up to a new level. The emphasis on active labor was also necessary to offset the fears of the populace, for whom continuous imperial residence in the capital was a hallowed tradition—the last emperor to campaign in person was Theodosius I over two centuries earlier. By his decision to swap his the purple shoes of the palace-bound emperor for the rugged boots of the general, Heraclius moved outside the normal orbit of palace *taxis*, outside the orderly ceremonies that regulated the Byzantine political world and which had become more significant in the late sixth century, as shown by Cameron. He thus risked forfeiting the sacral awe that adhered to the emperor through such artifices of eternity.

George’s explicit comparisons of the warrior-emperor to a range of Old Testament saints and his implicit allusions to the patterns of the martyr and the monk ensured that Heraclius regained it by other means. Yet along with this rather functionalist explanation, we should not rule out a real enthusiasm and inspiration on Heraclius’ part, a “mysticism” that Shahid noted as an important subject of inquiry in the study of Heraclius.

George’s poems were apparently well-received, otherwise he would not have continued to be called on to write them over the course of twenty years. Their greatest impact would have been in performance, as he recited them in front of a crowd of lay and ecclesiastical worthies such as that which heard Paul the Silentiary extol Justinian’s Hagia Sophia half a century

291 In her discussion of Heraclius, Cameron, “Images of Authority,” 5, neglects this aspect of his reign. Heraclius also considered moving the capital to Carthage and Constans II did actually move the court to Sicily (cf. Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 88–89). This marks a sharp break in the development of Constantinopolitan ceremonial revolving around the emperor’s physical presence. The development resumed, of course, after the resettling of the court in Constantinople with Constantine IV.
earlier. His adaptation of iambic trimeter and relatively modern language would have rendered it more easily understandable to the audience than Paul’s hexameter verses. The play of imagery may have been too swift to catch all of it on a first hearing, but this may have actually led to it being re-read, studied, and discussed by connoisseurs such as Theophylact Simocatta, thus extending the influence of the text beyond the initial moment of its recitation. It was circulated publicly anyway: *On Bonus*, which addresses the absent emperor, would obviously have had to be copied and sent to Heraclius, and we can safely assume that most of the other works would have been circulated officially in order to boost morale and loyalty to the regime.

George’s poems also coincides chronologically with the famous “David Plates.” This collection of exquisite silver dishes of varying sizes, found in a hoard in Cyprus and dated to sometime within George’s active period of writing, depicts various episodes of war and peace from the life of David, the great prophet-king of the Old Testament. The masterful combination of classical and biblical imagery recalls George’s poetry, which has in fact been called on by modern scholars to interpret the Plates. The level of artistry connects them with the highest social circles, the same people who would have access to George’s poetry.

Lastly, what of the Nachleben of George’s vision? George was highly regarded throughout the Byzantine period—Michael Psellus compared his iambic verses favorably to Euripides—but the manuscript tradition of his works is somewhat uneven. The poems that

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293 For the character of such an audience in the time of Paul, which would likely not have differed much from George’s, see Cameron, “Images of Authority,” 24–29 and for Byzantine poetic declamation see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 55–60.
294 Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, 25–26, supposes that some of George’s poems were published officially as propaganda messages, transforming the dry prose of imperial memoranda on the progress of the Persian campaigns into exciting verse panegyrics. He may be right on individual poems, but his theory of a lost Heraclian campaign history consisting of both prose and verse, composed by George, has not found broad scholarly acceptance.
focused more on panegyric are each preserved in only a few manuscripts, whereas the
Hexaemerón is found in over fifty.\textsuperscript{296} This suggests that the specific historical exploits of
Heraclius were not of great interest to later Byzantine readers. Such neglect was probably due
partly to Heraclius’ failure to defeat the Arabs, which made much of the rhetoric ring hollow in
his case, but even more so to his fomenting of Christological heresy.\textsuperscript{297} The more monastic-
minded writings of Sophronius and Maximus, which we will study in the following chapters,
thus won out on the level of spirituality as well as of dogmatic theology. Although in his extant
writings George did not actively promote domination of the Church by the emperor, his
idealization of the emperor could lend dangerous support to such a project. But then again, we
should not underestimate his influence. The manuscript tradition of his panegyrical works may
have been small, but it was persistent. Furthermore, the popular Hexaemerón, focused on the
theological contemplation of the cosmos as it was, placed imperial piety firmly within the
ordered universe as a necessary element.

\textsuperscript{296} Lauxtermann, Byzantine Poetry, 57.
\textsuperscript{297} Heraclius was spared condemnation by the Sixth Ecumenical Council (emperors were generally
not condemned synodically) but his dubious theological policies were not forgotten. For a brief overview of
Heraclius’s non-religious reception, see Kaegi, Heraclius, 318–23; it seems that many later Byzantine writers
did not remember him as losing to the Arabs, but rather transferred the greatest losses to his successors—not
wholly unreasonable, considering that at his death parts of Egypt were still holding out and northern Syria
was still not irrevocably lost.
3. A Portrait of the Bishop as a Layman: John the Almsgiver by the hagiographer Leontius of Neapolis

*Development of the role of the bishop up to ca. 600*

In the introductory chapter we considered very briefly the views of two great early Christian bishops, Basil of Caesarea and John Chrysostom, on lay piety. Although they were already prominent and influential figures in their own day, the role of the bishop in ecclesiastical and civil society grew ever further in the next few centuries. The ideas of these great fourth-century Fathers and their own example, as appropriated and interpreted by subsequent generations, were important factors in this growth. But the ongoing economic and social transformations of the period, particularly of the character of cities and civic life, were essential as well. The visions of a Christian polity which they had so eloquently, and sometimes abrasively, expounded, were in fact realized to a greater or lesser degree in ways which their own times did not allow. For example, the decline of chariot racing in most cities except the capital largely fulfilled the fulminations of Chrysostom against this vice. How much these processes were driven by the ideas of the Fathers and related pious developments, and how much by the natural processes by which the urban fabric changed, can of course never be fully resolved, and I will not attempt to do so here.

By 600 the bishop was, in most Roman towns, not just an important ecclesiastical figure, but also a leading member of the local aristocracy. The great impetus for this development had, of course, been Constantine’s favorable policy toward Christian bishops of the catholic persuasion. His enactments had been consistently added to and refined in response to new conditions. The decline of the old aristocracy of *curiales* saw the rise of a new élite of
possessores or ktêtores, wealthy local men who usually also held some imperial title either actively or honorarily or as emeriti. The local imperial regime usually cooperated closely with them, as it had with the curiales. The bishop, who had once been the pastor of a small Christian flock in a sea of pagans, gradually became the father of a city that was almost exclusively peopled by Christians. He naturally possessed influence as preacher, teacher, and defender of the poor and oppressed. These advantages were augmented by the wealth that churches were accumulating, of which the bishop was, theoretically at least, the prime disposer. 298 His influence was both ratified, and utilized by the imperial government, which in many laws officially legislated the role of the bishop in ruling the city: advocating for the poor and for the citizens in general before imperial officials, having a say in selection of some civic officials, and providing certain judicial services, mostly in the form of arbitration. 299 In addition to these normal roles, bishops were sometimes temporarily thrust into more prominent positions during times of crisis, such as enemy sieges or diplomatic missions. As figures of dignity, authority, and wealth, they were intrinsically influential in local and regional affairs. 300

298 Bishops did not, however, automatically control all the wealth pooling in churches in their diocese. Much of it was donated to private religious foundations, which were protected by Roman laws regarding private property. Successive imperial and canonical legislation had granted bishops greater power over such transactions, but the law often remained a dead letter where, for various reasons, the bishop could not vindicate his rights or did not wish to do so; see John Philip Thomas, Thomas, John Philip. Private Religious Foundations in the Byzantine Empire (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1987), 37–58. Cf. Gilbert Dagron, "Le christianisme dans la ville byzantine," DOP 31 (1977), 22: “On peut du reste de moins en moins parler de la «fortune de l'Eglise», mais plutôt de la fortune des institutions pieuses, et bientôt du statut ecclésiastique ou monastique de certains biens: car l'Eglise cesse très tôt d’être une unité économique.”

299 For a summary of literature on the vexed question of the extent and functioning of the episcopalis audientia, see Vincent Déroche, Etudes sur Léontios de Néapolis (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 1995), 142–46.

Their spiritual stature had also changed somewhat over the course of the centuries. Their social level increased their spiritual abilities, in some ways, since it made their voices better heard in situations where they could promote the spiritual well-being of their people; in other ways it hindered them, as the additional burdens of civic responsibility often reduced the time and effort they could devote to more directly spiritual endeavors, such as preaching. One key development that ensured that their spiritual authority did not much wane despite such obstacles was the increasing incidence of monk-bishops. Despite early tensions, the monastic movement came to be more and more controlled by the hierarchy, backed by imperial law. The tensions were also eased by the increasing number of monks who became bishops. Such men, and even celibate men who had not formally made monastic vows, possessed ascetical and charismatic authority in addition to the institutional authority conferred by their office. This authority, as well as their experience, often enabled them to fulfill three functions that Peter Brown has discerned in the Holy Man: exemplar, arbiter, and teacher of holiness (in addition to that of spiritual and secular patron).

In some ways they were even better placed to do so than the classic Holy Man, because they were more clearly situated as liminal, and thus mediating, figures. From his monastic preparation the bishop would ideally possess ascetic experience and authority; this would be combined with a thorough knowledge of Scripture and the growing corpus of ecclesiastical writings (many of which were of an ascetic nature) and the canonical control that he was

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supposed to exercise over the monastics under his jurisdiction. On the other hand, having left the real or notional desert for a position in the Church in the world, the bishop was naturally more implicated in the cares of the world and more familiar with the concerns of his primarily lay flock. Such a position enabled (and, for the conscientious, demanded) him to interpret asceticism for the circumstances of the laity, to forge lay piety out of monastic piety.

It must be remembered in this regard that, if monastics constituted a kind of spiritual élite in the Church, their piety was not in contradistinction to some notional “popular” piety. We are not dealing with a skeptical philosophical élite looking down on the superstitions of the masses. Late antique Christians, by and large, believed in miracles and the efficacy of saints and their relics. There were, of course, debates about the exact nature and mechanics of saintly efficacy and likewise of the precise methods of ascetic self-cultivation. The good pastor would know to refrain from speculating on such matters except with a small circle of learned interlocutors. His task in public was to shore up this faith with clear and decisive arguments and to distill the wisdom of the Scriptures and Fathers into a form comprehensible to laypeople and useful to them. The preaching of the word was complemented by other measures: institution of new liturgical customs—chants, feasts, processions, etc.—and patronage of persons and writings that would promote the same goals. Thus the bishop joined, and sometimes overshadowed, the holy man as mediator and teacher of lay piety.

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303 By our period both laws and canons had granted bishops great powers over monasticism in their territory, but as with the oversight of wealth mentioned above in n. 278, this was often a dead letter; see Peter Hatlie, The Monks and Monasteries of Constantinople, ca. 350–850 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 38–54.

304 Cf. Sterk, Renouncing the World Yet Leading the Church, 181–82, with reference to the contributions of Momigliano and Brown cited in Ch. 1, at n. 37. We must also not be fooled by the polemics of such apologists for the cult of saints as Eustratius of Constantinople in his late sixth century work On the State of Souls after Death (De statu animarum post mortem, edited by Peter van Deun [Turnhout: Brepols, 2006]) into thinking that those who disagreed with him were absolutely denying the efficacy of the saintly intercession. His arguments rely on reductio ad absurdum, but we can see a more moderate position even in Anastasius of Sinai, discussed in Ch. 6 of the present study.

In the rest of this section we will examine a few characteristic examples of the bishop’s mediating functions. In the case of John the Almsgiver, we have to deal both with his own taste for “edifying tales” (one subset of hagiography) and the complex craftsmanship of the author, Leontius, who both presents John as a saint and uses him as a mouthpiece for edifying tales. This makes it hard to separate historical fact from hagiographical fiction, fiction here being broadly understood as the literary license that the author uses to emphasize a particular message. But this will permit some further reflections on the rhetoric of hagiography as a powerful tool for shaping lay piety.

_A pious bishop and his pious biographer: John the Almsgiver and Leontius of Neapolis_

In writing the _Life of John the Almsgiver_, Leontius bequeathed a hagiographical masterpiece to Byzantine Christianity. The relation between subject, text, and author is very complex. I will begin by describing some of the key elements of lay piety as given in the text, exemplified and taught by John the Almsgiver, before moving on to examine how and why Leontius composed it as he did.

John the Almsgiver was himself somewhat of a lay saint: the son of the governor of Cyprus, married with children and soon a widower, his sudden promotion to bishop and patriarch of Alexandria occurred only late in life, without any previous monastic or clerical training, as a political appointment by the new emperor Heraclius. The nature of his piety as a layperson is

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306 My guide in much of what follows is Déroche’s excellent volume _Etudes sur Léontios de Néapolis_.

307 He was appointed by Heraclius at the behest of his right-hand man, the patrician Nicetas (who had conquered Egypt on his behalf), as a suitably loyal replacement for the previous incumbent, Theodore Scribon, who had been murdered in the civil war between Heraclius and Phokas; see the _Anonymous Vita_ 2–4 (henceforth _V/aj_) in Hippolyte Delehaye, ed., “Vie Anonyme de Jean l’Aumônier,” _AB_ 45 (1927): 5–24, translated into French in Leontius of Neapolis, _Vie de Syméon le Fou et Vie de Jean de Chypre_, ed. André-Jean Festugière (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1974), 321–38; see also Festugière’s summary of the events surrounding John’s appointment at 259–62. There is an English translation of the first part of the Anonymous and most of _V/jm_ (the medium-length recension of Leontius’ text) in _Three Byzantine Saints_: 
somewhat ambiguous. The Anonymous version of the *Life*, which in its first section epitomizes the first written account by John Moschus and Sophronius the Sophist, takes pains to claim that he entered into marriage against his own desire, out of obedience, and even then having to be forced by his father-in-law to consummate the union. The death of his wife and children is then presented as a liberation from worldly cares.

He had now gained complete freedom from all worldly burdens and anxieties and gave himself up wholly and entirely without any other thought than how to please the Lord and, like the great apostle, to ‘become all things to all men’ and ‘not to seek his own profit only but the profit of many’ that they might have a prosperous course. And indeed he was always on all occasions amiable to all, advising, encouraging, assisting, acting as peacemaker, doing a kindness, reconciling, and ever anxiously striving to display his love for the highest virtue in all its forms.\(^{308}\)

In this version his vocation is really that of a celibate, though not of a monk, at least not in the contemplative sense; during the time between the loss of his family and his ordination he plays the part of a fervent *philochristos*. He does not withdraw into monastic solitude, but exercises an active ministry of help to his fellow man that foreshadows the pastoral solicitude of his episcopate.

Leontius’ account is somewhat different. Without necessarily contradicting the above (which presumably would have been in the original life by Moschus and Sophronius that

\(^{308}\) *VJa* 3; *Three Byzantine Saints*, 200.
Leontius had before him), he records an account given by John the Almsgiver himself of a dream vision of a radiant woman that he had as an adolescent. She tells him:

I am the first of the daughters of the King … If you obtain my friendship, I will lead you into the presence of the King. For no one has boldness of speech before him as I do. For I made Him become man on earth and save men …

Upon waking John realizes that she was Sympathy or Mercy/Almsgiving (Eleêmosynê), “for it was truly sympathy toward men and compassion that made the Lord truly put on flesh.”

Thereupon he resolves to put the vision to the test by visiting the church to pray. A mysterious stranger gives him a sack of money to distribute as he sees fit, and then promptly disappears. This divine confirmation is followed by various other occasions when John’s charitable giving is recompensed a hundredfold, leading him to make a habit of giving without stint or discrimination.

This vision of Lady Mercy echoes the ancient story of Heracles at the crossroads and, perhaps more relevantly for a young man destined to be a Christian bishop, the account of his conversion to Christian philosophy by Gregory of Nazianzus. But whereas Gregory’s vision leads him to a life of monastic virginity and contemplation, John’s leads him to a life of active works in the world; there is no mention here of sexual continence.

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309 V/6 (Festugière 351–52): «Ἐγώ εἰμὶ ἡ πρώτη τῶν θυγατέρων τοῦ βασιλέως ... Ἐὰν κτήσῃ με φίλην, ἐγώ εἰσεφέρω σε ἐνώπιον τοῦ βασιλέως. καὶ γὰρ οὕδεις έχει παρρησίαν πρὸς αὐτὸν ὡς ἐγώ. ἐγώ γὰρ ἐποίησα αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐνανθηρωθῆσαι καὶ σῶσαι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους.»


312 Though perhaps it might be suggested by the vision of a young maiden, especially if one chooses to translate Ἐὰν κτήσῃ με φίλην instead as “have me as your lover.” However, given that Leontius omits the mention of a desire for youthful continence on John’s part, I think this unlikely.
While John may or may not have had a propensity for continence, he is certainly an ascetic bishop. Leontius writes of him: “Although he had not practised the discipline of the monastic life, though he had not spent his time in church amongst the clergy before his ordination to the patriarchate, though he had even lived in lawful wedlock with his wife, yet once he had been ordained straight from the civil service to be patriarch, he so mastered the ordering of the church and he attained to such a height of virtue that he excelled many of those who had distinguished themselves in asceticism and in the desert.” But John does not undervalue monastic asceticism as such, and even seeks to participate in it vicariously:

As he wished neither to be left out of this good, I mean to be numbered among those who lived the monastic life, he devised the following scheme. He collected two units of holy monks, arranged that all their needs be supplied from the estates belonging to him in the district of his own city, built cells for them and appointed them to the two oratories neighboring each other, I mean the one of our Lady the Theotokos and the other of St John, which he himself had built from the foundations before being raised to the patriarchal throne. And he said to the monks beloved of God: ‘I myself, after God, will take thought for your bodily needs, but you must make the salvation of my spirit your care, so that your evening and night vigils performed in the martyrium may be set to my credit with God; and if you perform any offices in your own cells, it will be on behalf of your own souls.’ Hence his God-pleasing organization of the units has continued even till

313 V/ 47 (Festugière 397–98): Τούτο δέ ἦν τὸ θαυμασιώτερον τοῦ ἐν ἁγίῳ ὅτι οὔτε τὸν μονήρη βίον ἀσκήσας οὔτε ἐν κλήρῳ πρὸ τῆς χειροτονίας αὐτοῦ εἰς πατριαρχεῖον διατρίψας ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ, ἀλλὰ καὶ γυναῖκι νομίμῳ προσομιλήσας, οὔτω τῆς καταστάσεως ἐκράτησαν ἀπὸ κάλλιγος εἰς πατριάρχην χειροτονηθείς, καὶ εἰς τοιούτον ὑψός ἀρετῆς ἀνυψώθη ὡστε σχεδὸν πολλῶν τῶν ἐν ἁσκήσει καὶ ἐρήμῳ διατριψάντων ἀναφανήναι ὅσιώτερον.
today, and because of this the life of his city is conducted after the fashion of a
monastery, as it offers to God hymnody throughout the night in various locations.\footnote{314}

The older translation by Dawes and Baynes based on the medium-length recension of the \textit{Life},
and hence lacking the key phrase “before his patriarchate,” seems to locate this patronage in
Alexandria while John is patriarch; likewise Festugière, though translating from the long
recension.\footnote{315} But the Greek of the long version, as I have translated it above, clearly describes
John’s actions in his native town of Amathous, on the south coast of Cyprus, \textit{before} his
ordination, i.e. as a layman. The present tense referring to \textit{his} city reinforces this impression, as
of a place that Leontius, himself a Cypriot, knows well. By patronizing monastic life, John
vicariously participates in the monastic cycle of prayer. This is an example of the the spiritual
economy that could obtain between monastics and laypeople, and a particular important one
because so clearly expressing the logic of the transaction. It is also an idealized form of the kind
of private religious foundations studied by John Thomas. Unlike so many cases of lay magnates
who abuse their role as benefactors either by not providing for the long-term maintenance of the
foundations, or by profiting from them financially, or by interfering in their internal governance,

\footnote{314 VJ 48 (Festugière 398): Βουλόμενος δὲ μηδὲ τούτου τοῦ καλοῦ τυγχάνειν ἄμοιρος, λέγω δὴ τῆς
tοῦ μοναδικοῦ βίου καταρθημέσως, ἐπιτιθεῖν πράγμα τοιούτον. συναγαγὼν δύο τάγματα ὁσίων μοναχῶν
τάσσει τούτως τὴν ἁπανθ. χρηγενθῆσαι ἐκ τῶν προσόντων αὐτῶν χωρίων ἐν τῇ ἑνρίᾳ τῆς ἀυτοῦ
πόλεως, ποιῆσαι αὐτοῖς καὶ κελλία καὶ τάξεις ἐν τοῖς ὑπόπτοις ἀγάπητοις ἀλλήλοις, λέγω δὴ
τῆς δεσποτικῆς ἡμῶν τῆς θεοτόκου καὶ τοῦ ἀγίου Ιωάννου, ἃνεπ ἤν ἐκ θεμελιωμένων αὐτῶν οἰκοδομήσας πρὸν ἢ
eῖς τοῦ πατριαρχικοῦ θρόνον ἀνυψωθῆναι, εἰπὼν τοῖς θεοφιλεστάτοις μοναχοῖς ὥστε· «Αὐτὸς ἔγραμ
θεύν τὴν χρηγενθ᾽ τὴν σωματικῆς φροντίδων ἡμῖν, ύμείς δὲ τῆς τοῦ πνεύματος μου φροντίσατε ἐπὶ τούτου
σωτηρίας, ἵνα τὸ λυχνικόν καὶ ἡ ἐν τῷ μαρτυρίῳ ἐπιτελουμένη ὑπὸ ἡμῶν νυκτερινῆ ἄγρυφνα παρὰ θεό ἕμοι
λογίζηται, εἰ τι δὲ ἐν τοῖς ὑμετέροις καλλίστοις λειτουργόντας ποιήσητε, τῆς ὑμετέρας ψυχῆς ἕνεκα ἐσθαυρό· ὡστε
καὶ ἕκ τῆς ταυτίτης αὐτοῦ προστάξεως σπουδαιότεροι ποιήσει τοὺς θεοφιλεῖς μοναχοὺς ἀγώνισάσθαι ο
μακάριος, ὅθεν καὶ μέχρι τῆς δέριος ἡ ταυτίτη αὐτοῦ θεάρεστος σύστασις τῶν ταγμάτων συνισταται καὶ
dίκην μοναστηρίου ή κατ᾽ αὐτοῦ πόλες εἰς τούτου πολιτεύεται <έν> διαφόροις τόποις τὰς πανυψάλλους
ὕμνωδιας τῷ θεῷ προσφέρουσα. The portrayal of a monasticized city may hark back to the depiction of
Oxyrhynchus in \textit{Historia Monachorum} 5 (as noted by Festugière, 619).

\footnote{315} Dawes and Baynes, \textit{Three Byzantine Saints}, 250–51 and Festugière 509–510.
John is generous, prudent, and honest.\textsuperscript{316} The apportionment of prayers is laid out strictly, even contractually, so that John is to obtain the merits of the common offices of the monasteries, while the monks will benefit chiefly from their private devotions. The fact that the monasteries were still running smoothly as of the time of Leontius’ composition, more than twenty years after John’s death, is evidence of his excellence as a lay patron.\textsuperscript{317}

In addition to his support of monastic ascetics, he himself embodies a moderate form of asceticism. The various versions of the \textit{Life} emphasizes his frugal lifestyle, but not primarily as a means to tame the desires of the flesh. Rather, John seeks to cut down his own consumption to the simple necessities in order to dispose of more wealth for charity. This is demonstrated strikingly in “the episode of the blanket.”\textsuperscript{318} A wealthy notable of the city (\textit{kitéor}), distressed by the shabby bedding of the patriarch, gives him an expensive blanket worth thirty-six nomismata, and the patriarch accepts it, albeit with misgivings. That night his conscience prevents him from sleeping, as he considers the real dire poverty of so many of the denizens of Alexandria compared to his rich and wasteful household.\textsuperscript{319} His guilt is a very exact accountant: he reckons
\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{316} He seems also to retained a sense of modesty, probably rare among benefactors. This is not immediately recognizable from this chapter on his monastic foundations—which could not avoid being associated publicly with his name, since it would have been commemorated out loud every time the common offices on his behalf were celebrated—but in another chapter describing his donations for reconstruction work in Jerusalem after the sack by the Persians in 614, it is mentioned that John asked that his name not be inscribed on the restored buildings (VJl 18, Festugière 366).
  \item \textsuperscript{317} If Leontius can be trusted, that is. But unlike the \textit{Life of Symeon the Fool}, where Leontius seems to have used his chronological and geographical distance from the hero to freely reshape the narrative, the hero of the \textit{Life of John} was both closer in time and in location, with an audience correspondingly more aware of the facts. And if, as I argue above, this passage refers to Amathous rather than Alexandria, it is highly likely that Leontius, as bishop of a neighboring town, would have had reliable information on the monasteries there. The towns were less than ten miles away from each other.
  \item \textsuperscript{318} VJl 19 (Festugière 366–67).
  \item \textsuperscript{319} This nocturnal soul-searching was recounted by his chamberlains, according to Leontius. It sounds suspiciously like a Stoic-Cynic diatribe of the sort beloved of the Church Fathers, so one must assume that John is exaggerating the sumptuousness of his own lifestyle. The VJs recounts how once at a meal in the church of St. Menas (thus presumably at the table of the local clergy and not in his own house) he refused to drink some expensive wine imported from Palestine and ordered them to serve him only inexpensive Mareotic wine, the local product (\textit{Anonymous} 10). But the gap between even a moderate aristocratic diet and the destitution of the poorest city-dwellers was certainly very real. The contrast between the moderate luxuries of the bishop and the dire condition of the destitute manifests how the late antique Christian ideal of
\end{itemize}
that the price of his one expensive blanket could provide for inexpensive Syrian wool blankets for one hundred forty-four people (four Syrian blankets to a nomisma). This gain is even further increased when the original donor buys it back several times since John keeps selling it. The comic moral of the story is encapsulated John’s somewhat surprising advice that it is a good deed to thus “trick” the wealthy into giving, since it saves the souls of both the reluctant rich man and the Robin Hood who despoils him!

Thus, while he is conscientious of even the small amounts saved by his individual austerity, its importance lies more in its exemplarity, inspiring others—especially his own clergy—to like efforts, which add up to both philanthropic gain and the salvation of their souls. And despite the careful reckoning of costs and prices evident in the above account—John was clearly concerned with effective material assistance on a large scale, not just with token acts of charity—there is a deeper significance to his frugality which provides a key to his concept of salvation in both its individual and social aspects. It is revealed in the preface to the blanket episode in the long recension of the Life.

Having been educated in this as in all good things, and keeping the accomplishment from the holy Gospels, because they say regarding Christ’s parents according to the flesh:

“There was no room for them in the inn,” and again that the Creator and Master of all benefaction differed from the older Greco-Roman evergetism: the latter catered to the enjoyment (apolausis) of the citizen populace whereas the former addressed itself to the indigence of the poor, including the stranger who had no place in the classical city; see Evelyne Patlagean, Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance 4e–7e siècles (Paris: Mouton, 1977), 188–89. One recalls also the famous episode in the Apophthegmata Patrum where an Egyptian shepherd-turned-monk complains about the extravagance of Abba Arsenius the Roman, only to be shamed when another monk points out to him how his own lifestyle has improved thanks to his trading of peasant garb for the monastic habit, whereas Arsenius’ few and simple comforts are all that remain of the luxuries he enjoyed as tutor to the emperors’ sons (Apophthegmata patrum collectio alphabetica, Arsenius 36, PG 65:101c–104a).

That Syrian cloth was of the cheapest kind is corroborated by a passage early in the Life of Melania the Younger, when she persuades Pinianus to trade his clothes of Cilician fabric for Syrian garb (Life of Melania 2.8); cf. A.H.M. Jones, The Later Roman Empire, 284–602 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), vol. 2, 848–50 (he, however, misreads the Melania passage).

John’s example in this regard produced results, as many others were moved to sell off property and entrust the proceeds to him for charitable redistribution: VJL 34 (Festugière, 376).
was laid in a manger, he annexed to himself also this good deed, I mean that he would lie down on the cheapest of beds and employ some wretched covers in his own cell.  

This might seem like a merely individual attempt at *imitatio Christi*, but in the perspective of the rest of the episode and of the whole pastoral program of John it takes on far broader resonances. The poverty of Christ in his earthly life was understood theologically as a form of solidarity with fallen humanity as a whole and especially the poor and meek of the earth. By following his Master in this, John also seeks to align himself with the poorest; this is made clear by his anxious monologue during the sleepless night under the expensive blanket, where he considers how he is failing to sympathize with the plight of those starving and freezing in the streets. By condemning himself in the exaggerated terms reserved for the hard-hearted rich in Greco-Roman diatribes, he also implicitly aligns himself humbly with sinners.

This sense of solidarity extends beyond distribution of material goods to other acts of mercy and justice. Through his policies John manages to reconcile these seemingly opposing virtues, imitating Christ also in this. He is depicted as a good administrator of his flock and city: updating the poor roll, standardizing weights and measures, raising the salaries of ecclesiastical officials to reduce corruption, diligently arbitrating at the episcopal court, defending the property of the Church against Nicetas’ attempts to confiscate some for the needs of the State.  

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322 VJ 19 (Festugière 366): Παιδευθεὶς καὶ τοῦτο ὡς ἢ παντα τὰ καλὰ καὶ φυλάσσων τὸ κατόρθωμα ἔκ τῶν ἁγίων εὐαγγελίων ὃτι φασὶ περὶ τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ κατὰ σάρκα γονέων «οὐκ ἦν αὐτοῖς τόπος ἐν τῷ κατάλυμα» καὶ πάλιν ὅτι ἐν φάτνῃ ἀνεβλήθη ὁ ποιητὴς καὶ δεσπότης τοῦ παντός, ἐπισπάται πρὸς ἑαυτὸν καὶ τοῦτο τὸ καλὸν, λέγω δὴ τὸ ἐν εὐτελεστάτῃ στρωμνῇ ἀνακλίνεσθαι καὶ οἰκτροῖς δην ἑκτέσμενα ν ἐν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ κελάξασθαι.

323 The *imitatio Christi* by means of assimilation with the utterly destitute underlies the spirituality in the Syriac *Life of the Man of God*, the earliest version of the story of St. Alexis of Rome. The presence of *imitatio Christi* in aspects of both the *Life of John* and the *Life of Symeon* suggests that Leontius (and possibly also his heroes, in their historical conduct that formed the basis, however tenuous, of Leontius’ hagiographical elaboration) may have been familiar with the emphasis on this mode of holiness in early Syriac hagiography; cf. Hans J.W. Drijvers, “Die Legende des heiligen Alexius und der Typus des Gottesmannes im syrischen Christentum,” in *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter*, edited by Margot Schmidt (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1982), 187–217.

324 VJ 1–5, 10, 13 (Festugièrê 347–50, 357, 361–62).
experience as a secular official likely provided him with the good sense and sure-handedness to see such measures through. All of these were responsibilities of a competent bishop; John’s holiness is demonstrated by the way that he carries them out, in an evangelical rather than merely administrative way, and with a mix of gentleness and prudence that made the measures more acceptable.325 There would have already been a poor roll in Alexandria before John; the account of his sending-forth the patriarchal officials to draw up a list makes it seem as if he was the first to do so, a clear hagiographical exaggeration. But he made it more comprehensive, while also indicating the true ministerial meaning of the task by designating the poor of Alexandria as his “masters.”326 Fighting corruption was supposed to be a concern of any good ruler, but instead of threatening dire punishments that would have had little success, or exhorting his subordinates to unrealistic expectations of self-abnegating poverty, John sensibly attacks one of the major causes of the problem by simply increasing salaries, rendering sportulae, illegal tips beyond the scheduled fees, less necessary.327 Fulfilling a characteristic trope of Byzantine saints, he is strict with himself but lenient with others. He keeps up the episcopal court as any bishop conscious of his jurisdiction would do, but makes an extra effort to hear cases in person in order to be more accessible to the poor and oppressed. This, and not just the distribution of money and provisions that John promoted, was an important element of philoptôcheia, since the poor were not necessarily those wholly destitute of material goods, but could also be those of higher status who had been oppressed through unjust machinations by those even higher than them, especially powerful and covetous officials. And even John’s defense of ecclesiastical property succeeded

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325 Déroche, Études, 136–53, compares Leontius’ account of John’s episcopal administration with contemporary sources and shows that it is historically plausible.
326 VI 1 (347–48). He commonly referred to others, including subordinates among his clerical retinue, as “my Lord” (despota mou). This custom is an interesting parallel to the institution, shortly before this time, by another pope, Gregory the Great of Rome, of the title servus servorum Dei, and may even have been influenced by it, as the patriarchs of Alexandria and Rome maintained strong connections (cf. Déroche, Études, 146).
327 For sportulae, see Jones, Later Roman Empire, vol. 2, 1055–56.
because of his combination of boldness (*parrhêsia*) and humility. This was enabled both by his adoptive kinship relationship (*adelphopoieia*) with Nicetas, and his tactful and self-deprecating reconciliation with the patrician after rebuffing him initially.\(^{328}\) It ultimately rested on the justice of his cause: when John claimed that in defending church treasure he was defending the interests of the poor, he could be readily believed, unlike other bishops who hoarded such wealth for their own enjoyment.\(^{329}\)

Apart from performing these administrative measures in an evangelical instead of merely formal and bureaucratic way—as a servant rather than as a master—John brought peace and piety to Alexandria by his conciliatory efforts. In addition to resolving his spats with Nicetas, John reconciled two nobles, one of whom had cuckolded the other. His solution was by the Book, eliciting forgiveness from the injured party rather than meting out punishment against the guilty.\(^{330}\) He taught masters to treat their slaves kindly, with reference to the image of God common to both; he reconciled truculent clerics with himself and with each other.\(^{331}\) The most striking instance of this virtue was in the case of his own nephew George, who had been insulted by a rude mechanical in the marketplace. With his characteristic mischievous humor, John promised his aggrieved relative that he would do something that would astonish all of Alexandria. George consequently expected a particularly satisfying revenge, only to see his holy uncle astonish the city by rewarding the offender, rather than punishing him!\(^{332}\) John, instead of

\(^{328}\) *V/1* 10 and 13 (Festugière, 356–57 and 361–62).

\(^{329}\) On poverty defined by vulnerability, and church wealth as the wealth of the poor, see Peter Brown, "From *Patriae Amator* to *Amator Pauperum* and Back Again," (paper presented at the Davis Seminar, Princeton University, 5 February 2010), though specifically to the West. Cf. Patlagean, *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale*, 10–35.

\(^{330}\) *V/1* 16 (Festugière, 393).


\(^{332}\) *V/1* 14 (Festugière, 362–63).
using his high position nepotistically to vindicate family honor, employed it ostentatiously to make a point about Christian forbearance and love for enemies.\textsuperscript{333}

These characteristics of conciliation and meekness were in turn supported by John’s consistent ethic of non-judgment. This was his policy with respect to the poor dole. He rebuked his stewards for holding back alms from higher-class paupers who, though presumably down on their luck, had not yet parted from some of their signs of status such as jewelry.\textsuperscript{334} And he even ignored the observation of his attendants when on one occasion a dishonest man changed clothes and returned for further alms on the same day; “for perhaps it is my Christ and He is testing me,” John replied.\textsuperscript{335}

But whereas this policy of not judging the poor seems to have been in place from the beginning of his patriarchal tenure, this was not always the case with respect to monastics. Once it was reported to him that a certain monk was traveling about with a girl, “making a laughingstock of the monastic habit which is equal to the angels.”\textsuperscript{336} John, “thinking to prevent sins against God, since he had been appointed to this task,” had them summoned before him and beaten by episcopal officers.\textsuperscript{337} But with the help of a divinely-sent dream, it was revealed that the monk was in fact a eunuch, and John repented fervently, both accusing his own over-hasty

\textsuperscript{333} It is notable here too that John fulfills the spirit of a Justinianic law that forbade the ordination to the bishopric of men who, though widowers, had living children. This was presumably out of fear of nepotism, but such a vice did not limit itself to direct lineal descendants, as evinced by the etymology of the term. John showed himself above the common episcopal fault of favoring a nephew. On episcopal nephews, see Patlagean, \textit{Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale}, 123.

\textsuperscript{334} \textit{VII} 6 (Festugièr 351). It was in order to explain his decision on this matter that he told the story of his vision of Lady Charity recounted above.

\textsuperscript{335} \textit{VII} 7 (Festugièr 353): μήπως ο Χριστός μου ἐστιν καὶ πειράζει με.

\textsuperscript{336} \textit{VII} 23 (Festugièr 373): κωμῳδεῖ τὸ ισάγγελον τοῦ μοναδικοῦ βίου σχήμα.

\textsuperscript{337} Ibid.: ὡς νομίζων κωλύειν τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν ἁμαρτήματα ὡς εἰς τοῦτο αὐτὸ προχειρισθεῖς. The girl is said to have been πτερνισθῆναι, which literally means “kicked” but is hardly likely in this case. Perhaps the word here means “to be beaten on the soles of the feet.” Festugièr notices the incongruity but renders the term “whipped,” relying on Anastasius Bibliothecarius’ Latin rendition \textit{flagellis caedi} (p. 586). The monk receives a worse punishment, being flogged badly enough that he could barely walk the next day when summoned again by John.
judgment and disciplining those who had “slandered” the monk.\textsuperscript{338} John’s initial harsh reaction was motivated by his desire, as a responsible pastor, to keep up monastic standards in his see, since monks and nuns were supposed to be examples for the lay faithful. He may also have wanted to assert his canonical authority over monks, always a potentially troublesome constituency for bishops. As a result of this incident, he took a more nuanced approach, becoming a patron of monastics rather than their inspector. Leontius writes that he decided to cater to the “hidden servants” of God, and that “from henceforth therefore the Patriarch showed special honour and hospitality to monks, both to the good and to those who were reputed to be evil, and he at once built a hostel entirely for them and called it ‘The Monks’ Inn’.”\textsuperscript{339} He enlisted monks as assistants, both for his own salvation and for the sanctification of the city, as in the aforementioned passage describing his establishment of monastic communities in two local churches. When another report of a bad monk reached him—that Vitalius of Gaza was consorting with prostitutes—he left the matter alone. His tolerance was vindicated when, after Vitalius’ death, it was revealed that he had been a holy man who made it his business to convert prostitutes, all the while hiding his virtue by pretending to frequent them for carnal enjoyment.\textsuperscript{340} This story has close affinities, of course, with Leontius’ other great work, the \textit{Life of Symeon the Fool}, and indicates a similar vision of holiness returning from desert monasticism to the laity of the city in order to redeem it.

\textsuperscript{338} \textit{VII} 23 (Festugière, 374–75). He deprived the latter of their benefices (\textit{paramonai}, cf. Déroche, \textit{Études}, 147).

\textsuperscript{339} \textit{VII} 23 (Festugière 375): ἐκτοτε οὖν ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ ἔτιμα καὶ ἐφιλοξένει τοὺς μοναχοὺς καὶ τοὺς καλοὺς καὶ τοὺς νομιζόμενους εἶναι κακοὺς, καὶ ἔκτησεν εὐθέως ἕξισσαν ἰδιαζόντως καὶ ἐκάλεσεν αὐτὴν ‘πανδέκτην τῶν μοναζόντων’, πάσαν ὑπερσιάν τὴν πρὸς ἀνάπαυσιν παρέχων τῶν ἐν αὕτῃ καταλύστων μοναχῶν. I have used the translation from Baynes and Dawes, \textit{Three Byzantine Saints}, 234. The word πανδέκτης for “inn” here is curious, instead of the usual πανδοχείον (Lampe, s.v., has not detected this attestation), and may be intended to emphasize the sense of all-inclusiveness showcased in this story.

\textsuperscript{340} \textit{VII} 38 (Festugière, 387–91).
While thus teaching by example, John did not neglect the power of words. The technicalities of theological controversy were not for him; although recognizing their importance for establishing Chalcedonian orthodoxy, he deferred on this matter to his resident experts, John Moschus and Sophronius the Sophist. The gospels are referred to explicitly or implicitly in most of John’s actions. As for paterika, upon hearing the story of a money-changer who, in order to defeat his own stinginess, ordered one of his children to steal from him every day and give alms to the poor, he exclaimed: “Believe me, I have read many paterika: I have never heard anything like this!” This episode also shows how he liked to augment the paterika by inquiring after new edifying stories of almsgiving and other virtues. Such sources apparently nourished his piety even while still a layman. The exclamation above seems naturally to refer to a lifetime of devout reading and not simply some self-imposed episcopal program. Furthermore, when recounting another story concerning a certain reformed tax-collector named Peter, he cites as his original source a steward who had served him on Cyprus, now deceased; this would presumably have been before his ordination. The Gospel commandments of generous compassion, gentleness, and non-judgment would have been reinforced for him by their radical application in the lives of the Desert Fathers and Mothers.

341 Although Sophronius at least was skilled in technical debate (if, as is believed now by most scholars, he is to be identified with the future patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem), he and John Moschus relied heavily on miracle stories and simple examples to get their Christological point across, as will be shown in the following chapters with regard to the Spiritual Meadow and the Miracles of Cyrus and John.

342 For this genre, see the more extensive discussion in the following chapter, with regard to the Spiritual Meadow composed by John’s lieutenants John Moschus and Sophronius the Sophist.

343 V/J 40 (Festugière 392): «Πίστευσον, πολλὰ πατερικὰ ἀνέγνων, τίποτε τοιοῦτον οὐκ ἦκουσα.»

344 V/J 20 (Festugière, 368): Εἶχον γὰρ, φησί, τινα παραμονήτην ἐν Κύπρῳ εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀποθήκην, πιστὸν πάνυ καὶ παρθένον ἕως τελευτῆς (‘For,’ he said, ‘I had a certain steward of my treasury on Cyprus, a man very faithful and virgin until his death’). Of course, John still owned estates on Cyprus, so strictly speaking he could have heard the story from his steward place after his ordination, but it seems unlikely. This is, incidentally, evidence for a layperson living in the world in life-long celibacy, and, like John, learning and passing on edifying tales.
These sources also shaped his own manner of teaching and exhortation. His table talk consisted of discussions about Scripture, he taught without eloquence but with inspired words that struck the heart of his listeners, and he preferred to argue through simple and concrete examples. Thus in order to combat the age-old tendency of lukewarm church-goers to linger outside the doors chatting during the liturgy, he left the altar in the middle of the service and went out to join them, explaining that “where the sheep are, there too is the shepherd.”

Repeated several times, this action shamed most of the congregation into reforming their habits. Similarly, in his struggle against heresy, he resorted to easily comprehensible examples. For example, in order to dissuade his flock from partaking of the Eucharist at Monophysite churches, even when there was no local orthodox church, he compared such an action to sleeping with another woman when away from one’s wife or to accepting counterfeit money. When it came to the everyday ascetic struggle, he recommended to laypeople the same kinds of mental and spiritual exercises that nourished monks, such as cultivation of gratitude toward God and assiduous meditation on death and the judgment.

Let this suffice, for time would fail us to tell of all John’s merits as recounted in the various versions of his Life. These present us with an impressive image of a truly lay saint, whose holiness as a bishop was formed by the particular virtues that he practiced during his time.

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345 VII/45 (Festugière, 397): Τέκνα, ὅπου τὰ πρόβατα, ἐκεῖ καὶ ὁ ποιμήν.
346 VII/49 (Festugière, 398–99). Festugière argues that this whole section of the Life was taken substantially from one of John’s own paschal encyclical letters (p. 295). The comparison of receiving heretical communion to adultery seems to become a commonplace around this time. John Moschus tells a story involving this analogy in Spiritual Meadow 187 (PG 87c: 3065–68). Given that Moschus and Sophronius were theological advisers of John the Almsgiver, it is possible that they ghost-wrote the encyclical and incorporated the analogy based on the story they recorded. It is repeated by Anastasius of Sinai in Questions and Answers 64, edited by Marcel Richard and Joseph Munitiz as Quaestiones et responsiones (Turnhout, Brepols, 2006).
347 VII/43 (Festugière, 394–97). Cf. VII/25 (Festugière 375), where John is said to have assiduously attended deathbeds, funerals, and graves in order to cultivate the remembrance of death. Gratitude toward God and the remembrance of him play a large part in the first responses of Basil of Caesarea’s Long Rule; see Terrence Kardong, Pillars of community: Four Rules of Pre-Benedictine Monastic Life (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 31, with references to the relevant literature.
as a layman.\textsuperscript{348} He cultivated a moderate form of asceticism and spiritual exercises that are more usually associated with monks, and urged those same exercises on his lay flock. The distinctive mark of his piety, was, however, his generous almsgiving, reflected in his epithet \textit{Eleémon}. His sudden rise to being a prince of the church only offered the opportunity to more widely diffuse these virtues, which were well-suited to his lay flock but also allowed him to relate comfortably to monastics.

We must not forget the context in which he worked. He came to the throne of St. Mark at a time of tumult for Egypt and for the Roman Empire as a whole. His sudden and irregular appointment from the lay state to the highest ecclesiastical office was not unprecedented in church history, but in that particular case it occurred response to the crisis facing Heraclius and Nicetas. His aristocratic background and experience as a civil official seem to have prepared him well to be a leader and administrator of one of the key cities of the Empire. Yet he was no cipher for the State, and resisted encroachments on the property and prerogatives of his church. He took seriously his peculiarly pastoral responsibilities and thus brought to his city (and farther abroad, to Palestine through his relief efforts) a soothing benevolence that softened the hard edge of secular power, whether Roman or Persian.

The brief flowering of piety during his decade as patriarch was cut short by the threat of Persian invasion and his own departure for Cyprus. The murky circumstances surrounding this last journey suggest that despite his success as conciliator among much of his flock, he did not

\textsuperscript{348} It is uncertain how long he was a layman, since we do not know his birth year. He died soon after leaving Alexandria in 619, but given life expectancy in the ancient world, we should not necessarily assume that he was very old. The fact that he had become adoptive brother of Nicetas, presumably a middle-aged man at the time, might suggest that he was also middle-aged, but this is cannot be proven. Later Byzantine iconography shows him as a white-haired, white-bearded hierarch, but it is unclear how reliable this tradition is.
entirely avoid making enemies, and even such as would attempt to have him assassinated. The miserable failure of Byzantine defenses to stop the Persian invaders at this time would likely have bred much mutual suspicion and recrimination among Byzantine leaders. The lack of clarity regarding this episode reminds us that what we possess is not a simple unvarnished record of his time as patriarch, but a number of recensions of his Life, dominated by the highly skilled, and thus potentially deceptive, pen of Leontius of Neapolis. Cyril Mango has argued convincingly that his other famous work, the Life of Symeon the Fool, takes great liberties with the historical information as we know it. However, Leontius and his audience were much closer in time and geography to John, and Vincent Déroche has demonstrated that the details of John’s episcopal administration as presented by Leontius are historically plausible. Yet he has also drawn attention to the political dimension of the Leontius’ Life, given that it was composed by a Cypriot in the circle of Arcadius, the archbishop of Cyprus. Arcadius had been a friend of John, and was at the time of composition caught up in the controversies surrounding the doctrines of monenergism and monotheletism. Both these prelates had experienced the delicate secular and sacred political maneuvering of the reign of Heraclius, and the Life can therefore be seen as a kind of apology for John, a native son of Cyprus, and through him for the island’s church and its leaders as well. Furthermore, as Déroche has pointed out, even the “popular” register of much

349 Leontius claims that John was asked by Nicetas to travel to Constantinople to bless the emperors (who would have been Heraclius and his first son Constantine at this time), but received a vision while stopping at Rhodes that the King of Kings was calling him, so that he returned to Amathous to end his days (VJ 50). VJa 13–14 says that John wished to travel to the emperor at Constantinople “to support the cause of peace” but was prevented by his flock. However, he discovered a plot against his life and fled to Cyprus. Later, the general who had surrendered Alexandria to the Persians and then taken refuge on Cyprus also plotted to murder John, but was murdered by others first.


351 Déroche, Études, 136–54.

352 Déroche, Études, 16–36.
of Leontius’ writing is a deliberately chosen artifice that he deploys variably even within a given

These reflections can actually enrich our dossier of lay piety, since the very fact that
Leontius chose to write such a Life of John the Almsgiver, as well as the Life of Symeon the Holy
Fool, and to write them in such a way suggests that he, as bishop and hagiographer, had a
specific pastoral vision of the place of ascetic piety in the lay world. Déroche rightly calls this
“a theology for the people” and notes its affinities with the prescriptions of Anastasius of Sinai
and other edifying literature of the seventh century. Leontius, while certainly not denigrating
monks and monasticism, emphasizes different virtues than the normal ones of withdrawal,
prayer, and contemplation. We have seen how he omits the claim that the young John desired
to remain single, as recounted in the Anonymous, and instead illustrates John’s youthful
enthusiasm for piety through the retelling of his dream of Lady Mercy. In general, Leontius has
an optimistic vision of the spiritual life; he counts on God’s grace, expressed through the
compassion and generosity not only of great holy men but of simple laypeople, to overcome the
hardness of hearts and the emptiness of bellies. Under Leontius’ pen, Alexandria becomes a
utopian polity ruled by a philosopher, but a philosopher in the mould of the Apostles rather than
Plato. The Alexandria of John the Almsgiver did not lack heretics, prostitutes, and paupers,
despite his best efforts. Doubtless Leontius expected his readers to realize this; we must not see
his hagiography as an attempt to pull the wool over the naïve eyes of gullible Byzantine readers.
The lives of saints always had as their goal the presentation of an exemplary figure, not a

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353 Déroche, Études, 370–71. Cf. the deployment of colloquial speech by a later Cypriot, Anastasius of Sinai, when he describes his conversations with an uneducated teenager at Amathous, at Tales 2.17.
355 Déroche, Études, 226–301.
356 An old contrast, expressed perhaps most forcibly by John Chrysostom in his introductory homily to the Gospel of Matthew.
documentary record. What is somewhat unique to Leontius’ *Life of John*, however, is that the exemplary saint is not perched alone on a sharp pinnacle of holiness stretching upward toward heaven, hardly possible for any but a very few to participate in more than vicariously. Instead he is stretched onto the broad canvas of a great city, and the kind of holiness he exudes is easily available to all who would open themselves to just a little compassion for their neighbor. If the *Life of Anthony* was the first monastic rule, a charter for “the Desert a City,” John the Almsgiver becomes a kind of criterion for lay piety, as mediated by genuinely Christian clergy such as John himself. His *Life* is a kind of thought experiment as to how to realize the apostolic community in the late antique city. As with Plato’s *Republic*, this community could only ever be actualized this side of the Kingdom in individual hearts, and temporarily in regimes, civic or monastic, that were inevitably subject to cycles of spiritual decline and renewal.\(^{357}\)

Déroche argues that Leontius’ “theology for the people,” despite the popularity of the *Life of Symeon* and *Life of John*, ultimately failed to make a deep impact on Byzantine norms of holiness, since its vision of engagement with the world was not picked up in the broader tradition. He is only partially correct. It is true that no later Byzantine hagiographer had the skill and imagination to compose such original masterpieces of hagiography, which created such a holistic vision of sanctity diffusing through society through evangelical living. It is also the case that no later author had the late antique city to work with imaginatively. The *Life of Symeon the Fool*, whom we have not analyzed here, perhaps fared better in this regard, because it relied more on the hidden individual effects of one man working at the lowest levels of society and

\(^{357}\) The same is true of the *Life of Symeon the Fool*, although there the contrast between ideal and reality is sharper. Though John the Almsgiver has certain characteristics of the Holy Fool, nevertheless he is able to influence society consistently and authoritatively, at least during his all-too-brief tenure as patriarch. Symeon, in contrast, is always an outsider, who can only challenge the brazen impiety and hypocritical piety of Emesa with spectacular but ephemeral challenges. Leontius does, however, claim that even these punctuated interventions succeeded in changing the spiritual state of the city for the better.
could thus be fairly easily adapted in the medieval city as well, becoming thus the ancestor of the
great tradition of Greek and Slavic holy fools that has lasted up until today. The *Life of John the
Almsgiver* was more difficult to adapt, because after the seventh century there was never again a
vastly wealthy bishopric that could become the setting of a holy utopia such as Leontius had
imagined. But the individual components of that vision, which Leontius shared with
contemporary authors such as Anastasius of Sinai (to whom we shall come in due time), were
able to enter the bloodstream of medieval Byzantine piety. The *Life of John the Almsgiver* was
not only transmitted in many manuscripts in various redactions, but also excerpted in such
influential works as the great eleventh-century monastic florilegium, the *Evergetinos*. Thus the
combination of asceticism and charity that Leontius describes were part and parcel of Byzantine
piety, both monastic and lay.

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358 The patriarchate of Constantinople in its middle Byzantine heyday perhaps approached distantly
the wealth of the late antique patriarchate of Alexandria. But as the city of the emperor, it was too
ideologically cramped to imagine a new Christian polity there.

359 Paul of Theotokos Evergetis, Εὐεργετινὸς ἦτοι Συναγωγὴ τῶν θεοφόρων ῥημάτων καὶ
dιδασκαλίων τῶν θεοφόρων καὶ ἁγίων πατέρων ἐν πάσῃ γραφῇ θεοπνεύστω συνάθροισθείσα, edited by
Elias Bakopoulos (Athens: Ekdoseis Synaxaristes, 2001); trans. Chrysostomos of Etna et al., The *Evergetinos:
A Complete Text* (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2008).
5. Mirabile dictu: Teaching laypeople through miracle stories

Miracle collections as sources of lay piety

Historians of Byzantium have often been puzzled by what to do with the genre of hagiography. Its miraculous character is difficult to reconcile with modern historical methodology, but given that it constitutes a large part of the surviving texts, it cannot simply be ignored. The great Bollandist scholar Hippolyte Delehaye, surveying early Byzantine miracle collections (fourth-seventh centuries), lamented what he considered to be their incredible and unedifying character. More recent scholars have sidestepped the problem of incredulity by using accounts of the supernatural to better understand early Christian and Byzantine society and its thought-world. Here I apply a variation of this approach, following Pierre Maraval in examining this set of miracles as vehicles of Christian education. This allows us to understand better what the aims of the authors were and why, perhaps, the miracles they wrote are not quite as unedifying as Delehaye supposed.

The very nature of miracle stories as discreet units lends itself to the form of a sermon: although the miracle collections usually form a unified whole, each individual miracle usually has its own integral structure with introduction, body, and conclusion. Furthermore, the stories have a natural attraction to a reader or listener because of the wondrous events they recount.

They often tell of saints who often already have a devoted following, or at least a reputation which might stoke the curiosity of the pious to learn more. A crowd of devotees often implies a shrine dedicated to the relics or memory of the saint, where miracle stories might be collected, recorded, and reworked, and sometimes recited as part of liturgical ritual. It is in such contexts that we should seek the lay audiences for miracle stories.

*Teaching ascetic piety to the laypeople: John of Thessalonica*

The earliest compilations of the *Miracles* of St Demetrius of Thessalonica are contained in two books, the first composed by the city’s archbishop John in the early seventh century and the second by an anonymous author, explicitly seeking to supplement John’s work, probably from the late seventh century. The origins of the cult of Demetrius are obscure—he is supposed to have been a martyr of the Diocletianic persecution—but by our period it was well-established, although perhaps not dominating the city at this early stage as much as it did later in the Middle Ages. The focus of veneration was not the visible relics of the saint, but the site over his alleged grave, deep in which his body was thought to lie, unable to be removed because of a divine ban. On the site was built a grand cathedral, which was a major place of pilgrimage through the Middle Ages and afterward. During the seventh century it was decorated with vivid mosaics and frescoes of Demetrius as patron, standing by the citizens of Thessalonica, including the bishop and prefect as well as various families whose ex votos these images were.

Almost nothing is known about John, archbishop of Thessalonica, apart from what can be gleaned from his own self-presentation in the *First Collection of the Miracles of St Demetrius*

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363 John of Thessalonica notes the peculiar tradition of relics in his city in the *First Collection of the Miracles of St Demetrius*; critical text in *Les plus anciens recueils des Miracles de Saint Démétrius*, edited by Paul Lemerle (Paris: CNRS, 1979), vol. 1 89–90 (the text of the first and second collections of the *Miracles* is found in vol. 1 and will be cited below as *First Collection or Second Collection* followed by miracle number and Lemerle’s page number; vol. 2 contains a commentary and will be cited as Lemerle, *Les recueils*).
and the brief references to him in the anonymous *Second Collection*.\textsuperscript{364} Lemerle has argued convincingly for placing John as the immediate successor of Eusebius, archbishop of the city in the late sixth and early seventh century, and his composition of the *First Collection* during the early years of the reign of Heraclius.\textsuperscript{365} For our purposes here, however, it is sufficiently clear that John was a gifted preacher who conscientiously strove to craft his retelling of the miracles of the city’s patron saint for maximum didactic effect.\textsuperscript{366} The Prologue to the *First Collection* sets out his purposes very clearly. As Lemerle observes regarding this Prologue:

> It guarantees that the collection of miracles which it introduces is indeed the fruit of reflective thought, in its conception and in its execution. In its conception: linked, somewhat formally, to the entirety of Christian soteriology, and more profoundly, to the closer and more “human” person who is Christ, it poses the fundamental question of the collection, namely that Saint Demetrius, true civic hero, is a Thessalonian who is very attached to those who remain his fellow citizens. He continues to live among them at the same time that he lives in God, and he unceasingly intercedes for them and protects them. In so doing he accomplishes a work of mercy that pleases the merciful God.\textsuperscript{367}

The last sentence is particularly important for the framing of lay piety in society. The notably vivid sense of Demetrius’ living presence that is expressed and expounded by archbishop John

\textsuperscript{364} John was also the author of an early account of the Dormition-cum-Assumption of the Virgin Mary: see Brian Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998), 12–13 and 47–70.

\textsuperscript{365} Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils*, vol. 2, 27–34 and 44–46. Paul Speck, “De miraculis sancti Demetrii qui Thessalonicam profugus venit, oder Ketzerisches zu den Wundergeschichten des Heiligen Demetrios und zu seiner Basilica in Thessalonike,” *Ποικίλα Βυζαντινά Varia* 4 (1993), 255–532, argued that our John, who would presumably be John I, cannot be proven to have existed (unlike John II from late in the seventh century), and that the Collections were the work of redaction over several centuries, culminating in the version we have now in the late ninth century. James C. Skedros, *Saint Demetrios of Thessaloniki: Civic Patron and Divine Protector, 4th–7th Centuries CE* (Harrisburg PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), critiques this argument and confirms Lemerle’s identification and dating.

\textsuperscript{366} See Lemerle, *Plus anciens recueils*, vol. 2, 73–76.

\textsuperscript{367} Lemerle, *Plus anciens recueils*, vol. 2, 35.
shows how, despite the advent of the living ascetical Holy Man, the deceased Martyr could still play an essential role in forming the religious consciousness of late antique and medieval Christians. Furthermore, Demetrius’ virtue and its enjoyment do not consist of an absorption in divine contemplation to the exclusion of his fellow-citizens, but instead of an exercise of mercy that assists them while also rendering him more and more like God: “He obtained a greater likeness to Him who is compassionate by nature, arranging ascents of mercy in his heart daily.” With this deft interweaving of mystical and philanthropic language, John portrays the sanctified Martyr as an exemplar of holiness, perfectly combining in himself the active and contemplative virtues. This is not just a theoretical solution to the tension between the two “states,” but a real key for lay piety, presented to the urban audience of Thessaloniki as primarily the exercise of mercy toward one’s neighbors. John expects his account of the miracles of Demetrius not just to convey this piety, but even to elicit it, by rousing compunction (katanyxis) in his hearers.

This reference to the intended effect of the miracles on his hearers offers a clue as to the methods of John. Lemerle has observed that he refers constantly to elements of spoken delivery—his hearers, his tongue rather than his readers, his pen, etc. Even if this is a literary conceit as regards the final form of the First Collection, as possibly edited by John himself, it

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368 As discussed briefly in the introductory chapter, with respect to the holy monk as a successor to the holy martyr as focus of spiritual power and devotion. This lends some nuance to Peter Brown’s argument that in western Europe piety tended to focus on the shrines of dead martyrs whereas in the east it focused on the living holy man; see “Eastern and Western Christendom in Late Antiquity: A Parting of the Ways,” in The Orthodox Churches and the West, edited by Derek Baker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 11–24. Granted, Thessalonica may be a special case because of its strong connections with Old Rome. This is all further complicated by the fact that, as Brown observes in the aforementioned essay, in this period the contrast was not so much between east and west as between north (beyond the Alps) and south (Mediterranean).

369 First Collection Prol. §5 ; cf. Ps. 83:6 (LXX).

369 First Collection Prol. §5 ; cf. Ps. 83:6 (LXX).

370 John mentions compunction thrice in the Prologue: once praying to Christ to grant the audience a disposition of compunction (§3), once defining his goal as inciting them to glorify God with compunction (§4), and concluding with an exhortation to them to listen attentively and with compunction (§9).

371 Lemerle, Les recueils, 35–36.
would seem to stem from an originally spoken form of the stories, and not just as oral traditions that John wrote down so that they would not be lost to posterity. While the Prologue and the organization of the *First Collection* ensure that it possesses a literary unity, each miracle is essentially a stand-alone account that one could imagine being preached as a sermon. It is possible that John in fact delivered such sermon to a packed cathedral church on feasts of the saint or at other times of the year. Even if the intended audience is rather smaller than the whole city, as Skedros would argue, it could still have been preached, or at least read aloud, to a smaller circle of pious aristocrats for hortatory and didactic purposes.\(^\text{372}\)

*Teaching laypeople ascetical theory*

The first miracle story, regarding a certain former eparch of the city named Marianus, is a perfect example of this method of instruction. Apart from the vague reference to a story passed down orally from fathers to sons, the only specific evidence that John adduces for the miracle is an inscription recording it outside the basilica of St. Demetrius. While allowing for the fact that Byzantine inscriptions could be quite long-winded, it is likely that the information contained in John’s rich and detailed narrative is largely an invention of his own, in the manner of speeches in Thucydides and other ancient historians.\(^\text{373}\) He takes full advantage of the opportunity. In his hands Marianus becomes a Job-like exemplar of virtue in the midst of suffering. From the beginning, the eparch is depicted as “chastely and piously governing the reins of justice and

\(^{372}\) Skedros, *Saint Demetrios*, 115–20. He notes that John emphasizes the role of the imperial and civic elites of the city in these miracles and argues that this is part of a project to elevate Demetrius from being merely *one* of the martyrs of Thessaloniki, with a largely popular following, to unique patron of the city, with all the high-level political and social ties this would imply. One possible objection to Skedros’ argument is that John is quite critical of these same elites in several passages.

pleasing God and appreciated by the citizens.”374 Thus far John may have been drawing on vague local memories, passed down through the years, of a virtuous eparch of the past named Marianus. But what follows goes beyond oral tradition. Marianus’ good conduct attracts the envy of the devil, who tempts him in a very specific way: by proceeding through the entire catalogue of eight evil thoughts analyzed by the Desert Fathers, going back to Evagrius Ponticus.375 The basic vices of gluttony, lust, and avarice are followed by anger, sorrow, acedia, then vainglory, and ending with the most subtle thought, that of pride. John does not simply run through the list; he pauses and analyzes each one and the eparch’s wise response thereto, supported by scriptural quotations. The bishop thus uses the hypothetical inner battle of an eminent public figure of old to bring the insights of the monastic life into the religious consciousness of the citizens of Thessaloniki. It is a remarkable example of an attempt by an elite clergyman to shape lay piety.

But this is not all. Seeing that spiritual temptations have failed to move the man of God, the devil next brings physical illness on him, as he did with Job. The eparch is struck by paralysis, and the efforts of doctors to restore him are futile. One of his servants, out of solicitude for his master’s health, procures an amulet as a possible aid. The eparch firmly rejects this offer with a detailed refutation of magic.376 Then in a dream the saint appears to him disguised as his

374 First Collection 1 (Lemerle, 57).
375 First Collection 1 (Lemerle, 56–9). A striking parallel to this presentation is found in the Prologue to the Life of Spyridon of Trimithous written by bishop Theodore Paphos about a generation later: see La légende de S. Spyridon, edited by Paul Van den Ven (Louvain: Publications universitaires, 1953), 4–5; though Spyridon was later ordained bishop, his victory over the passions is described there as occurring in his years as a layman. For Evagrius’s system, see William Harmless, Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 322–27. On the development of the doctrine of the eight voices from Evagrius to Maximus Confessor (contemporary with the First Collection) see Lars Thunberg, Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor (Lund: Håkan Ohlssons Boktryckeri, 1965), 262–74 and on the origins of the “octad” and its reshaping and use by contemporary Latin bishops (including the development of a “heptad” of seven deadly sins), see Richard Newhauser, The Early History of Greed: The Sin of Avarice in Early Medieval Thought and Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 53–54 and 97–101.
376 First Collection 1 (Lemerle, 61–2).
namesake, a courtier known to the eparch. Demetrius encourages Marianus to remain joyful in his difficulties, explaining that God brings trials on the righteous to guard them against pride and to glorify them still more, and on sinners to wipe out their sins and rescue them from the greater pains of hell. Marianus agrees with this in theory, but observes the danger that sufferings might lead one to anger and blasphemous complaints, by which he admits he is tempted. The saint is touched and pleased by Marianus’ humble confession and self-knowledge and he promises to heal him. Shortly thereafter, Marianus is laid in the basilica and offers a humble public prayer. Falling asleep, he sees another dream where the saint warns him, if healed, not to lose the compunctionate disposition of soul that he now enjoys. Upon waking, he is healed, and heeds the saint’s warning by confessing that even now, the humility he requires can only come from God’s gift through the martyr, not his own efforts. The story concludes with Marianus humbly traveling by foot (instead of horse) to the praetorium, from whence he brings gifts to the basilica, and then proceeds to sit on his eparchial throne and distribute gifts to the poor and sick inhabitants of the city. This step-by-step unfolding of the narrative includes several edifying teachings: an explanation of God’s judgment in allowing bad things to happen to good people; a pastorally sensitive recognition of the spiritual strain that physical illness imposes; a reflection on the need for humility and compunction and reliance on God, even in good times; and proper use of wealth to glorify God, the martyr, and his church, and to help one’s needy fellow-citizens. The miracle story thus becomes a tour de force of moral education. Using the narrative opportunities offered by the miracle, John brings monastic theories of vices and virtues vividly to life, offering

377 This phenomenon of saints appearing in disguise as an acquaintance of the recipient of the vision is common in contemporary hagiography; the phenomenon is noted later in this chapter in the Miracles of Cyrus and John. Cf. Nicholas Constas, “An Apology for the Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity: Eustratius the Presbyter of Constantinople, On the State of Souls after Death (CPG 7522).” JECS 10, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 267–85.
378 First Collection 1 (Lemerle, 62–3).
379 First Collection 1 (Lemerle, 63–7).
comfort to those in affliction and insight into the psychology of spiritual warfare, and last but not least, the emphasis on charitable giving so beloved by the Church Fathers.

Pastoral problems

Some of the same themes crop up again in other miracles. The emphasis on Marianus’ spiritual struggle as cooperation of his own free will with God’s grace is more summarily presented in various juxtapositions of man’s free choice and God’s judgment. In Miracle 3 he argues that the distribution of the punishment of plague happened to each according to their deserts and not to chance, without explaining further. In Miracle 12 he asserts that God grants free will (to autexousion) to the hearts of men whom he has created, but that it is he who steers them toward what is profitable. In Miracle 14 he responds to the hypothetical complaint that by ascribing victory to God, he leaves no glory to the citizens of Thessaloniki themselves: he simply retorts that it is only with God that one can be truly victorious. Certain actions absolutely rule out the beneficial intervention of God: for example the use of magic (this temptation, already mentioned in connection with the first miracle, arises again in Miracle 2), or cynical insolence, on the part of an eparch appointed to the city from elsewhere, regarding St. Demetrius’ patronage of the Thessalonians (in Miracle 11). The eparch’s blasphemy against the saint is all the more egregious in that he is highly intelligent, and thus more responsible for his actions; instead of using his cleverness for good, he lets it lead him to intellectual pride and contempt for others.

Complementing the straightforward juxtaposition of man’s freedom and God’s judgment, John also manifests a pastorally sensitive appreciation that faith in God can be enfeebled in ways that are not wholly in man’s own hands. The problem of challenges to patience and faith in God that Marianus discusses with the disguised saint is raised again in Miracle 3. There John exhorts

380 First Collection 3, 12, 14 (Lemerle, 79–80, 128, and 158).
his audience to see calamities such as the plague he is describing as chastisement inflicted by divine mercy, not wrath, as stimulus to repentance, but at the same time he recognizes that such trials can have a debilitating effect on a person’s faith: “For by the varied incurable sufferings of the body, the soul of the one who suffers grows slack and lukewarm with respect to the remembrance of God, and hence becomes gradually enfeebled with respect to faith, and from its helplessness falls into anger and speaks abominable words and murmurs against him who chastises in judgment and not in anger.”

A further challenge to faith is the lack of mental faculties brought on by demonic possession, examined in Miracle 4. Yet even here the philanthropy of God, actualized by the compassion of the saint, overcomes the crippling effects of evil. “For without the demoniac saying anything by way of prayer—for together with the ability to speak, as we have said, the ability even to will was taken away due to the unsoundness of the mind—the saint himself, in an exceedingly short time, returned the soldier to his fellows sound.”

Thus John takes his place in the perennial debates among Byzantine theologians regarding human agency and natural causality and God’s providence and judgment. He does not provide a systematic or even highly intellectual answer, since that is not the purpose of this text. It provides instead basic moral guidelines for piety: responsibility for one’s own actions nuanced by an awareness of God’s inscrutable providence, fear of punishment for sin tempered by awareness of God’s goodness, and depiction of sins to avoid—such as greed and presumption—balanced by suggestion of ways to attract God’s mercy, such as compassion and humble confession.

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381 First Collection 3 (Lemerle, 76). On the importance of remembrance of God in previous monastic writers such as Basil of Caesarea, see Terrence Kardong, Pillars of community: Four Rules of Pre-Benedictine Monastic Life (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 31.

382 First Collection 4 (Lemerle, 85).
Lay piety and civic community

All this occurs within a clearly defined Christian community, the city of Thessaloniki that both provides the arena of lay virtue but also guarantees its efficacy through the heritage of accumulated holiness. This inheritance leads archbishop John to flatter his audience as “enthusiastic and intelligent and most Christian” and their homeland as “such a great city, through so many generations built up in the faith by his [i.e. Christ’s] sweat and the blood from his precious side.” The latter phrase is from the mouth of Demetrius himself, when he argues with the angels sent by God to notify him of the impending doom of Thessaloniki. In that particular passage his intense identification with the city of which he is patron ensures that punishment is averted and that, despite the people’s sins, the forbearance of God will enable them to continue to struggle to live a life of Christian piety. The wrath of God is also averted in another passage which expresses how the cult of the Christian martyr has neutralized any lingering notions of pagan civic patriotism. In a vivid vision Demetrius is depicted in his ciborium, attended by a decorous woman who personifies eutaxia, civic law and order. She wishes to leave the city because of strife between the citizens, but the saint constrains to stay with him, symbolizing his protection of the city during a period of acute civil strife. This story takes place during the last few years of the reign of Phocas, when factional violence was convulsing many of the empire’s cities, so we can appreciate how grateful were the bishop John and the other citizens of Thessalonica that their city had escaped such savagery. As Skedros notes, the personification “Lady Eutaxia” takes the place of the Tychē, the protecting goddess of a major city that personified its good fortune. He emphasizes the subordination of Eutaxia to

383 First Collection 13 and 15 (Lemerle, 134 and 163).
Demetrius as a sign of the saint’s rise to the status of unique patron of the city of Thessaloniki.\textsuperscript{384} I would also suggest that it also implicitly supplants any lingering notions of the city’s \textit{Tychē} as a goddess to be propitiated in the ancient manner. Such worship was still alleged to have taken place in Antioch only half a century earlier, whereas in the period after the composition of this \textit{First Collection}, images of the \textit{Tychē} of cities was included in Christian art unproblematically.\textsuperscript{385} Thus, in the miraculous vision recounted by John of Thessaloniki, we catch a brief glimpse of the process by which a potent religious figure of Antiquity was purified and rendered harmless as a literary and artistic motif of the Byzantine Middle Ages.

Having performed such sterling work as a teacher and preacher of lay piety, our author John himself is incorporated into the tradition that he helped to build: the anonymous \textit{Second Collection}, probably to be dated to the early eighth century, considers him a saint too, interceding with St. Demetrius, who intercedes with God: a hierarchy of intercession that, probably unwittingly, echoes the angelic and ecclesiastical hierarchies described by Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite. The \textit{Second Collection} also gratefully recalls the civic building works that John promoted.\textsuperscript{386} The bishop who mediates lay piety thus becomes an object of patriotism and of lay piety on a local scale, as Basil of Caesarea and John Chrysostom did for the whole \textit{oikoumenē}.

\textit{The Works of Sophronius of Jerusalem}

We have already mentioned Sophronius along with his spiritual father John Moschus as theological advisers to John the Almsgiver. They served in this capacity during one stage of their


\textsuperscript{385} Helen Saradi, \textit{The Byzantine City in the Sixth Century: Literary Images and Historical Reality} (Athens: Society of Messenian Archaeological Studies, 2006), 135–44.

\textsuperscript{386} \textit{Second Collection} 2 (Lemerle, 184).
long pilgrimage through the Roman Mediterranean, a journey driven to some degree by the threat of the Persians but even more so by a thirst for spiritual wisdom. The identity of Sophronius the Sophist, the disciple and traveling companion of John Moschos, with the sainted Sophronius of Jerusalem, patriarch of that city who surrendered it to the second Muslim caliph ‘Umar, is now accepted by most scholars.\textsuperscript{387} Sophronius, as his epithet “Sophist” suggests, was a learned rhetorician and philosopher; he hailed from Damascus. His relationship with Moschus is hard to define: although Moschus appears to have been older and to have served as a kind of spiritual father to Sophronius, the latter was more advanced in secular and sacred lore and probably also in social standing, and was thus esteemed by Moschus as a spiritual brother as well as a son.\textsuperscript{388}

Sophronius’ corpus is quite large. Before his elevation to the patriarchal throne of Jerusalem, he composed the \textit{Miracles of Cyrus and John},\textsuperscript{389} a polished collection of seventy miraculous cures at the shrine of the martyrs Cyrus and John at Menouthis outside Alexandria, organized in sections based on the geographical origin of the patient. The final one is Sophronius’ own cure from a disease of the eyes, in gratitude for which he wrote the whole work as a kind of votive offering. The \textit{Miracles} are preceded by a substantial \textit{Encomium of Cyrus and

\textsuperscript{387} The arguments in Christoph von Schönborn, \textit{Sophrone de Jérusalem: vie monastique et confession dogmatique} (Paris: Beauchesne, 1972), based largely on stylistic parallels between the works ascribed to the Sophist and the Patriarch, were supplemented by Henry Chadwick in “John Moschus and his friend Sophronius the Sophist,” \textit{JTS} n.s. 25, no. 1 (April 1974): 41–74, esp. 49–53. Ihor Ševčenko, “Il. Storia letteraria,” in \textit{La Civiltà bizantina dal IV al IX secolo: Aspetti e problemi} (Bari: Centro di studi bizantini, 1977) raised some further objections, without however considering the full argumentation offered by Chadwick, and thus, to my mind, not turning the balance against the identification. Several of his objections as well as some older problems were answered by Vincent Déroche, \textit{Études sur Léontios de Néapolis} (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 1995), 31–6. The identification is affirmed by Phil Booth, \textit{Crisis of Empire: Doctrine and Dissent at the End of Late Antiquity} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 55–58.

\textsuperscript{388} Chadwick, “John Moschus and his friend Sophronius,” 59.

John that functions as a prologue to the work and contains important statements on the monastic and lay states. These two texts will be the main focus of this section, but his other writings will occasionally be of use to provide some more perspective. A series of anacreontic poems and several epigrams also date from his pre-patriarchal period. Soon after his elevation to that office, he sent a *Synodical Epistle* to Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople and Honorius of Rome to all but declare his opposition to the monenergist theological program being advanced by those sees. At some point he also sent an epistle to Arcadius of Cyprus against the liturgical use of the interpolated Trisagion in Chalcedonian churches on that island; this text is preserved partially only in Syriac. More relevant to our search of evidence for lay piety, several of his homilies are extant, preached on the occasion of various ecclesiastical feasts. These are particularly useful for comparison to the *Miracles of Cyrus and John* because the latter, like the *Miracles of Demetrius*, can be seen as a series of sermons disguised as miracle accounts. Sophronius, like John of Thessalonica before him, took full advantage of this subset of hagiography to inculcate Christian beliefs and virtues in his audience.

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391 *Anacreontics* edited by Marcello Gigante, *Sophronii Anacreontica* (Rome: Gismondi, 1957); *Epigrams* in PG 87: 3421–3424, 4009 but see the critical comments by Alan Cameron, “The Epigrams of Sophronius,” *CQ* n.s. 33/1 (1983): 284–92. Several hymns for Christmas and Theophany and a prayer for the Great Blessing of Waters at Theophany, still in use today, are also attributed to him, found at PG 87: 4001–4009.


393 Various *Homilies* are found in PG 87: 3201–3364. Some of them are only given in Latin and some are dubious or spurious; cf. the entries for Sophronius at CPG 7635–7681 and Schönborn’s discussion in *Sophrone de Jérusalem*. For a full bibliography of the Greek texts and a French translation of the entire series, see Jean de la Ferrière, *Fêtes chrétiennes à Jérusalem* (Paris: Migne, 1999). A new Greek edition and English translation is awaited from John Duffy; he kindly gave me a draft of his critical text of the *Homily on the Meeting of the Lord* (which the PG gives only in Latin) as well as a photocopy of the hard-to-find first edition by Hermann Usener, *Sophronii de Praesentatione Domini sermo* (Bonn: Formis C. Georgi univ. typogr., 1889).
Some care is called for, however. We cannot take the self-presentation of the authors of miracle collections at face value, especially in the case of Sophronius who was not formally associated with the shrine of Cyrus and John at Menouthis and was, at that point, probably not ordained, although already a monk. Philip Booth has pointed out the possibility of competition between various “impresarios” of the cult. The saints’ power could be tapped and interpreted in different ways. This is evident from the fact that monophysites, as well as orthodox, would frequent the shrine to seek the intercession of the martyrs and its tangible form, the blessing of the oil and wax from the lamps and candles that lighted the reliquary. Obviously, these non-Chalcedonians had a different view of the proper theological and ecclesiological “location” of the saints. Even within the orthodox communion there might be friction between different spokesmen for the cult and between different views about the nature of the saints’ activities and the proper attitude and ritual to take with regard to them. I would give more weight to Sophronius’ auctoritas among the orthodox of Alexandria as a learned monk and theological adviser of the patriarch than Booth does, and I disagree with his claim to detect traces of tension between Sophronius and the shrine’s chief cleric, the priest Christodoros. Booth does, however, point out the existence of another, anonymous collection of miracles of Cyrus and John, from a slightly later date, which does suggest that Sophronius was not the only one claiming to speak for the saints and their shrine. Nevertheless, I think that we should be wary of casting Sophronius as an individual competitor for authority at the shrine. In context, rather, we should see him as a lieutenant of the Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria, strengthening the hold of orthodoxy over this important pilgrimage site, not only in response to heterodoxy outside the fold (whether

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394 Booth, Crisis of Empire, 49–59.
heretical or pagan) but in response to the pastoral duty for laypeople to be reminded and instructed in the essentials of orthodox belief and practice.\textsuperscript{395}

Hagiographical texts generally contain enough realistic details to render their narrative comprehensible and their claims credible. Sophronius filled out his miracle accounts with plentiful details about day-to-day piety at the shrine. I would add that, given Sophronius’ didactic intent, he also tended to put his finger on many real concerns of laypeople and likewise on many of their practices that he perceived either as meriting praise or as needing correction. Thus, before examining Sophronius’ theological articulation of lay piety and its relation to monasticism, I would like to present some of the \textit{realia} of religious practice at Menouthis.

\textit{Day-to-day piety at the shrine of Cyrus and John}

The church of Saints Cyrus and John was located twenty kilometers to the east of Alexandria on a precarious stretch of land, threatened by both the battering of waves and the encroachment of sand; it was a landmark for sailors along the Egyptian coast.\textsuperscript{396} It was supposed to have been originally founded by the famous fifth-century patriarch Cyril of Alexandria to draw people away from the popular pagan shrine of Isis nearby.\textsuperscript{397} Booth provides a description of the physical fabric of the shrine and its personnel. The church complex was delimited by an enclosure that was entered through gates. Outside the church there was a fountain, bath, and latrines. The church was ringed by a portico and contained a baptistery as well as the saints’

\textsuperscript{395} For Booth’s view of the relation between Sophronius and Christodorus, see \textit{Crisis of Empire}, 55–56 and for the other miracle collection, ibid., 58 n. 66. Booth does not, however, neglect Sophronius’s role as patriarchal assistant.

\textsuperscript{396} Encom. 29 (Bringel 32). This was a considerable distance from the city, especially for those traveling on foot, such as the demoniac Theopemptus whose exhausting journey Sophronius describes with great sympathy.

\textsuperscript{397} This is the narrative Sophronius adopts, based on several still-extant \textit{opuscula} that are supposed to be Cyril’s sermons on the occasion. But other evidence, such as the role of monophysites in the (re?)founding of the shrine in the late fifth century, may challenge this narrative. Booth reviews the evidence and the various interpretations thereof at \textit{Crisis of Empire}, 47–48.
tomb. The personnel at the shrine included a steward (oikonomos), who was appointed by the patriarch and was usually a priest presiding over the complex both liturgically and financially; a secretary (notarios) to assist the steward; various assistant clergy including deacons and subdeacons; and supporting staff such as gate-keepers for the entire complex, door-keepers for the church, a keeper of the tomb (mnēmatitês, although it is not clear if this is an actual position or simply an epithet), and various pious laypeople, members of confraternities (philoponoi) who may have been attached to the shrine in some semi-official capacity and helped with various tasks such as transporting patients to and from the shrine.398

All of these elements are, of course, important for the experience of laypeople at the shrine. The building’s architecture shaped people’s use of the space, whether material or conceptual. This effect began from the outside. Sophronius wrote that Theodora, the wife of the shrine’s steward Christodorus, was cured of a painful disease simply by the sight of the martyrs’ temple.399 The import of this claim was clearly to declare the miraculous power of the saints insofar as they were able to heal at a distance, but it is perhaps to be understood that the actual beauty of the shrine’s architecture also played a part. In another passage, the acts of seeing the church and venerating of the martyrs are barely distinguishable.400 The aesthetic effect of the shrine would have been heightened by the proliferation of thanksgiving offerings, including the donation by one patient of marble revetment on a wall near the saints’ tomb and its decoration with figures of Christ, John the Baptist, Saint Cyrus, and the patient himself offering thanks.401

398 For references see the individual components as discussed in the following pages.
399 Mir. 9.6.
400 Mir. 24.3: Πρὸ γὰρ τῆς αὐτοῦ [scil. τού τεμένους] θέας καὶ τῆς εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους ἀφίξεως ἁσθενοῦμεν οἱ ἀνθρώποι, καὶ δεινοῖς πολλάκις κατεχόμεθα πάθεις· τοῦτο δὲ βλέποντες, καὶ τοῖς οἰκονικοῖς προσπίπτοντες μάρτυς, πᾶσαν νόσον καὶ πᾶσαν ἁσθένειαν εὐθὺς ἀπορρίπτομεν.
401 Mir. 28.12.
Much of the action of the miracle accounts takes place in and around the church complex, where the holy and mundane mingle. Areas such as the bath and the toilets served a necessary function, but were also thought to be likely haunts for demons, until the saints counteract their malevolence. The fountain in the courtyard was a source of holy water for cures, though it is unclear whether it had a formal liturgical blessing or was sanctified simply by its location in the shrine complex or by the saints’ command. Water would also have been important inside the church at the baptistery. In the text it mainly appears as the repository of the reserved Eucharist where monophysites resort to be united to the orthodox communion. Nevertheless, while the number of unbaptized pagans dwindled and that of Christian families increased among the local population, we may suppose that the baptistery of a popular shrine such as Cyrus and John would have been a favorite destination for the baptism of the children of pious Christian families.

The tomb of the saints was, of course, the heart and soul of the church. It was what drew Alexandrians to a far-off suburb and many foreigners to the great city on the Egyptian coast. Incubation was a popular practice and Sophronius defended it against Christian critics who may have considered it too close for comfort to the rituals of the pagan healing cults. The oil from the tomb’s lamps and the wax from its candles was a popular material taken by the faithful as a blessing or a cure, usually by anointing the afflicted part with it. Wine also played a part in

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402 Mir. 9.8–11 tells of the aforementioned Christodora slipping in the bath and suffering a severe neck injury, which is then healed by the saints. But in subsequent stories people are shown bathing there, even at the saints’ command, without difficulty. Gascou, Miracles, n. 253, comments on the widespread ancient belief that aggressive demons haunted warm, humid places such as baths. Ancient apprehensions of water as the symbol of chaos are well-known. Cf. the Prayer for the Great Blessing of Waters at Theophany in the Greek orthodox, attributed to Sophronius (PG 87c: 4001–4).

403 Mir. 2.3. Pace Booth, who adopts the translation of φωτιστήριον as “sanctuary,” instead of “baptistery,” from Marcos 45f., who argues for this based on its characterization several times as a place where the Eucharist is kept or received. But I would prefer to follow Gascou, who notes, “Comme le rite baptismal égyptien comportait une communion, il est normal qu'on ait gardé les sacrements au baptistère” (Gascou, Miracles, 130 n. 745).

404 Gascou, Miracles, 15–16.

405 Mir. 1 (wax) and 36 (oil).
some cures, or in normal consumption as a component of meals; some of it was supplied as a thanks-offering by a farmer from Antinoopolis who had been cured at the shrine. But the practice of incubation led to the use of many other materials by the instruction of the saints, some of which were part of the ancient pharmacological repertoire and others which were not (often on purpose) or which possessed some kind of spiritual symbolism. The atmosphere of such a shrine, where various suppliants crowded the floors sleeping, praying, chatting, and in various states of hope or despond, has been evoked nicely by Crisafulli and Nesbitt in their translation and study of the later Miracles of Artemius in Constantinople. The liturgical cycle helped to set a certain daily rhythm and activity for clients, and the miracles sometimes took place in conjunction with movements of the divine office, such as the circumambulation of the priest or deacon with the incenser. At other times, dream visions were shaped by this liturgical environment, so that the saints appeared to suppliants as clerics.

The clergy are mentioned in several stories. The most important was the steward of the shrine, whose name implies his financial as well as liturgical and pastoral duties as a priest. Two are mentioned in the text: the previous office-holder George, who had died by the time Sophronius composed the text, and the incumbent Christodorus. Sophronius speaks positively of both. George was an oblate of sorts at the shrine and was celibate, a details that will be considered in the discussion of monasticism later in this chapter. Christodorus, as mentioned above, was married to Theodora, and they had at least one child, a daughter Marou. The

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407 Mir. 44, 67; 48 (the donation by the farmer).
408 E.g. Mir. 5, 9, 10, 15. The use of absurd, non-medical cures is mentioned at several points as an implicit refutation of scientific medicine.
410 Incense, Mir. 31 and 32; priests or deacons, Mir. 32, 36, 37. In the course of his cure, Sophronius has a vision of a great procession of saints, led by the Apostle Thomas (Mir. 70.18–20).
The dynamics of family life are portrayed vividly by Sophronius. Theodora did not want her husband assigned to the shrine at Menouthis, since it was so far away and she did not want to leave behind their house in the city. The next story tells of their daughter Marou and her afflictions while teething, which were complicated by a severe ear infection; Sophronius evokes the beauty of the first crop of “pearly whites” in babies, while showing great sympathy for the pains and other ills of teething. The following story, about the miraculous preservation of the daughter of the shrine’s deacon John when she fell from an upper window of her home, involves mundane details that help flesh out life at the shrine. The family’s quarters were attached to the church, so that to enter them one had to pass through the church. The girl’s mother was weaving there, and the courtyard down into which the girl fell was occupied by pigs; perhaps these were maintained by the deacon and other workers at the shrine to supply food for themselves and the clients. These incidental details help us visualize better what life was like for the ministers of the shrine in some of its humbler aspects, and how these spatially abutted its sacred areas.

The same story mentions another John who was laid up in the church awaiting a cure and, when healed, dedicated himself to the service of the shrine: “He who was after this made a cleric with the rank of deacon, from a lay condition but a zealous and solitary way of life, by a decision and command of the martyrs and by a patriarchal laying on of the hands by John who now shepherds the Church of the Alexandrians.” It is unclear whether this means that he had been unordained monk (and thus technically lay rather than clerical) or whether he was a layman who

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411 Mir. 9.3–4. Sophronius uses this as an occasion to comment on the wiles of women and their ability to persuade their husbands!
412 Mir. 10.
413 The phrasing indicates that he was the only one deacon there: Μαρία μὲν ἐκκλείστο τὸ κόριον, Ἰωάννου μὲν τοῦ διακόνου τοῦ τῶν ἁγίων τεμένους ὑπῆρχε θυγάτριον (Mir. 11.2).
414 Ὁ κληρωθεὶς μετὰ ταῦτα διάκονος, ἐκ λαϊκοῦ μὲν καταστήματος, σπουδαῖον δὲ καὶ μοναδικὸν πολιτεύματος, μαρτυρικὸ φησίσματι καὶ κελεύσματι, χειροθεσίᾳ δὲ πατριαρχικὴ Ἰωάννου τοῦ νῦν τὴν Ἀλεξανδρέων ἐκκλησίαν ποιμαίνοντος (Mir. 11.6). Leontius of Neapolis portrays John on his way from Alexandria to Menouthis to pray at the church of Cyrus and John in Life of John the Almsgiver 31 (Festugière 382).
lived ascetically like a monk. In any case, according to the canons he would have remained single after ordination, so that we see both married and celibate clerics serving together at the shrine of Cyrus and John. In addition to deacons, there were also subdeacons serving at the shrine. The only ones mentioned in the Miracles were converted to orthodoxy by the saints, from monophysitism, and will therefore be discussed in the section on heterodoxy below.

Finally, among the staff of the shrine there were members of the lower clergy and laypeople who helped with the various tasks and general order of the shrine. Christodorus’ assistant, the secretary of the shrine Menas, was, like the subdeacons, converted from monophysitism so he will be dealt with below. Moving on, the story of the attempted suicide of a certain George mentions several terms for people who are involved in his care: “those who ministered to the young man,” porters and gatekeepers, and “those who were conducting the office of the saints.” The latter may have been lower clergy such as lectors and acolytes.

Another specific attendant at the church was John the “Mnêmatite,” from the Greek word for shrine or monument. After being healed of demonic possession, he had decided to permanently...
settle at the shrine and make himself a servant of the saints.\textsuperscript{417} This is the only known attestation of the word with this meaning.\textsuperscript{418} Thus it seems that John’s was not an official post at the shrine, but that his epithet was a kind of nickname earned by someone who attended at it assiduously. Given Sophronius’ emphasis on John’s abandoning his homeland to do so, it seems likely that he lived an austere ascetic life there, without however receiving the monastic habit. The \textit{philoponoi} of the shrine are, in comparison, described as those of the sick who are well enough to help out; presumably they were sufficiently strong to carry one patient out to the sea shore on occasion and another to the latrines frequently.\textsuperscript{419} The leader of another society of \textit{philoponoi}, at a church of the Apostle Andrew nearby, came to Menouthis to be healed of an illness, assisted by his wife.\textsuperscript{420} He was previously healthy, so that this \textit{philoponeion} appears to have been more of a devout club attached to the church of Andrew than an ad-hoc group of clients of a shrine who were expected to make use of their time there.

The mention of the \textit{philoponos}’s wife is also not extraordinary: family members feature fairly regularly in the miracle stories, often assisting their afflicted kin to travel to the shrine and ministering to their daily needs during their stay. In the case of Theodore the heretical sub-deacon, his mother supplies him with the monophysite Eucharist while he is laid up at Menouthis.\textsuperscript{421} Lastly, there are temporary visitors who may not be sick but simply wish to benefit from the holiness of the shrine, often staying for a fairly long period; they are often designated with the general term for a pious layperson, \textit{philochristos}. Such was the lawyer Cyrus who was consulted when a poor vegetable-peddler was afraid to approach a rich man who had

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[417]{Mir. 40.3.}
\footnotetext[418]{Lampe defines it as “custodian of a tomb,” with this passage as the only attestation (p. 874); LSJ (p. 1139) adds the meaning of a funeral oration.}
\footnotetext[419]{Mir. 35.5–6, 56.2.}
\footnotetext[420]{Mir. 5.}
\footnotetext[421]{Mir. 36.15.}
\end{footnotes}
been pointed out to him in a vision as the means of his cure. Probably Cyrus, because of his piety and his middling social status (and perhaps also being a namesake of one of the saints), was considered a suitable intermediary.\footnote{Mir. 28.10.} Some anonymous philochristoi serve as intermediaries in another way, bringing a deaf-mute man to the shrine from Tyre.\footnote{Mir. 64.}

The presence of such low-ranking clergy and lay helpers, along with the ascetics such as John of Byzantium who later became a deacon and John the Mnematite, blurs the distinction between clerical, lay, and monastic/ascetical somewhat. We tend to think of clergy only as the presiding or officiating ministers of the liturgy, namely bishops, priests, and deacons, but early Christianity had a far broader range of roles considered as “clerical,” with various distinctions in status, mode of ordination or appointment, and commitment to attendance at the liturgical offices.\footnote{Eva Wipszycka, “Les ordres mineurs dans l’église de Égypte du IVᵉ au VIIIᵉ siècle,” The Journal of Juristic Papyrology 22 (1992): 181–215, reprinted in eadem, Études sur le christianisme dans l’Égypte de l’antiquité tardive (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1996), 225–55; cf. Gilbert Dagron, “Remarques sur le statut des clercs,” JÖB 44 (1994): 34–36.} And as mentioned, there were also helpers or devotees who may have had no official clerical status but fulfilled tasks hardly distinguishable from the clerical ushers and porters. Their presence increased the number of people attached to a given church who could not easily be classed as simple laypeople. This was not unique to Menouthis; a similar phenomenon has been noted at the famous pilgrimage church of St Martin in Tours around the same time. Both cases are likely connected to a broader development in late antiquity whereby churches and other religious institutions provided poor or marginal people with shelter, sustenance, and a certain social place and status.\footnote{For Tours, see Lisa Bailey, “Within and Without: Lay People and the Church in Gregory of Tours’ Miracle Stories,” JLA 5, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 119–144. For the socio-economic context, see Evelyne Patlagean, Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance 4ᵉ–7ᵉ siècles (Paris: Mouton, 1977) 55, 179–81, 196, 202–3.}
Sophronius on lay and monastic

Sophronius expresses a highly positive appreciation of lay piety in his *Encomium of Saints Cyrus and John*. He wonders at this “odd couple” of martyrs, a monk and a soldier, two professions which seem diametrically opposed. He expands on this opposition with the liberty of a rhetorician, but in order to heighten the effect of the equally profuse description, immediately following, of their unity through a common faith:

For their habit did not distinguish them so much as their faith combined them; nor did their profession separate them so much as their piety conjoined them; nor did their arts furnish them a separation so much as hope graced them with fellowship. For those who hold the same faith will become like in their manners as well; and those who practice a single piety always accomplish the same deeds; and those who look for the same hope undertake the same tasks.426

The next paragraph goes on to argue that God’s justice, which is devoid of favoritism, rewarded the martyrs with equal honor and a common tomb for their identical labor on behalf of virtue.427

This powerful assertion functions in the first place to reinforce equal devotion in the cult of the saintly pair. Yet Sophronius cannot have been ignorant of its import for his audience, which probably consisted of the current and potential clients of the healing shrine at Menouthis, as well as other connoisseurs of edifying literature near and far—in short, a mixed lay and monastic audience. The terminology in the first part of the quotation contrasts Cyrus’s and John’s different states, using common terms for distinguishing social and economic roles—habit

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426 *Encom.*, 13 (Bringel 36): οὐ γὰρ τοσοῦτον αὐτοὺς τὸ σχῆμα διέκρινεν, ὡς οὖν η ἀντίθετος συνεκρίνει τοσοῦτον αὐτοὺς τὸ ἐπάγγελμα διεχώριζεν, ὡς οὖν συνήπτευν αὐτοὺς ἡ ἐνζύμη· οὔτε τοσοῦτον αὐτοὺς τὸ ἐπάγγελμα διεχώριζεν, ὡς οὖν τοσοῦτον αὐτοὺς ἡ ἐνζύμη ἐχάριζετο· οἱ γὰρ τῆς αὐτῆς ἐχόμενοι πίστεως, ἀνάλογοι καὶ τοῖς ἐπί ζῶντας ἐντεύκτοις, πράξεις αἱ αὐτὰς ἐνπράξεις αὐτάς διαπράττονται· καὶ διὰ πρὸς ἐπί ιδεῖν τὴν αὐτὴν ἀποβλέπωσις, τὰς αὐτῶς ἐγχειρήσεις κεχρηται.

427 *Encom.*, 14 (Bringel 36).
or appearance (schêma), profession (epangelma), arts or crafts (technai)—and immediately draws them back together with theological virtues—faith, piety, hope. The second part then renders these more theoretical qualities practical by showing that they issue in pious ways or manners (tropois), deeds (praxeis), undertakings or tasks (encheirêmasin). This last step is significant, since it shows that Sophronius is not content with mere theoretical parity between monastics and laypeople based on holding an abstract faith in common or waiting for similar rewards in the afterlife. This faith must be quickened by works. Laypeople must be as holy as monastics. The implicit model is Job, since immediately before the passage quoted, the martyrs are described in terms echoing that Old Testament saint’s righteousness. The martyrs also matched the apostles in virtue.

Although they do not figure in the actual miracle collection, we should note the tradition of the companions of Cyrus and John, three young consecrated virgins who were instructed by them and steeled by their words to endure martyrdom. Cyrus and John are presented as spiritual fathers to the girls, adding care for them (merimna, phrontis) to their own concerns. Thus the ideal of spiritual equality is extended to laypeople and women, in the specific context of a close-knit fellowship of Christians brought together by their common faith and piety rather than their particular state. In this small community, Cyrus enjoyed seniority but not an exclusive privilege to holiness.

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428 Cf. Job 1:1 «καὶ ἦν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος ἄληθινός, ἀμεμπτός, δίκαιος, θεοσεβής, ἀπεχόμενος ἀπὸ παντὸς πονηροῦ πράγματος» and 42:12 «ὁ δὲ Κύριος εὐλόγησε τὰ ἔσχατα ἱῷῳ ἤ τὰ ἐμπροσθεν» with Encom. 13 «ἀμφω γὰρ ἐστὶν ἱερόν, ἀμφω ἁγιασμόν, ἀμφω ἄληθινόν, ἀμφω ἀμέμπτων, ἀμφω δικαίων, ἀμφω θεοσεβῆ, ἀμφω ἁκακίας ἀνόητων, νόμου τε θείου καὶ διδαχῆς καὶ προστάγματος, ὡς τὸ τέλος αὐτῶν ἐμπροσθεν, καὶ τὰ ἑθέθεν δοθέντα χαρίσματα». Encom. 14 (Bringel 36). Cf. Encom. 33 (Bringel 70), where Ps. 18:5, traditionally applied to the apostles (in the liturgy and in discourse) is referred to Cyrus and John. Encom. 18 (Bringel 42).

429 Encom. In the Miracles, Cyrus often appears as an old man to John’s youthful countenance, and often he has the latter perform healings as his assistant. This may simply be due to the age difference attributed to the saints during their life and Cyrus’s position as a kind of spiritual father to John and the women who were
Sophronius’ leveling of the field between the lay and monastic in the *Encomium* seems to be borne out by the paucity of monastic characters in the *Miracles*. We have remarked already on the deacon John who had been either a monk or a *philoponos* at Constantinople. In one instance we find a young girl, less than twelve years old, who is already a nun at a convent of virgins. Sophronius implies that he disapproves of such a young age for entry into the monastic life, since he criticizes the fact that she lacked proper guidance for the spiritual struggle, and even normal daily life, in such a setting. Yet, as we have seen already, he does not oppose the idea of Cyrus and John’s charges having been young (aged 15, 13, and 11, according to him). Nor does he object to a child oblate at the shrine of Cyrus and John, namely the presbyter George, who was offered there in conjunction with the healing of his cataract, according to a dream his mother had.  

He served at the sanctuary from a young age and was promoted step by step up the clerical hierarchy, and had served as the director of the shrine before the incumbent Christodoros, probably with the same office of steward. While certainly a priest, it is unclear whether he was a monk as well; at least the fact that he was raised at the shrine suggests that he did not have a family apart from it, and that he was celibate. Lastly, the saints made a “contract” with Theodore, a blind man who came to their shrine for healing of blindness and attacks of demonic possession: they stipulated that he should “renounce the tumults of life and embrace the martyred with them. They sometimes appear in their respective monastic and military garb, sometimes both as monks (*Mir.* 10, 13, 38, 52, 65), and sometimes both as clergy (priests or deacons, *Mir.* 32, 36, 37). To Sophronius himself Cyrus once appeared as his spiritual father Moschus and John as the praetorian prefect of Egypt, Peter (*Mir.* 70.8). On the phenomenon of saints’ appearing in the guise of acquaintances of the recipient of the vision, see the discussion of the disguise of St Demetrius earlier in this chapter.

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432 *Mir.* 44. On child oblates in Egypt around this time, see Arietta Papaconstantinou, “‘What remains behind’: Hellenism and Romanitas in Christian Egypt after the Arab conquest,” in *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East*, edited by Hannah M. Cotton, Robert G. Hoyland, Jonathan J. Price, and David J. Wasserstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 462–64. It is difficult to understand Sophronius’ full views on this subject, since the passage on the twelve-year-old nun is obscured by his rhetorical use of her situation as a morality tale for lack of spiritual guidance, especially of women who are portrayed as naturally weaker, as Eve was deceived without Adam in Eden. See the discussion and references at Gascou, *Miracles*, 159 n. 953.

433 Cf. John the Mnematite, leading an ascetic life at the shrine, probably as a lay ascetic, as discussed above.
tranquility of the solitary life, since the reformation of life of those cured is a remuneration particularly desired by the martyrs." He is in fact directed specifically to the monastery of St. John the Baptist on the Jordan, and fulfills his part of the contract there after being healed. We should note that, despite Sophronius’ equalization of lay and monastic life in the *Encomium*, here he speaks of monasticism favorably and even as synonymous with “reformation of life.”  

*Educating the laity*

Among the diverse contents of Christian education that the miracle collections contain, I focus here on two broad categories of instruction: doctrinal and moral. By doctrinal, I mean instruction in orthodoxy, in conflict with its various competitors, especially the various sects of the Monophysite movement. Five of them deal with monophysites explicitly, while two others may implicitly attack them. Maraval has noted that Sophronius does not really provide a reasoned theological argument against monophysitism, but presents a more immediate proof, the orthodox Chalcedonian faith of Saints Cyrus and John themselves. Sophronius, of course, was...

434 *Mir*. 65.4: αἰ δὲ συνθήκας, καὶ τὰ δ’ αὐτῶν γεγονότα προστάγματα τῆς ταραχώδους ζωῆς ἄπητου ἀπόθεσιν, καὶ βίου μονήρους γαληνώσαν ἀνάληψιν· αὕτη γάρ αὐτοῖς πρὸς τῶν ῥυμνυμένων μισθοπορία τριπόθητος, ἡ τοῦ βίου τογχάνει δόρδωσις

435 Additionally, a kind of asceticism akin to that of monks is attributed to a certain John from Rome, who, in order to be cured of blindness by the saints, waited outside the shrine in the open air for eight years, enduring heat and cold and all other adversities until he obtained his purpose (*Mir*. 69.6–9). This kind of asceticism recalls the self-mortification of the Syrian monks described in Theodoret’s *Religious History* but it may be based on a too-literal and over-eager interpretation by Sophronius of the ex-voto inscription left by John the Roman, who was probably in fact blind for eight years, until coming to the shrine and receiving healing. The argument for Sophronius’ imaginative elaboration is at Delehaye xyz. Cf. Gascou, *Miracles*, 218 n. 1294, who notes that the inscription as given in the text is almost certainly a reworking by Sophronius, based on its use of characteristically “Sophronian” strophes, but may have been based on an original at the shrine. Cf. the first story in the *First Collection of the Miracles of Demetrius*, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

436 This in a general sense, since Theodore is not characterized earlier in the passage as being burdened by any particular sins, and it is remarked that he showed strong faith in the power of God through the martyrs by making the journey from his home city of Anzarzarus in Cilicia.

437 Monophysitism in Egypt was divided into several sects. For the background to the situation in Alexandria around the time the miracles were written, see John Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Division: The Church 450–680 A.D.* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1989), 272–80.

438 Maraval, “*Fonction pédagogique*,” 389.
not lacking in the skill to produce a reasoned argument. Maraval suggests that his reticence might be due partly to his experience of the stubborn sectarian nature of contemporary ecclesiastical allegiances.\textsuperscript{439} This is doubtless true, but more to the point, detailed theological dialectics were not really suitable to the genre of miracle stories. Instead, the miracles in question teach the true faith by emphasizing non-theological factors that would have influenced a person’s decision for or against Chalcedon.

One such factor was social status, as exemplified in Miracle 12, concerning the \textit{comes} Julian. He was a member of the Gaianite sect.\textsuperscript{440} Apart from his high governmental rank of \textit{comes}, his wealth and noble lineage is emphasized by Sophronius.\textsuperscript{441} Julian is thus a very prominent public figure, something of which he himself seems conscious. Thus, although persuaded by the saints that the Chalcedonian confession is true, he still hesitates to follow through because of his concern about publicly breaking with his fellow Gaianites. Eventually the Saints make his conversion public by a pious ruse: they tell him to receive orthodox communion privately at the Theonas church of the Theotokos in Alexandria after the liturgy is finished and everybody has left. But as he is partaking, a crowd of Gaianite priests who are in the habit of praying at that church after the orthodox service, arrive just in time to witness the act. According to Sophronius, Julian’s embarrassment has by now passed—he is apparently still alive when the collection is being written—and he frequently recounts the story to all and sundry.\textsuperscript{442} The social status of Julian and the public prominence of his conversion are not incidental details in this

\textsuperscript{439} Ibid. For a similar polemical approach, see the analysis of Anastasius of Sinai in a later chapter of this study.

\textsuperscript{440} They held the views of Julian of Halicarnassus on the incorruptibility of Christ's humanity before the Resurrection, against both the Severan monophysites and the orthodox Chalcedonian doctrine; see Meyendorff, \textit{Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions}, 274 n. 11.

\textsuperscript{441} He also uses this as an opportunity for moral exhortation on the dangers of wealth and its proper Christian use, a common theme in this collection.

\textsuperscript{442} \textit{Mir.} 12.1. Apparently Julian was less perturbed by the Saints’ trick than Delehaye, who complains that Sophronius "n'a pas l'air de sentir combien de pareils procédés sont peu dignes des saints" (Delehaye, "Recueils," 29). Delehaye does not exhibit much appreciation for hagiographical humor.
story: the example of such a rich and powerful man could have very concrete effects on his fellow citizens. Julian could play an important role supporting the embattled orthodox community in Alexandria and promoting the charitable works of a bishop such as John the Almsgiver.

Another aspect of Sophronius’s polemics is his attempt to clarify the fuzzy or unstable boundaries between groups. While it seems that many monophysites were careful to only receive the Eucharist from their own clergy, they frequented orthodox churches for prayer and even for the first part of the liturgy, and they did not hesitate to anoint themselves with the blessed oil from the lamp at the tomb of Cyrus and John in hope of receiving healing. This last practice is the target of a strong rebuke from Sophronius in Miracle 36, where he says that the heretics do not realize the harm they do thereby, neglecting the highest blessing of the body of Christ while relying on the lesser blessing of the relics of saints, who themselves can do nothing apart from Christ. In that story the patient Theodore waits for his mother to bring him a
portion of the Julianist Eucharist in order to commune. Eventually Theodore agrees to convert, partly because he had been promised clerical rank by the saints if he did so!

The two following miracles involve people who are healed by the saints upon accepting orthodoxy, but then relapse, the one out of forgetfulness and the other because of the social pressures of his hometown; in both the factors of familial tradition come into play. In Miracles 37, John was already a subdeacon in the Theodosian sect of the monophysites, in the city of Cynopolis, but was practicing incubation at Saints Cyrus and John to obtain hearling for his eyes. After accepting the Chalcedonian faith through communing of the Eucharist at the shrine, he was summoned home by the death of his father, to be made a deacon in his stead in the local church. The saints punished him by striking him with blindness again, until he repented; he then went on to serve at the shrine and progress in the clergy of the (orthodox) Church.

In the next story, Miracle 38, a certain Stephen from Nikiou was convinced in a dream vision of the saints to receive the Chalcedonian Eucharist. His servant, who was also converted, then asked Stephen what they would do when they returned to Nikiou. He replied, “While we are here we will do what the martyrs approve, and when we depart from here, we will hold our own dogmas again as before and the faith which our fathers entrusted to us.” The saints, however, intervened once again, and after suitable chastisement Stephanos remained firm in his newfound orthodoxy. The subject of Miracle 39, Peter of the nearby estate of Herakleion was more difficult to convince,

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446 His explanation for not partaking of the Chalcedonian Eucharist is interesting: “No, I will not go in [to the baptistery, where the reserved Eucharist was kept]; for I am of another belief, and not of the proclamation of the church ...” Οὐδὲν οἴκησον ὡς ἐκείνην ἑτέρας γὰρ ἑνώ δόξης καθέστηκα, καὶ οὐ τοῦ τῆς Ἑκκλησίας κηρύγματος (Mir. 36.15). In reality he probably would not have spoken of himself so naively as being outside the Church. The expression is probably due to Sophronius’ literary license, but it is also possible that it stems from an oral or written reminiscence by Theodore, who might have spoken that way after his conversion to Chalcedonian orthodoxy.

447 Mir. 36.7.

448 Mir. 37.

449 Mir. 38.6.
but once he agreed to the saints’ demand to become orthodox, he did not relapse like his predecessors.\footnote{Mir. 39.8–9.}

Under the same number Sophronius tacks on the interesting case of the secretary of the steward-priest Christodorus, Menas by name, who was also monophysite. Apparently the fact that a monophysite like Menas worked for a shrine controlled by the orthodox did not appear incongruous to Christodorus, perhaps because Menas was a layman and specifically employed for the economic and not liturgical needs of the church. But Cyrus and John were more strict and compelled Menas to convert, through a vision and a beating.\footnote{Mir. 39.10–11.}

In concluding this miracle, Sophronius states that he will tell no more anti-heretical stories, lest his collection of miracles be considered merely a screed on behalf of Chalcedon.\footnote{Mir. 39.11.} This lends support to my previous contention that his sensitivity to the literary and paedagogical needs of the genre makes him careful not to burden it with more theology than it can bear. What stands out in these stories is Sophronius’ careful attention to the social setting and pressures that the confessional strife in Alexandria and Egypt involved. He states most of these matter-of-factly, disapproving of course of the relapses of John and Stephen but not deeming them unusual. Furthermore, none of these men convert because of a theological debate, except for Peter, who demanded of the saints an apology for their insistence on adherence to the Chalcedonian faith—but even that is perfunctory, at least from the point of view of dogmatics.\footnote{Mir. 39.8–9.} The emphasis on the Eucharist as the boundary between orthodoxy and heresy, and its use as the instrument of conversion—no need for baptism or chrism—is also notable, and will be explored in great detail in Chapter 5 with regard to the Spiritual Meadow.
As a bridge from the doctrinal to the moral aspects of Sophronius’ teaching, let us consider the role paganism plays in the Miracles. There are occasional references to the past history of the area, given the Cyrus and John’s supposed importance for suppressing the cult of Isis at Menouthis, but there is only one actual pagan character, Agapios “the Hellene.” He managed to avoid detection by the paying of bribes—exactly how the worship of Isis had continued at Menouthis until the campaign against it by Peter Mongus in the late fifth century—and when he sought a cure at the shrine of Cyrus and John he justified his refusal to take communion by claiming that he was a heretic. There are several others who are accused of being crypto-pagans, such as Gesius the iatrosophist and Nemesion the ex-prefect who was learned in Greek science, particularly in astrology. The former was a well-known medical expert from the previous century, who had been baptized externally as a matter of convenience but continued to mock the Christian faith; he was already a historical figure by Sophronius’ time and thus did not represent the state of paganism in Alexandria in the 610s. The latter was Christian and displayed suitable piety at the shrine—he was the one who had commissioned the marble reliefs, complete with donor portrait, discussed above—but Sophronius claimed that his stargazing and alleged belief in astrological determinism was an implicit renunciation of his baptismal vows. Others may not have treated them so harshly, especially as concerns the pious Nemesion. Lastly, a man named Theodore was punished by the saints for snorting after receiving communion at the shrine, an act which seems to have been considered obscene in Greco-Roman society and that Sophronius attempts to relate to paganism. He does not accuse Theodore of

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454 Mir. 32.9. Another patient at the shrine was rumored to be a pagan because his mother did not eat pork, a characteristic of devotees of Adonis, but Sophronius admits that he does not know if the rumor was true: Mir. 54.6–7. He does not mention the possibility that she may have been a Jew or a member of a Judaizing sect.
455 Mir. 30.2–3.
456 Mir. 28.2–7.
being a pagan himself, but sees his sacrilegious action as common among the mass of Christians and uses the opportunity to try to uncover its pagan connotations in order to persuade people to abandon it.457 Both in the case of Nemesion and in that of Theodore, then, we see that paganism, unlike heterodox Christianity, was not a serious threat. In the Miracles, we have entered the long history of the combat against alleged “pagan survivals” in Christian society. The only mention of a Jew in the corpus is relevant to this: he was a magician who died once the defixio that he used to cause harm was found and destroyed at the instruction of Cyrus and John.458 This is Judaism not as a serious theological rival, but as a repository of occult knowledge that blurs into the muddled memory of the ancient gods. But the picture from the Miracles is misleading, as we will see in the evidence for Judaism as a serious social and theological rival in the corpus of Anastasius of Sinai.

Moral teaching

Sophronius’ sustained attack on secular medical science, mentioned above in relation to Gesius, is complex, since he is not uniformly hostile to physicians and likes to exhibit his own detailed understanding of the causes of ailments according to that same science. Several other scholars have considered this problem in some detail, so I will not discuss it here.459 Yet it brings into view one of Sophronius’ main didactic preoccupations in the collection, the relation between


458 Mir. 55.3–4.

physical and spiritual illness. His erudition actually allows him to give rather nuanced answers to the different versions of this conundrum that appear in each story.

His guiding principle is that, ever since the Fall of Adam and Eve, mankind has been subject to corruption, death, and disease. Thus a given instance of illness or injury is not necessarily connected to moral turpitude in the person concerned. The only true obstacles to healing are incorrigible moral evil or stubborn unbelief in the power accorded to the saints. He emphasizes, for example, that death by drowning is not always an indication of an adverse judgment on God’s part; that leprosy, despite the taboos associated with it in the Old Testament, is likewise not an infallible indication; that even possession by demons, properly a disease of the soul and not the body, was due more to the abuse of demons than to human culpability. The case of a testicular disease elicits a long discourse on how we should not be ashamed of physical ailments, since we are not responsible for them, but of spiritual ones.

Yet sometimes illness is permitted by God in order to cure a spiritual disease, or at least serve as an example to others. The very first miracle account concerns a certain Ammonios whose arrogance was cured by his need to wait at the shrine for healing. He was tasked with sweeping around the reliquary—in order to be humbled by constantly looking downward and meditating upon how he was taken from earth and would return thence—and later by trading his luxurious garments for sackcloth and lugging heavy jugs of water around for the needs of the

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460 Mir. 17.1.
461 Mir. 8.7–9 (with reference to the steward Christodoros, although in this case he escaped death through the intercession of Cyrus and John).
462 Mir. 13.1–2 and 15.2–4 (Sophronius mentions the opinions that the Apostle Paul had some kind of leprosy and Job had elephantiasis).
463 Mir. 14.2–3.
464 Mir. 16.1–5.
465 At Mir. 20.1, he notes that miracles benefit both the bodies of those healed and souls of those who witness them and who hear their retelling.
sick brethren.\textsuperscript{466} The trope of stooping down is a familiar one from Greco-Roman rhetoric (contrasting the earthly regard of quadupred beasts with the heavenward gaze of man as he stands erect) and is probably Sophronius’ own moral embellishment to the tale, repeated in the story of a woman whose arrogance consists of not believing that Cyrus and John are real martyrs.\textsuperscript{467} But in any case the experience of performing such menial tasks would likely have humbled an arrogant Alexandrian and edified those who saw him, in person or through Sophronius’s account.\textsuperscript{468} Another such story presents two women of the same name, Juliana, one poor and one rich; both are healed physically and the latter also of the arrogance of wealth. Doubtlessly, audiences would have enjoyed such reversals of circumstances. But the intention is not to condemn the wealthy or shake the social and economic hierarchy: what is desired is a reformation of the attitude of the grandees, leading to the practice of almsgiving, which puts those hierarchies to good use.\textsuperscript{469} The case of the convert comes Julian discussed above illustrates another aspect of their proper role.

Another way in which moral evil may intervene is in instances of magic, but there Sophronius emphasizes the spiritual fall of the one employing the magic, not of the one afflicted by it.\textsuperscript{470} The devil, apart from inflicting his own injuries through demonic possession, makes men his partners in hurting their fellow men through the use of sorcery. When a certain Theodore fell

\textsuperscript{466} Mir. 1.7.13. Ammonius thus seems to have been pressed into services as one of the \textit{philoponoi} of the shrine, as described above.

\textsuperscript{467} Mir. 29.9–10. She is afflicted by the saints with a spinal deformity that forces her to stoop; Sophronius recalls the period of Nebuchadnezzar’s beast-like madness in the Book of Daniel.

\textsuperscript{468} Mir. 24. Cf. Mir. 49.7, where a thief, George, was chastised by sweeping the church twice a day; his downward look, imitating the pig that he stole, was supposed to lead him to repent.

\textsuperscript{469} See the discussion by Susan R. Holman, ”Rich and Poor in Sophronius of Jerusalem’s \textit{Miracles of Saints Cyrus and John},” in \textit{Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society}, edited by eadem (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 103–24, esp. for this passage 113–14.

\textsuperscript{470} Mir. 21.1.
ill from magic potion in his food, Sophronius lamented that humans, not content to harm their fellow men through blows and weapons, have also devised poisons and charms.\textsuperscript{471}

Sophronius also has a sustained program of theological education regarding the proper attitude toward the saints, in relation to their role as servants of the one God and not deities in their own right. This was a fine line and one easily crossed by simple believers, whether influenced by lingering paganism or not. Nevertheless, Sophronius was convinced of the importance of rendering due honor to the saints, not least because their miracles continued to bear witness to the truth of Christ and were an antidote to the lure of pagan healing shrines.\textsuperscript{472} He also sought to emphasize the harmony of various saints as drawing on the same divine power, in this regard explicitly comparing Cyrus and John to the other famous healing pair of Cosmas and Damian.\textsuperscript{473} Elsewhere Theodore Tiro, Theodore Stratelates, Menas, and the Apostle Thomas all make appearances cooperating with Cyrus and John for specific cures.\textsuperscript{474} Through such teachings Sophronius may also have sought to defuse the competition of shrines devoted to different saints.\textsuperscript{475}

The need to subordinate the saints to Christ is manifested in the context of the heretics as well. As we saw earlier, Sophronius objected to heretics seeking the blessings of the saints but not of Christ in the form of the (orthodox) Eucharist. The saints are, in fact, simply not capable of working miracles on their own: they tell the monophysite Theodore that as only God the

\textsuperscript{471} Mir. 27.2.
\textsuperscript{472} Mir. 9.7: the miracles of the saints should be preached far and wide, in contrast to the phantom apparitions (φάσματα) of the demons. Mir. 29.3–8: Athanasia disbelieved in Cyrus and John, perhaps because of lingering pagan beliefs or because there were not indisputable records of them; but we should believe anyway because miracles confirm the verity even of unwritten martyrs. For Sophronius’ defense of the practice of incubation while also seeking to lay devotion to saints in an orthodox direction, see Gascou, Miracles, 15–19.
\textsuperscript{473} Mir. 30.14.
\textsuperscript{474} Mir. 8.10–12, 70.16–20.
\textsuperscript{475} Cf. Booth, Crisis of Empire, 54. Sophronius certainly sees Cyrus and John as competitors of the monophysites who controlled the shrine of Menas, but not of their fellow-martyr himself. He is honored by the epithet of defender and confirmer of Egypt and of Christ-loving (philochristos) Alexandria (Mir. 46.1).
Creator can number and grasp the countless waves of the sea splashing against the shrine, so only he can master the many mysterious flows of the humors in the sick man’s body.  

Sophronius continues this theme of God’s ultimate mastery with direct reference to the material blessings of the saints.

For I too say that the oil of the saints’ lamps was sanctified; but what is that compared to Him who sanctifies the saints themselves? And we agree that it has power against illnesses, but what is that compared to Christ who is the wisdom and the power of God, who also distributes to the saints themselves the gifts of works of power? I say too that it is worthy of honor as burning on top of the reliquary, but what is that compared to Him who sits upon the Cherubim? And why is the oil of the lamps of the saints given precedence to the saints themselves who sanctify the oil of the lamps? For whatever is classed among creatures, not only earthly but heavenly … loves and prays to bear the yoke of servitude and to be and be called a slave of the dominical body of Christ our God … We say these things not in order to correct the errors of the aforementioned [heretics] (for what have I to do with judging outsiders, as the Apostle says) but in order to secure our brethren, lest if they often see those people doing this very thing, they share in their irreverence.

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476 Mir. 36.10.
477 Mir. 36.16–18: Ἡγάσθη μὲν γὰρ, λέγω κάγω, τὸ τῆς τῶν ἁγίων κανθάλας ἑλαῖον, ἀλλὰ τί τούτῳ πρὸς τὸν τοὺς ἁγίους αὐτοὺς ἀγιάζοντα; Καὶ δύναμιν αὐτὸ κατὰ νοσημάτων ἔχειν τιθέμεθα, ἀλλὰ τί πρὸς Χριστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ σωφρινὸν ὑντα καὶ δύναμιν, τὸν καὶ μάρτυσιν αὐτοὺς χαρίσματα δυνάμεων νέμοντα; Λέγω δὲ καὶ τιμής ἄξιον ὡς ἑπάνω τῆς θήρας καιομένου, ἀλλὰ τί πρὸς τὸν ἐπὶ τῶν Χερουβιμ καθεξίμουν; καὶ τί τὸ τῆς κανθάλας ἑλαιὸν τῶν ἁγίων παραφερόμενον, ἢ τοὺς ἁγίους αὐτοὺς τοὺς τὸ τῆς κανθάλας ἀγιάζοντας ἑλαῖον; Πᾶν γὰρ ὅπερ κτίσμασι τέτακται, οὐ μόνον ἐπίγειον, ἀλλὰ δὴ καὶ οὐράνιον ... ἀγαπητὸν ἤγεται καὶ εὐχεταὶ τὸ δούλεισιν ἄξεις ζυγόν, καὶ δοῦλον εἶναι καὶ λέγεσθαι τοῦ Δεσποτικοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν σῶματος· μὴ μὴν αὐτὸ παραβάλλεσθαι, καὶ τὸ ἅγιον ἡ παρὰ μικρὸν ἀποφέρεσθαι βούλεσθαι· ὃπερ οὐδὲ τῆς ἢ ὁ παρέχων ... Ταῦτα δὲ λέγομεν, οὐ τὰ τῶν εἰρημένων διορθομένους σφάλματα (τὶ γὰρ μοι τοὺς ἔξω κρίνειν, ὡς φησίν ὁ Ἀπόστολος), ἀλλὰ τοὺς ἡμῶν ἀδέλφους ἀσφαλιζόμενοι, μήπως αὐτοὺς τούτο ποιοῦντας συγνότερον βλέποντες, σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀσεβήσωσιν. Ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ τὸ λειτομένον ἡμῖν τῆς διηγήσεως ἐλθομεν.
The irreverence to be shared is apostasy from the Christ defined by the orthodox creed. Such apostasy is enabled by the habit of being satisfied with the lesser blessing of the lamp-oil from saints’ reliquaries, to the neglect of the body of Christ offered in the orthodox Eucharist, that Body to which even the angels consider themselves fortunate to be subject. It could also refer to a lesser fault, namely veneration of the saints (whether at orthodox shrines or at those in the hands of heretics) to the neglect of communion even while remaining within the formal boundaries of the Church.

The saints themselves are subject to the angels, in a hierarchy spanning earth and heaven. When the child oblate George lies dying of the plague, the saints ask the angels, come to take his soul, to keep him in this life, and the angels have them apply to God. Their freedom of speech in the heavenly court demonstrates the power and grace they have received from God. This celestial hierarchy is lent even more nuance by the addition of the late George himself, recently departed from the ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, whom Sophronius asks to intercede with saints on our behalf. The saints themselves possess the grace of healing because they served God irreproachably during their time in the same ecclesia on earth. But though the saints may plead their case in the heavenly court, the ultimate end of the life of each is up to God alone.

Sophronius draws heavily on Scripture to reinforce this conception of the proper place of the saints. He says that the saints themselves use Christ’s own words to heal in order to show whence they drew their power. When the saints save Christodorus from a storm at sea, one

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478 Mir. 51.10–12. Neighbors here on earth also play a role in intercession: Mir. 31.5, 64.4.
479 Mir. 47.2.
480 Mir. 62.5–8.
481 Mir. 46.3. Similarly, the faith to move mountains and raise the dead is attributed not just to a patient at the shrine, but to Cyrus and John in curing him (Mir. 4.3); and Menas the paralyzed philoponos, upon being healed, carries away his cot, thus imitating the paralytic cured by Christ at Bethesda (Mir. 5.7).
appears rebuking the winds and the other calming the sea: a one-man job for their Master. The
saints, telling someone in a vision that they are going to attend a banquet at the deacon John’s
home, when they are in fact going to cure his daughter Maria, indicate that their food, like
Christ’s, is to do the will of the heavenly Father. In rewarding the good and punishing the evil
they imitate Christ himself, who invited those on his right hand to inherit the Kingdom and sent
away those on his left to the eternal fire.

Sophronius draws heavily on Scripture to embellish his presentation both rhetorically and
spiritually, in keeping with the tendency of all hagiographers with any pretensions to stylistic
polish. Most of his scripture is drawn from books familiar to laypeople from liturgical use:
Gospels, the Psalter, and the Old Testament pericopes found in the lectionary. This is in keeping
with the general tendencies of hagiography in this period. He does, however, make the
occasional obscure reference. He also adds a certain ornate eloquence. Several instances have
already been cited, but one particularly relevant to lay piety is his conceit that he has placed the

482 Mir. 8.5.
483 Mir. 11.9–10.
484 Mir. 29.1, citing Mt. 25:34,41 and, later on, Is. 1:19–20.
485 For Sophronius’s rhetorical level, see Gascou, Miracles, 12–14. In addition to the proper
conception of saints, his views on physical afflictions as a consequence of the Fall are buttressed with
quotations from Gen. 3:19 and Ps. 103:29. Proverbs is a favorite source, for its concrete moral content, for its
realistic observations, and also for vivid imagery. Among other quotations or allusions: Mir. 9.1 (it is better to
traffick in the grace of the Saints than in treasures of gold and silver and precious stones, a quotation of Prov.
3:14–15, originally referring to wisdom), 23.2, 24.2, 32.1. In Mir. 2–3 he quotes the Old Testament (cited as
Moses but actually from Sirach) to support moral imperative to love fellow man, and supports it with
reference to judgment in the Epistles of Paul, but also recognizes the perversion of conscience that allows
men to pretend not to know this.
486 Cf. Derek Krueger, “Scripture and Liturgy in the Life of Mary of Egypt” (paper, 36th Annual
Byzantine Studies Conference, October 9, 2010); a forthcoming book by the same author (Liturgical Subjects:
Christian Ritual, Biblical Narrative, and the Formation of the Self in Byzantium) will develop the topic more
broadly for this period.
487 E.g. Mir. 7, to Menas the runner, who is compared to Asael the brother of Joab, swift as a gazelle in
the field (2 Kg 2:18).
story of the poor man Paul after the banker John, as the poor people trail the affluent in the agora, hoping to catch a few drops of gold scattered by Christ-loving sympathy.  

Conclusion

How then would this text have been received? It is difficult to tell if it was actually read out loud at the shrine. Sophronius expresses the idea that he is preserving the stories of miracles for posterity, giving voice to those who experienced them even after their death, and setting his stamp on their experiences by his own cure at the shrine.  

The rather ornate language tells against it being appreciated by the common man, but then again scholarly opinions on the level of language understood by the average Christian at this period, as well as what the expectations of religious discourse would have been, are divided. Perhaps only a well-educated cleric or layman could appreciate Sophronius’ art fully, but even a peasant or artisan could be impressed by the rhythmic periods of his Kunstprosa.

If such is indeed the case, we must remark that the elites in the audience were not very different from their humbler coreligionists. Their religion was “popular” in that it took full advantage of the material means of healing and the mediation of the saints. It is difficult to tell how much this was a reality and how much it was the ideal of Sophronius. His virulence against the medical profession, while not absolute, indicates an important competitor. But it is likely that most people mixed and matched. Those who could afford them probably tried physicians first and turned to the saints only when necessary, while those lacking sufficient funds might direct their steps to the shrine right away.

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488 Mir. 18.1: ὃσπερ ἐν ταῖς ἁγοραῖς ποιοῦντας ὀρώμεν τοὺς πένητας προσιόντας τε καὶ τῶν χρυσορεύστων ὑψηθεὶς βαινοῦντας, σταγόσιν εἰ ποτὲ τισιν αὐτῶν, διὰ φιλόχριστον ἀπορρεούσας συμπάθειαν, περιτύχοιειν.

489 Mir. 10, 12, 32, 39, 65, 70.
At the other extreme from an over-reliance on earthly doctors was a certain hagiolatry, at least as Sophronius characterizes it. His most sustained attack on it, in the story about Theodore the Monophysite discussed above, at first glance does not seem wholly fair. Monophysites did not necessarily neglect the oil of the saints because they had a low view of the Eucharist per se, but because they were wary of the Chalcedonian Eucharist. Doubtless many Chalcedonians did the same when they went on pilgrimage to Monophysite-controlled shrines such as Apa Mena, if they did not simply partake of the heretical Eucharist, as was very common. But Sophronius adds an important clarification: his criticism is not directed toward the monophysites themselves, “outsiders” as they are, but toward his own people. He is afraid lest they learn to despise their own Eucharist, their true Christ, through the example of their heretical neighbors.

This critique is absent from the other extant writings of Sophronius. Although having plenty of opportunities in his Anacreontics and in his Homilies that deal with saints, he generally contents himself there with a celebration of them. Furthermore, these works are intimately connected with the practice of pilgrimage and veneration of holy things and places. His silence on hagiolatry is primarily due to the fact that it would not be fitting for the given genres. But it is also connected to the fact that in the poems, which largely express his own experiences and meditations, and in the sermons, which were preached at great gatherings of the orthodox faithful, he did not have to worry about orthodoxy and its Eucharist being neglected, because they lay at the heart of the matter of those occasions for writing.490

Two aspects of the dossier of Cyrus and John find some confirmation and nuance, however, in his other writings. With regard to the relationship between lay and monastic piety, he comes out more strongly for the latter. In his Homily on the Annunciation he has the Virgin

490 He does take the opportunity in several homilies, however, to assert orthodox dogma in highly technical Christological language; this is especially so in the opening and conclusion of his Homily on the Annunciation (PG 87c: 3217-3288).
Mary, fearing that the Archangel’s tidings portend her being deprived of virginity, explain that the gift of that state far surpasses even honorable marriage. Likewise, in the *Homily on St John the Forerunner*, John is superior to the Old Testament hero Joseph inasmuch as virginity surpasses marital chastity. But then again in his *Homily on the Hypapante* he allegorically interprets the pigeon and turtle dove sacrificed at the purification ceremony for the Virgin and the 40-day old Christ as representative of the solitary and communal life.

The way of life that is desert-dwelling and solitary and free of the turbulence of mundane affairs is good, that way of life which allows one to attend to God as much as possible and be joined to him at greater leisure, without being attracted by anything else and dragged down into worldly distractions. God can be detected saying this to such people in the psalmic melodies, “Be still and know that I am God” (Ps. 45:11), since he always loves to appear to those who leave themselves free to attend to him single-mindedly, and to grant to them knowledge of his own illuminating holiness. And likewise good is the way of life that is calm and sociable and full of mutual affection, by which one may be able to accomplish works of the utmost compassionate mercy to one’s neighbor. Also good is the philanthropy naturally joined to this, which produces great resemblance to God.

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491 PG 87c:3260.
492 PG 87c: 3332d-3333a.
493 *Hom.Hypar. 21*: Καλον δὲ καὶ τὸ ἐρημικὸν καὶ μονότροπον καὶ σάλου πραγμάτων ἔλευθερον καὶ θεῷ προσανέχειν ὡς δύναμις, καὶ σχολιαστέρως συνάπτεσθαι ὑπ’ οὔδὲνς παντελῶς ἄνθρωποι καὶ εἰς περισσοτέρως κοσμικοὺς κατασπατώμενον. Οἶκα καὶ λέγων ἐν μελῳδίαις πεφώραται, «σχολάζατε καὶ γνώτε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμὶ θεὸς», ὡς τοῖς αὐτῶ μονοτρόποις σχολάζοντων ἂν̄ φιλῶν ἐμφανίζεσθαι καὶ γνώσαν χαρίζεσθαι τῆς αὐτοῦ φωτιστικῆς ἀγορίτης. Καλον δὲ ὁμιλίως ἐστὶ καὶ τὸ ἡμερον καὶ κοινωνικόν καὶ φιλαλλήλων, δι’ οὗ τις κατορθόσαι δυνήσεται καὶ τὸν πρὸς τὸν πέλας συμπαθέσσατον ἔλεον, καὶ τὸ τούτῳ φυσικῶς συνημμένον φιλάνθρωπον, ὃπερ μεγάλη πρὸς θεόν ἀφομοίωσις πέρυκεν. I thank John Duffy for making the draft of his critical edition of the Greek text of this sermon available to me; PG 87c: 3287–3302 gives only a Latin translation.
At first glance and with reference to the terminology alone, this could refer to a difference *within* monasticism, i.e. between the life of hermits and that of coenobites. But given the context of the sermon, preached by the patriarch on a great feast, there can be little doubt that he is contrasting monastic with married life. It is notable in this regard that the defining virtue of the latter is mercy and love for one’s fellow man, terms which would have suggested almsgiving to his hearers. In the next paragraph he re-interprets the two species of birds again, as symbolizing Christ’s two natures and also the double constitution of human beings as both soul and body, concluding that we must must practice virtue in both if our sacrifice is to be acceptable to God. Although he does not make an explicit connection between these latter two theological and anthropological allegories and the previous ecclesiological one, a certain continuity suggests itself, one which is also found in later seventh-century writers such as Anastasius of Sinai.

Furthermore, Sophronius seems to hint at virginity as the virtue of spiritual and not necessarily just bodily purity in his famous *Homily on the Nativity*: “God is born of a Virgin and goes forth; and who will not be made divine today, and would not hasten to eagerly embrace the purity of virginity and chastity, in order to draw closer to God?” He could not have been exhorting his audience, which would have been predominantly lay, to literal virginity. The juxtaposition of virginity with deification indicates Sophronius’s underlying hope for all: that they would attain to likeness with God.

As we have seen in this chapter, he grounded the process of becoming like God in a detailed knowledge of lay piety, with its relics and oils, its saints and shrines, its confessional confusions and doubts and daily struggles. Although Sophronius preached orthodox doctrine

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495 This appreciation of the techniques of piety is evident in his *Anacreontics* as well, where Sophronius describes his own enjoyment of pilgrimage to the shrines of the Holy Land.
without compromise, his instruction also contained a pastoral sensitivity to the difficulties of applying it. In this he resembles his superior, the unsophisticated but sympathetic patriarch John of Alexandria. He also balances the account of that figure in the *Life* written by Leontius, showing us less of the ideal shepherd and more of the boisterous flock.
6. Desert and City: Palestinian monastic texts and the laity in the early seventh century

Background and Sources

This chapter examines a dossier of Chalcedonian monastic texts from the early seventh century, originating in a Palestinian milieu but shedding light on a wide geographical area. In addition to abundant evidence for day-to-day religious practice of monks and laypeople, each source presents a slightly different point of view on the nature of monasticism and its relationship to the laity. The five major sources under examination are the *Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschus (the mentor and companion of Sophronius), the *Pandect* by Antiochus of Mar Saba, the *Life of George of Choziba* by Anthony of Choziba, and the early portion of the dossier of Anastasius the Persian, comprising his anonymous *Life and Martyrdom*, an account of the translation of his relic, and various miracle stories. The authors of these texts were Palestinian monks (by profession, not necessarily by origin), and the region figures more or less prominently in these writings. But they also range further abroad, providing us with evidence for large stretches of the late Roman Empire and beyond, from Carthage and Rome in the west to Nisibis and Bethsaloe on the Euphrates in the east.

The *Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschus is the prize exhibit in this rich dossier. It is a collection of edifying tales, a version of the genre of *paterika* already discussed with relation to John the Almsgiver, and is prominent as one of the largest and most important of these collections from late antiquity.496 The purpose of these collections was to record the exemplary

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496 John Wortley, *The Spiritual Meadow* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), in “Translator’s Note,” pp. ix–x, identifies seven great early collections. In order of original late antique publication, these are *History of the Monks of Egypt*, the *Lausiac History* by Palladius of Helenopolis, the Systematic version of the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, the Alphabetical version of the same, the *Tales of Daniel of Scetis*, the *Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschus, and the *Tales of Anastasius of Sinai*: Wortley, “Translator’s Note,” in *The Spiritual Meadow*, ix–x.
holiness and profound wisdom of great monks and nuns before the passing of time buried their memory, and thereby to provide a permanent criterion and inspiration to younger generations of ascetic strivers.\textsuperscript{497} Initially the ascetic audience was primarily monastics, but soon the reading of paterika became a favorite spiritual exercise of laypeople as well. The compositional methods of these texts, inasmuch as they were ascetic, were not aimed at providing some kind of disinterested historical record of early monasticism, but at capturing words and actions that would pierce their audience to the heart, generating the salutary feeling of compunction that spurred on the believer in his or her daily struggle.\textsuperscript{498}

Because of this purpose of education, both the initial recorders of the anecdotes and the later scribes who transmitted them were not particularly careful about provenance or word-for-word transmission. Although eyewitness accounts were prized, and their accuracy sometimes guaranteed by chains of transmission, it was also the case that interesting or wondrous stories were accepted by the original collectors simply for their edifying or marvelous character. Later compilers and scribes also felt free to copy only those stories from the original collection that they thought fit, to add other ones from other sources, and to edit them to suit their purposes.\textsuperscript{499} Combined with the large number of versions and manuscripts of these popular works, the result is that it is often very difficult for scholars to edit their way back to an Ur-text. A critical edition of the Spiritual Meadow has long been in preparation, but until it appears, we must rely on the edition in Migne’s Patrologia Græca, cautiously consulting the supplements edited by Nissen,

\textsuperscript{498} Chadwick, “John Moschus and his friend Sophronius,” 48–49.
\textsuperscript{499} Cf. Chadwick, “John Moschus and his friend Sophronius,” 46.
Mioni, and Pattenden while also referring to excerpts preserved only in the great middle-
Byzantine monastic florilegium, the *Evergetinos*.\(^{500}\)

Cautious optimism about this approach has been the rule for scholars up to now, since the
*Spiritual Meadow* is too rich a source to be overlooked. Apart from issues of transmission, the
very genre of *paterika*, with their incidental and heterogeneous character, can make it difficult to
try to draw out of them a structure and argument. Yet they tend to have a certain tone and
attitude that can be apprehended through careful reading and comparison with other sources.
Especially for our purpose here of delineating the practices of lay piety and the mentality that
informed them, the anecdotal character of the *Spiritual Meadow* is a strength rather than a
weakness. The dizzying number and variety of stories and sayings contained therein offers a
panorama of religious practice throughout the Mediterranean, across the whole spectrum of
social and religious statuses.\(^{501}\)

John Moschus did not, of course, simply record every story he happened to come by. His
monastic experience and theological views established criteria for deciding what to include. He
had a high regard for the monastic life, but also made room for the holiness of laypeople (often
hidden by their unassuming worldly occupations), and above all feats of asceticism, he insisted

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\(^{500}\) The standard text is in PG 87c: 2851–3116. Additional tales, some of which probably belong to the
original and others of which probably do not, were published in the following: Theodor Nissen, “Unbekannte
Giovanni Mosco,” *OCP* 17 (1951): 83–94; Philip Pattenden, “The text of the *Pratum Spirituale,*” *JTS* n.s. 26
(1975): 49–54. Hereafter cited as *Pratum*, using the numbering of Wortley, *Spiritual Meadow*, and if one of the
supplements also giving the number in the edition as Mioni x, Nissen y, etc. For the clearest overview of the
state of the text and some of the previous *paterika* which Moschus used, see Chadwick, “John Moschus,” 41–
49. He states that “No Syriac version of Moschus seems to have been made,” attributing this lack to the anti-
Monophysite tone of the work (45–46). But a Syriac Melkite codex of ascetical writings contained extensive
excerpts from the *Spiritual Meadow* (*olim Hieremann 500/2*). It was unfortunately destroyed by Allied
bombing in World War II but a detailed catalogue entry remains: see Anton Baumstark, “Codex Syriacus I,”
it “als erste bekannt werdende Probe einer Übersetzung auch dieses asketen-geschichtlichen Werkes ins
Syrische von höchster Bedeutung ...” I thank Grigory Kessel for providing this information.

\(^{501}\) For an early essay showing the wealth of cultural history to be found in the *Spiritual Meadow*, see
Norman Baynes, “The *Pratum Spirituale,*” in *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays*, 261–70.
on theological correctness in line with the Chalcedonian faith. John’s emphases were shaped by his particular experience of ascetical life. His monastic formation was in Palestine, the bastion of eastern Chalcedonian orthodoxy, from a young age. But he tended to move around for reasons of pilgrimage to holy places and holy people and perhaps also to reap the spiritual fruits of \textit{xeniteia}, wandering as a stranger for the sake of Christ.\footnote{502} This tendency to wander was boosted by the dangers of the Persian invasions of Palestine, Syria, and then Egypt. It was in the course of these travels, over many years, that he collected the anecdotes that form the \textit{Spiritual Meadow}. At some point along the way he acquired as a companion and protegé Sophronius the Sophist, whom we have already encountered in the previous chapter. He figures in quite a few of the stories, and as regards their theological tenor, his learning and apologetical acumen might have reinforced Moschus’ existing predilection for Chalcedonian orthodoxy. It is quite possible that Sophronius was entrusted with the editing of the \textit{Spiritual Meadow} as Moschus prepared for his death, which most likely occurred in 634.\footnote{503}

Our second Palestinian author is Antiochus, a monk of Mar Saba, the famous monastery founded in sixth century in the Judaean desert and still inhabited today. Antiochus was the author of the \textit{Pandect}, a series of 130 discourses, each on a particular moral vice or virtues, with the whole prefaced by a letter to an abbot Eustathius and concluded by a lengthy penitential prayer

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{503} The other possible date is 619. The ambivalence arises out of the stated date in the “Prologue” to the \textit{Spiritual Meadow}, placing his death in the eighth indiction, which could fall in either of these years. Christoph von Schönborn, \textit{Sophrone de Jérusalem: Vie monastique et confession dogmatique} (Paris: Beauchesne, 1972), 70ff. accepts the 619 date uncritically. But Chadwick, “John Moschus and his friend Sophronius,” 50–54, argues convincingly for the later date, and more recent work has added support for this case: see the summary in Philip Booth, \textit{Crisis of Empire: Doctrine and Dissent at the End of Late Antiquity} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 231–32. The latter’s argument uses the Syriac \textit{Life of Maximus the Confessor} to tie all three figures, Moschus, Sophronius, and Maximus together in an ascetical circle with a common theological program (esp. on pp. 142–55). The logic of their movements as suggested by this reconstruction adds further support to the 634 date, but the reliability of the Syriac \textit{Life of Maximus} is still disputed.
\end{itemize}
composed by Antiochus himself.\textsuperscript{504} A biographical notice that follows the text in one family of the manuscripts gives further information.\textsuperscript{505} The addressee of the prefatory epistle, Eustathius, was abbot of a monastery named Attalinê, in the city Ancyra of Galatia. Due to the Persian invasion, he and his monks had been forced to flee their monastery and wander about, suffering from the physical afflictions of war and exile but also from the lack of books. He wrote to Antiochus asking him to compose a digest of the Scriptures, containing all that was edifying therein, as a vade mecum for the dispersed monks of Attalinê. In the letter Antiochus also included a description of his own travails along with his brethren of the monastery of Mar Saba in the wake of the Persian invasion of Palestine and related depredations by Arab raiders.\textsuperscript{506} At the time of the writing of the epistle, in 629 or 630, all was well at Mar Saba and the other monasteries of Judaea.\textsuperscript{507} The aforementioned biographical notice found in some manuscripts of

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\textsuperscript{504} Epistle to Eustathius (CPG 7842) in PG 89: 1421–28, Pandect (CPG 7843) in PG 89: 1428–1849, Prayer of Confession (CPG 7844) in PG 89: 1849–1856. The title Pandectes Scripturæ Divinitus Inspiratae is given in the PG edition (PG 89: 1413–1856) which reprints the Greek edition of 1624 by Fronton de Duc. It is also given in Greek in Πανδέκτης τῶν θεοπνεύστων ἁγίων Γραφῶν, edited by Nektarios Kephalas (Athens: Orthodoxos Kypselē, 1991; orig. published 1905). Kephalas was the retired Metropolitan of Libyan Pentapolis and at the time director of the Rizarios Seminary in Athens; soon after his death he was canonized as St Nektarios of Aegina, and is one of the most popular saints of modern Greece, beloved for his humility and his wonder-working. He seems to have only consulted the PG edition but emended it heavily based on conjecture and by consulting the facing Latin translation of Godfrey Tillman (1543) and the original text of the quoted scriptural and patristic passages. For an overview of Antiochus and his work in the context of Mar Saba, see Siméon Vaillé, "Les écrivains de Mar Saba," EO 2 (1898): 8–9.

\textsuperscript{505} A critical edition of this single-paragraph notice, with discussion of the manuscripts that contain it, is given by François Nau, "Note sur les MSS. de Paris qui renferment la notice Biographique d'Antiochus moine de S.-Sabra," ROA 11 (1906): 327–30. He also argues that the notice given at PG 89: 1419–1422, based on Coislin. 117, is actually attached to a work by Nikon of the Black Mountain; in any case this latter notice does not contain any historical information about Antiochus.

\textsuperscript{506} He and his abbot Nicomedes and most of the monks had fled to the province of Arabia at the threat of the Saracen depredations that troubled Palestine in the wake of the Persian invasion of that region and the sack of Jerusalem in 614. They returned to bury those who had stayed behind and were slain by the raiders, but they remained only two months before fleeing at the threat of another Arab attack. They then stayed at the monastery of Abba Anastasius closer to Jerusalem for two years. At the entropy of the patriarchal locum tenens Modestus, Antiochus and some of the other monks returned to their home to rebuild it, while others remained behind at the Monastery of Anastasius under the leadership of the priest Justin, who became their abbot.

\textsuperscript{507} Booth, Crisis of Empire, 204, dating it based on Antiochus’s referring to the Persian scourge in the past tense and voicing his concern about the possibility of the Syrian monophysite leader Athanasius the Camel-Driver being recognized officially by the emperor as patriarch of Antioch, related to the doctrinal discussions about monenergism held at that time.
the work adds the information that Antiochus himself was from a Galatian town called Medosaga, near Ancyra, and that he made his monastic renunciation at the aforementioned monastery of Attalinê before moving to Mar Saba.\footnote{Nau, “Note sur les MSS. de Paris,” 329. The notice concludes that once he settled at Mar Saba he remained there the rest of his life. This is not strictly accurate, given the vicissitudes that Antiochus recounts in the prefatory epistle. Perhaps this inexactitude can be overlooked because of the temporary nature of his absence, but it also might point to the unreliability of the notice itself and thus cast doubt on the information about Antiochus’ own natural and monastic origins. There is no mention of them in his own writings, and no direct indication of spiritual kinship with Eustathius. He addresses him as “honorable father” but this may simply be an honorific, acknowledging his status as abbot (\textit{abbas} = father) of the Monastery of Attalinê. The notice is not, however, implausible; there is evidence for a similar trajectory from Galatia to Judea in the contemporary \textit{Life of Theodore of Sykeon}, a monk from a village near Ancyra, who received his monastic tonsure at the monastery of Choziba near Jericho (see below) and later tried to settle at Mar Saba; one of his disciples succeeded in doing so: c. 47 and 63, edited by André-Jean Festugièrè, \textit{Vie de Théodore de Sykéon} (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1970). Antiochus’ name may also point to Galatian origins, since the martyr Antiochus was a popular local saint (with his brother Plato; a side chapel at the main pilgrimage church at Theodore’s monastery was named for the pair, c. 40; cf. \textit{Synaxarium CP} July 16, no. 2). Moreover, the notice’s specific mention of the name of his home village and his home monastery indicates that it draws on reliable information.}

The \textit{Pandect} itself is expressly a compendium of the teachings of the Bible, mostly of an ethical character. Each chapter deals with a particular topic, addressing it primarily through patristic quotations, almost always unattributed, followed by a collection of supporting scriptural texts, whose application to the topic at hand sometimes seems rather strained. It is not exactly a florilegium, given Antiochus’ active role in paraphrasing and adapting his texts, as pointed out by Bardy.\footnote{Gustave Bardy, “Antiochus.” \textit{DSp} 1 (1936), 701–2.} The patristic sources include both pre-Nicene Fathers—Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, Hermas of Rome, Irenaeus of Lyons, the pseudo-Clementine \textit{Epistles to Virgins}—and post-Nicene ascetical authors, including Evagrius of Pontus, Diadochus of Photice and John of Carpathus.\footnote{See the summary of previous work in Krausmüller, “Dating John of Carpathus to the 6\textsuperscript{th} century. A textual parallel between his \textit{Capita hortatoria} and the \textit{Pandectes} of Antiochus of St. Sabas,” \textit{Gouden Hoorn} 7, no. 1 (1999): 8–9.} Some have seen this source base as an indication of the contemporary library holdings of Mar Saba, although the assumption is problematic given the recent calamities.
the monastery had faced. In any case, it provides us with further evidence of how authors at the end of late antiquity drew on the developing patristic canon and interpreted it for their own didactic purposes.

In the Pandect Antiochus primarily speaks to the monastic readership for which the work was requested, but he also sought to make it useful to a wider audience. At certain points he hints at oral delivery; perhaps Antiochus practiced it on his fellow Sabaites or other locals before sending off the polished form to the distant Galatians. In the course of the work, Antiochus provides evidence for the ubiquity of interactions between monks and laypeople, both of a spiritual, didactical and of a material, economic kind, which we will discuss in detail below.

The Life of George of Choziba was composed in the same period as the Pandect and in the same region, and is marked by the same combination of normal interaction with laypeople and the more ominous threat of barbarian depredations. It was written by George’s disciple Anthony in 630, after his master had passed away. The monastery of Choziba, established as a coenobium around 480 after a succession of anchorites had occupied the space, was somewhat unique in the Judaean desert due to its emphasis on hospitality, to both monks and laypeople,


512 This is explained at Pand. 66 (Kephalas 158–159), in the course of an apology to Eustathius for the elementary ethical nature of much of the material up to that point, which, Antiochus says, is not necessary for the abbot and his monks, but for a vulgar audience.

513 This oral dimension is indicated by the designation of the chapters as homiliai as well as by an expression in the midst of one of the chapters: “So yesterday, beloved, we discoursed (διέλέχθημεν) about forgiving one’s neighbor; today we remind you not only to forgive them, but even to pray for them ...” (Pand. 72 [Kephalas 170]). Perhaps Antiochus did not actually deliver each chapter himself, but wrote as if it were meant to be read, e.g. as a regular public monastic catechism, such as Pachomius and his successors provided to their community in the fourth century, and Theodore did to his Stoudites in the early ninth.

male and female. It was close to the road to Jericho, and the duties of its monks included providing refreshment to travelers on that route. The influx of pilgrims in turn provided the monastery with much of its material support.\textsuperscript{515} The high volume of traffic provides the background for the extensive interactions with laypeople, by George and the rest of the Chozebites, which are described by Anthony at length. The \textit{Life} is complemented in this respect by a short appendix by the same Anthony, on \textit{The Miracles of the Most Holy Theotokos at Choziba}, which sheds light on the origins and growth of the monastery.\textsuperscript{516} Apart from such narrative details, Anthony records long portions of the oral teaching of George. A major theme is loving concord and humility that avoids judging, not only between monastic brethren but from monks toward laypeople, and even from Christians toward non-Christians. This explicit outward orientation makes the text a valuable source for a consciousness, among certain monks, of the dangers of exaltation of monasticism to the detriment of lay piety.\textsuperscript{517}

The dossier of Anastasius the Persian is rooted in the same Judaean context but sprawls outward.\textsuperscript{518} Anastasius, whose Persian name was Mazgundat, was a Persian aristocrat from a Magian family, serving in the cavalry at Dastagerd, when that locale witnessed the captivity of the True Cross along with a train of captives from Jerusalem in the wake of the Persian sack of 614. He was moved to embrace the Christian faith and deserted the army, eventually making his

\textsuperscript{515} This is pointed out by David Olster, “The Construction of a Byzantine Saint: George of Choziba, Holiness, and the Pilgrimage Trade in Seventh-Century Palestine,” \textit{GOTR} 38 (1993): 309–22, who sees the \textit{Life} by Anthony largely as an attempt to vindicate both the general power of Christ response to the Persian invasions and the relics of the ascetic founders of Choziba, through the holiness of George.


\textsuperscript{517} For a general overview of the \textit{Life} and the \textit{Miracles} and their context, see Tim Vivian and Apostolos N. Athanassakis, \textit{The Life of Saint George of Choziba and the Miracles of the Most Holy Mother of God at Choziba} (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1994), 1–31.

way to Jerusalem where he was baptized at a monastery and was soon tonsured, under the Greek Christian name Anastasius, at the monastery of Abba Anastasius close by Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{519} But ascetic rigor did not satisfy Anastasius’ zeal in his new faith, and he longed for martyrdom. After a period of ascetic preparation and a vision inciting him to realize his goal, he sought and received the blessing of his abbot and the senior monks to seek martyrdom. He traveled to Caesarea Maritima, headquarters of the Persian occupying forces in Palestine, and actively provoked his arrest by the authorities. Eventually he was sent to the shah Chosroes himself in Mesopotamia, back in Dastagerd where his Christian journey had begun, and executed as an apostate from Zoroastrianism.\textsuperscript{520} Anastasius was buried at a local monastery by Christian Persian monks, who refused to relinquish the precious relic. A monk from his home monastery who had accompanied him on his last journey then contrived to steal (or recover) Anastasius’ body, and translate it back to their home monastery, distributing portions of it to pious clergy and laity along the long route back. Eventually portions of these relics reached even Constantinople and Rome.

The long account of Anastasius’ life before his arrest and his subsequent trials and martyrdom was written by a monk of his home monastery, who could draw on the eye-witness testimonies of monks who had accompanied Anastasius in various stages of his contest, as well as of Christian visitors from Persia who came to the monastery to recount more details of the final events there.\textsuperscript{521} The account of the translation and the accompanying miracles forms an

\textsuperscript{519} This cloister served as the temporary refuge of the Sabaïte monks, including Antiochus the author of the \textit{Pandect}, in the face of the Saracen threat. Anastasius became part of the group that remained under the abbacy of Justin, after Antiochus and company returned to Mar Saba.

\textsuperscript{520} The Persian shahs tended to only persecute upper-class apostates from the official religion, such as Anastasius was. A further charge was his desertion from the army, but according to the account he could have avoided prosecution for this if he returned to his original faith.

\textsuperscript{521} This author was thought by some to be Antiochus of Mar Saba himself, due to a misunderstanding resulting from a mistake in the text of Antiochus’ \textit{Epistle to Eustathius} prefacing the \textit{Pandect}. Flusin shows this supposition to be false, in \textit{Saint Anastase le Perse}, vol. 2, 185–90.
appendix to the *Acts* by the same author. These initial hagiographical writings were commissioned by Modestus, patriarch of Jerusalem himself, according to an addition in the Latin translation of the *Acts*. Another collection of miracles from various places, including Seleucia-Ctesiphon, Caesarea Maritima, and Abydos, was redacted in Constantinople by a different author at a slightly later date, no later than the early 630s, judging from the absence of references to the Islamic invasions. The *Acts* were soon rendered in a more elevated form by George of Pisidia in an *Encomium* and in successive versions up through the tenth century. The long account of the exorcism of a young nun in Rome through the relic of Anastasius kept at a Greek monastery there, from the early eighth century, is not considered in the present study.

The Anastasian dossier gives us a rare opportunity to witness the making of a saint and his cult in rapid succession. Laypeople and their relations to monks and monasticism play an important role throughout. On the one hand, Anastasius’ eagerness to take the habit exalts monasticism through its connection to his subsequent martyrdom. On the other, Christian laypeople, both Roman and Persian, aid and encourage him in his quest, while he in turn inspires them with faith and zeal. In the case of the Roman Christians, this intervention is particularly needed, reviving their flagging spirits in the wake of the despondency wrought by the success of Persian arms. After Anastasius’ death, the accounts of the miracles wrought by his relics provide a wealth of circumstantial details about lay attitudes and practices, regarding such varied components of piety as liturgy, fasting, patriotism, military patronage, confraternities, and more.

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523 Ibid. vol. 1, 111–12.
524 Flusin includes this stand-alone miracle account, which was written in Greek, in his dossier. For the further diffusion of the cult of Anastasius in the West, see Carmela Vircillo Franklin, *The Latin Dossier of Anastasius the Persian: Hagiographic Translations and Transformations* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute for Mediaeval Studies, 2004).
Conversion from lay to monastic life

All of these texts were written by monks and most of them are about monks. So in order to properly appreciate what they can tell us about laypeople, we must first consider how they view their main subject, the monastic life. Monasticism is exalted by all of the texts, but in different ways and to different degrees. This is performed in two ways: firstly, by portraying the conversion to monastic life of the protagonists or of other characters, and secondly, by explicit exhortations to adopt monasticism in preference to life in the world. The stories of conversion often state the person’s reasons, or provide a gloss, so we will begin by surveying these cases and then proceed to a more detailed examination of their motives and of motives expressed in more general exhortations recorded in our texts.

Some eagerly and deliberately choose to don the monastic habit. Such a one was George of Choziba, whose homeland was Cyprus. Despite pressure from his uncle, his guardian since he had been orphaned, he resisted marriage, “as he found worldly affairs disagreeable and furthermore as he did not wish to have relations with a wife.” George’s disinclination toward life in the world, particularly sex, may have been strengthened by the fact that he was being pushed into marrying his own cousin (his uncle’s daughter).

More positive incitements to monasticism may have been the example of another uncle who was abbot of a nearby monastery to which George fled to avoid marriage, and also his older brother Heraclides, already a monk at the Lavra of Kalamon near Jericho, whom George eventually joined. By his flight he presumably abandoned his property, which had been held in trust by his overbearing uncle. Thus at a stroke...

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526 τοὺς κοσμικῶς ἀπαρεσκόμενος, ἔτι δὲ καὶ μὴ βουλόμενος γυναικὶ προσομηλήσαι [sic] (Vit.Georg.Choz. 2).
527 The uncle was seeking to marry his daughter to George, i.e. cousin marriage. On the pressures toward close-kin marriages in early medieval Byzantium, see Patlagean, *Pauvreth économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance 4e–7e siècles* (Paris: Mouton, 1977), 118–28, esp. 123.
he liberated himself from the ties of marriage, family (at least insofar as it could exert worldly influences), and wealth.

Later in the *Life* we see others come to the monastic habit for different motives. One of these is a champion wrestler (*luctator*) from Constantinople named Epiphanius, who had become demon-possessed by resorting to magicians to defend him against other magicians hired by his opponents. When he visited Choziba during a pilgrimage in the Holy Land seeking healing, George counseled him to settle down there as a monk in order to repent for his sin of resorting to magicians. Epiphanius embraces this solution eagerly and becomes a model monk, going above and beyond the asceticism required by the coenobitic regimen of the monastery, although not being freed of the demon completely until his death.528

The *Spiritual Meadow* presents a wider spectrum of motives for monastic conversion. More often than not, outwardly mundane motives clothe a deep and heartfelt movement of compunction. Even a dichotomy between conversions as a result of miracles and more normal processes is inadvisable, given the mysterious workings of divine providence showcased in these edifying tales. But for the sake of organization we will proceed with a rough categorization into conversions arising from an already-present inclination toward renunciation, those brought about by some powerful, even miraculous experience, and those stemming from profound guilt for a sin or sins committed in the lay state.

Like George of Choziba, several of the monks portrayed in the *Spiritual Meadow* have a conscious or subconscious inclination toward monasticism. Often this is tied to the example of a holy man. Abba Palladius in Alexandria, when asked by Moschus and Sophronius how he had embraced the monastic life, told of the example of Saint David the Dendrite, a famous recluse in Palladius’ native Thessalonica. David’s cell was known to shine with a divine fire that left it

unconsumed. Palladius concludes: “I said to myself: ‘If God so glorifies his servants in this
world, how much more so in the world to come when He shines upon their face like the sun?’
This, my children, is why I embraced the monastic life.”

Sometimes the impression made by a holy man is less spectacular, but still powerful.
Abba Sergius was traveling once with a holy elder and they lost their way. By mistake they
stumbled onto the land of a farmer and trod on some of his seedlings. The exchange that
followed is worth quoting at length:

The farmer … began to upbraid us angrily in these words: ‘You are monks? You fear
God? If you had the fear of God before your eyes you would not have done this.’ At once
the holy elder said to us: ‘For the Lord’s sake, let nobody say anything,’ and he addressed
the farmer: ‘Well spoken, my child. If we had the fear of God, we would not be doing
these things.’ Again the farmer spoke angry and abusive words, to which the elder again
responded: ‘You speak the truth, child, when you say that if we were true monks we
would not have done this; but for the sake of the Lord, forgive us, for we have sinned.’
The farmer was astonished. He came and threw himself at the feet of the elder, saying: ‘I
have sinned, forgive me, and for the Lord’s sake, take me with you.’ […] And in truth he
followed along with us; and when he came here he received the monastic habit.

Interestingly, the farmer’s words showed a positive notion of monasticism in general, but his
anger only allowed him to see the negative effects of specific monks on his property. The

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529 Pratum 69 (Wortley 53).
530 Pratum 218 (Wortley 193–94).
humility and patience of the holy elder led him to fully embrace that positive idea by becoming a monk himself.⁵³¹

Sometimes there is no single catalyst, but monasticism develops out of a pious lay life as its logical conclusion. We read of two brothers living in Constantinople as laymen given to piety and much fasting, one of whom became a monk in Rhaïthou in Sinai and was visited by his still-lay brother. Then there is the instance of a pious young man who maintained his temperance and purity, never drank wine, and intended to renounce the world, but was initially prevented from doing so by his father who wished to involve him in the family business, as he was the oldest son in the family. He “endured it all in silence; everybody loved him for his piety and his moderation.”⁵³² Eventually his father repented on his deathbed for obstructing this pious desire and was reconciled to his son; the latter then became a recluse in the area, still maintaining relations with his brothers.⁵³³ Lastly, in the Thebaïd there was a pious layman named Paul who would attend the offices of the Catholic Church day and night:

When the spoudaioi, the philoponoi that were with him, saw him thus they said to him:

‘Appa Paul, you have neither parents nor do you wish to take a wife; why don’t you become a monk?’ He said to them, ‘You’re right; I’ll go and become a monk.’⁵³⁴

In this case, Paul is a member of a confraternity of devout laypeople, such as was common in late antiquity.⁵³⁵ Even while a layman he is honored with the title “Appa,” which was not necessarily

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⁵³¹ In another case an anchorite asked some sailors who passed by to help him bury his deceased companion; one of the sailors was so impressed by the anchorite’s virtue that he stayed on as his monastic disciple: Pratum 91 (Wortley 73–74).
⁵³² Pratum 202 (Wortley 180).
⁵³³ Ibid. (Wortley 181).
⁵³⁴ Pratum 226 [Nissen 7]. The quotation above is my translation, since Wortley, 202 does not notice that spoudaioi and philoponoi are technical terms and translates them as “the diligent, hard-working people.” I mentioned the “Catholic Church” above with capitals, because the phrase δς ήκολούθει τη άγια του θεου καθολικε έκκλησια ήμερας και νυκτός seems to have a doctrinal connotation, rather than specifying that he attended the local cathedral church. But this is not certain.
reserved for monks.\textsuperscript{536} His lay brethren were presumably themselves restrained from monasticism by the family responsibilities of which, they observed, he was free.

Other stories tell of people becoming monks in response to deliverance from certain death: a soldier stationed in North Africa who had been miraculously delivered by St Thecla from a rout of his unity by the Moors; a young man rescued by a monk from human sacrifice at the hand of Saracens, who became the disciple of his rescuer; a man falsely accused for a crime and acquitted at the last moment as he was about to be executed by hanging; a layman healed of disease by a stylite and staying on, with his father and brother, as monks around the pillar.\textsuperscript{537}

In two instances that are hard to place, laypeople involved in miracles are remitted to monasteries by the local bishop. The first involves children who play at the Liturgy out in the countryside near Apameia in Syria, unwittingly drawing down heavenly fire on their apparent Eucharistic offering. When the bishop learns of it he sends them to a monastery.\textsuperscript{538} The second concerns a Jewish boy in Constantinople who mistakenly consumed the Eucharist and was punished by his father, a glass-blower, by being cast into the shop’s furnace, but miraculously survived unscathed. The father is executed by imperial order, whereas the boy and his mother convert, with the first made a lector and the second a nun.\textsuperscript{539}

Monastic conversion as a form of repentance for grievous sins appears in many different contexts. Some of these involve disreputable professions. A prostitute named Mary, traveling


\textsuperscript{536} For the use of “apa” to refer to laypeople as well as clergy, in contrast to “abba” which was reserved for monks, see Jennifer Westerfeld, “A Coptic Letter Referring to the Bishop of Babylon,” \textit{BASP} 50 (2013): 172, n. 2.

\textsuperscript{537} \textit{Pratum} 20 (Wortley, 14); \textit{Pratum} 155 (Wortley, 129); \textit{Pratum} 72 (Wortley, 55); \textit{Pratum} 28 (Wortley, 20). In the latter case, the father of the healed man is appointed steward of the monastery’s granary.

\textsuperscript{538} \textit{Pratum} 196 (Wortley 172–74).

\textsuperscript{539} \textit{Pratum} 243 (Wortley 227–29).
with three young men, crossed paths with two monks at an inn in Cilicia and was drawn to them by their reading the Gospel out loud; the monks at first tried to drive her away, but when they saw in her real contrition, they brought her to a convent, where she spent many years of worthy asceticism. Another story involves an actor (mimos) in Tarsus and his two “girlfriends” (philas). He went into church one day and providentially heard a Gospel reading including the verse “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” This struck him with compunction, so that he resolved to “renounce the world and become a monk.” He planned to leave his property to his girlfriends, but they were caught up in his enthusiasm and resolved to accompany him in repentance as they had in sin. The sequel shows us the mechanism of renunciation:

The actor immediately shut himself up in one of the towers of the walls of the city. The women sold their property and gave the proceeds to the poor, then they too received the monastic habit. After that they made a cell for themselves near the tower and shut themselves up in it.

Moschus encountered these repentant ascetics himself, and commented that “The man is very compassionate, very forgiving and humble-minded.”

Another unsavory practice that monastic repentance could expiate was grave-robbing. Moschus and Sophronius heard from an abbot at Antioch of a young man who had come to him sobbing and confessed that he had been in the process of robbing a young woman’s grave when her corpse suddenly came to life, grabbed hold of him, lectured him on his evil ways, and threatened to keep him in the tomb forever unless he promised to “immediately and without delay, go renounce the world and become a monk—so that you can repent of your misdeeds and

540 Pratum 31 (Wortley 22). Moschus writes that he heard the story from her own mouth.
541 Pratum 32 (Wortley 23).
live in the service of Christ.” The abbot not only made him a monk but also immured him in a nearby cave, where he worked out his salvation as a recluse.\footnote{Pratum 78 (Wortley 63).}

Next there is the case of a monk from Rome named Abba Paul. He became a monk at the monastery of Saint Theodosius and served as a muleteer. Once one of his beasts trampled a child at an inn and killed it, without Paul’s knowledge. Although he was not directly involved, he still felt that he would stand as a murderer at the last judgment, so he fled into the wilderness and became an anchorite, until he received divine assurance that he was forgiven and returned to his monastery.\footnote{Pratum 101 (Wortley 81).} Paul was already a monk when this occurred, but the story is instructive for further degrees of penance within monasticism, involving greater renunciation and withdrawal from the world. Paul’s keenly felt contrition for a deed others may have brushed off as accidental might be related particularly to his monastic consciousness.

In the \textit{Spiritual Meadow} there are two stories of bandits becoming monks. One was captain of a band of robbers in the district of Hermopolis in Egypt who was suddenly struck by his conscience one day. When he came to seek reception at a monastery, the abbot rejected him as being too advanced in age to endure the austerity. The bandit then revealed his identity and threatened to bring his band to destroy the monastery and the monks unless he was accepted—a peculiar way to obtain a penance! He was duly inducted into the brotherhood through tonsure and clothing with the habit and excelled them all in both asceticism and humility.\footnote{Pratum 143 (Wortley 115–16). Although an angel revealed that his sins were forgiven and that he would now be able to work miracles, the former bandit could not believe that his numerous misdeeds had been absolved so quickly. He was punished for his unbelief by muteness, but he bargained with the angel to at least be able to speak and sing during the divine offices!} Another bandit, in Palestine, after nine years of exemplary monastic life, felt that all his bloody crimes had been forgiven except the murder of one infant, which haunted him day and night. So he
requested back his lay clothes and gave himself up to the local authorities, obtaining final absolution only through his blood. This same penance of blood for blood was paid by a certain Abba Poemen the Grazer. As a layman, working as a shepherd, he had neglected to restrain his dogs from attacking and devouring a stranger who was passing by. He attained great heights of sanctity in the Judaean desert and was on good terms with the local lions, but foreknew that he would be devoured by wild beasts due to his past sin, and his prediction was duly fulfilled.

In review, then, there were a range of motives for laypeople to embrace the monastic life. Firstly there is penance for some grievous sin, such as murder, brigandage, grave robbing, harlotry, resort to magic. This often entails some of the same kind of harsh mortifications that used to be imposed on penitents in the pre-Constantinian Church. It was, however, usually a voluntary penance undertaken by the sinner. In some cases it might have been the only hope for a criminal to forsake his lawless ways without surrendering himself to the authorities. A man might be able to hide in the anonymity of the monastic habit, although his conscience might eventually lead him to surrender himself anyway, as in the case of the penitent Palestinian brigand. In that story and several others, monastic asceticism only went part of the way toward purging the conscience, and a violent death expiated the remaining guilt. Yet even in such cases monasticism played an important part by preparing the penitent to pay the full price for his sins: with the benefit of monastic training he was able to accept his death humbly and peacefully rather than in fear and agony. In other cases where blood was not required by divine justice, the penance of monasticism was nevertheless accompanied by further trials: withdrawal to the deep desert in the case of Abba Paul, loss of his speech by the Egyptian brigand, continued demonic haunting by the ex-wrestler at Choziba.

545 Pratum 166 (Wortley 136–7).
546 Pratum 167 (Wortley 137).
Secondly, conversion may be a response to the experience of a miracle, such as a cure or rescue—or a supernatural rebuke of one’s sin, pointing back to the first motive, penance. Monastic conversion in response to a miracle might involve a vow, as in the case of the African soldier rescued by St Thecla, or the blind Theodore at the shrine of Abba Cyrus and John discussed in the previous chapter, while the presbyter of the same shrine, George, was offered as an oblate of sorts to the saints by his mother in return for his cure. Or it might be out of gratitude and awe toward a particular holy figure who effected a cure, such as in the case of Abba Cyril at the pillar of Julian the Stylite. This leads into the third category, the response to the perceived holiness of an exemplary monastic figure. This could be impressed upon the layperson in a miraculous way, as with Cyril and Julian just mentioned, or Palladius and David of Thessalonica; or simply by a faithful ethical witness to the Christian Gospel, as with the case of the irate farmer.

The two cases of people being remitted by others to monasteries as the result of miracles in the *Spiritual Meadow* should be considered as a special subset, overlapping to an extent with the penitent conversions. Such people were in a sense set apart, *anathema*, by their encounter with the overwhelming holiness of God in the respective miracles.\(^5\) Anathema, of course, can refer to a setting-apart from society in both a negative and a positive sense, for terrible sin or for particular holiness.\(^6\) The aforementioned oblation of George the presbyter at the shrine of Cyrus and John falls under this latter category as well: he was literally an anathema, an ex-voto. It is notable that the ones thus remitted are children or women, people who in Byzantine society

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\(^5\) It might be supposed that the children playing at the Eucharist were considered to be guilty of sacrilege, but this is not indicated in the text, and the innocent and probably pious playing of children was not generally frowned upon. This is confirmed by the following chapter, which relates the famous legend of Athanasius of Alexandria’s solemn administration of baptism to his playmates as a child, which was witnessed and subsequently confirmed by the archbishop Alexander (*Pratum* 196 [Wortley 174–76]).

\(^6\) Lampe, ἄναθημα (p. 102–3).
were generally subject to patriarchal authority.\textsuperscript{549} Thus the issue of their own choice in the matter does not seem to be considered very important. In the Jewish miracle in the \textit{Spiritual Meadow}—viewed sociologically, without regard to its actual historical veracity—such authority (very literally “Patriarchal” in this instance) stepped in necessarily, since the \textit{paterfamilias} had legally forfeited his rights both by virtue of his cruelty to his child and because he refused to follow his wife and the child in converting to Christianity. The social logic behind this legal procedure is evident. The mother and child, without the father to support them and furthermore cut off from their Jewish kin and communal support by virtue of their conversion, required a new Christian “family.” This was provided by monastic and clerical community (the latter similar to the western medieval system of cathedral canons), respectively.

This brings us to the familial element in monastic conversion. In some cases family members were an obstacle to renunciation; but often it was a decision undertaken together or in sequence, with mutual influences exercised by various members.\textsuperscript{550} In the \textit{Life of George of Choziba}, George’s elder brother Heraclides precedes him in monasticism and then acts as a guide and spiritual father for him.\textsuperscript{551} In the \textit{Spiritual Meadow} the layman cured by Julian the Stylite was accompanied on his journey and then joined in monastic renunciation by his father and brother: the pious family prayed together and therefore stayed together. Sometimes even impious families converted to monasticism together. Such was the rather “non-traditional”

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\item\textsuperscript{549} Patriarchal in general, not specifically with reference to the episcopal dignity of Patriarch—although in the Jewish miracle, it is indeed the Patriarch who is said to have made the decision to send the boy and his mother to a monastery. For the status of women in this period, see in general Joëlle Beaucamp, \textit{Le statut de la femme à Byzance (4e–7e siècle)}, 2 vols. (Paris: De Boccard, 1990–1992).
\item\textsuperscript{550} Alice-Mary Talbot, “The Byzantine Family and the Monastery,” \textit{DOP} 44 (1990): 119–129. Family opposition is, of course, a familiar trope in hagiography, though none the less real for that. But the phenomenon of family conversions to monasticism is also quite common in the sources, particularly from the late Byzantine period, when archival documents reveal small family monasteries that are otherwise not often noted in hagiographic and other traditional literary texts.
\item\textsuperscript{551} \textit{CV} 2.6–9 (Vivian and Athanassakis 39–42).
\end{itemize}
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family composed of the Tarsian actor and his two girlfriends.\footnote{The household they formed would certainly not have been recognized as legitimate by the Christianized Roman law of the age of Justinian, but the ménage-à-trois probably answered to real socio-economic needs and not simply to sexual whims. The women, in particular, would have found a degree of support and protection with the actor, a substitute for the social and economic privileges acquired through honorable marriage, which was probably not an option in their condition. On the instability and informality of marriage and cohabitation among the poorer classes in Byzantium, see Evelyne Patlagean, \textit{Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance 4e–7e siècles} (Paris: Mouton, 1977), 117. That disreputable women could be reformed and obtain advantageous marriages was not, however, completely impossible. In addition to the well-known rise of Theodora from the stage to the palace by marrying Justinian, there is the example of Maria, mother of the holy man Theodore of Sykeon. She conceived him in the course of plying her trade of prostitution at her family’s roadside in (a family of three women only, mother and two daughters, then Theodore and his sister as grandchildren), but later it became a respectable hotel with gourmet food, making the family moderately wealthy. Eventually Maria married a grandee from the nearby metropolis of Ancyra, who bore the formal dignity of protector (imperial guardsman). \textit{Life of Theodore of Sykeon} c. 3, 6, 25; cf. Carolyn L. Connor, \textit{Women of Byzantium} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 146–57.} To this enumeration of the cases of conversion in the \textit{Spiritual Meadow} we could add the mention of monastics whose entry into the monastic life is not described, but which implies some sort of common familial inclination to monasticism.\footnote{These include Amma Damiana, the mother of a monk-bishop who herself became a nun at some point in her life, as well as the mention of a father and son who are both monks, presumably in the same community \textit{Pratum} 127, 184 (Wortley 103, 154).}

\textit{Discourse in favor of monasticism}

In addition to concrete instances of people choosing to enter the monastic order, our sources contain many passages detailing the advantages of monasticism over life in the world. Those found in the \textit{Spiritual Meadow} are the most “raw” in the sense that they record actual conversations that Moschus and Sophronius held on this topic, even if they might be slightly edited for inclusion in the collection. The context of some of these conversations was Sophronius’ continuation in the lay state for quite a long time, even while traveling with the monk Moschus. In one passage Moschus mentioned to a distinguished elder near Alexandria that Sophronius wished to renounce the world, and asked for advice to both of them on what way of life they should adopt together. The elder congratulated Sophronius on his intention and then set
out for them a simple regimen of seclusion in a cell with prayer and inward recollection.\textsuperscript{554}

Another chapter recounts a mystical vision Sophronius experienced on the eve of his final profession: “I set out on my way and a company of young women danced before me saying: ‘Welcome Sophronios; Sophronios has been crowned!’” There has been some dispute about the true meaning of this brief anecdote, whether Sophronius is dying or being perfected through renouncing the world.\textsuperscript{555} I believe the latter meaning is correct, but would add that the connotations of death are not wholly accidental. By becoming a monk, Sophronius is imitating the martyrs, being perfected by dying to the world and thus receiving a heavenly crown.\textsuperscript{556} These two passages with reference to Sophronius do not actually explain the superiority of monasticism, but leave it to be inferred.\textsuperscript{557}

The exhortations of a certain Abba Marcellus at a lavra in Palestine are more explicit. In a series of memorable excerpts of his teaching recorded in the \textit{Spiritual Meadow}, two in particular emphasize the superiority of monasticism:

Believe me, children, when I say to you that it is a highly praiseworthy and a very glorious thing, a kingdom in itself, for a man to take vows and become a monk, for

\textsuperscript{554} \textit{Pratum} 110 (Wortley, 91).
\textsuperscript{555} \textit{Pratum} 102 (Wortley, 82). The meaning of this passage has been much disputed, hinging on the translation of the word μέλλοντος τελειοῦσθαι which Wortley translated “was about to make his final profession,” following the argument of Chadwick, “John Moschus and his friend Sophronius,” \textit{57} n. 1. The alternative is that it means “was about to die,” which would mean that Sophronius the Sophist had pre-deceased John Moschus and thus could not be identical with Sophronius of Jerusalem. Ihor Ševčenko, “II. Storia letteraria,” in \textit{La Civiltà bizantina dal IV al IX secolo: Aspetti e problemi} (Bari: Centro di studi bizantini, 1977), supports this reading. The view of so eminent a philologist should not be brushed aside lightly, but I feel that he quibbles too much by insisting that the passive verbal form τελειοῦσθαι is otherwise unattested with the monastic meaning so early in Byzantine literature; this might simply be one of the first uses, and itself perhaps influential for later usage given the popularity of the text. Thus I follow Chadwick and Wortley here.

\textsuperscript{556} Furthermore, the vision of divine maidens can be paralleled in the dream of John the Almsgiver mentioned in Ch. 4 of the present study, as well as the philosophical (i.e. Christian ascetical) conversion of Gregory of Nazianzus, noted in the same place; these all echo the famous ancient tale of “Heracles at the Crossroads.”

\textsuperscript{557} Similarly, another story uses, in passing, the phrase “Lord ... you who have counted me worthy to embrace this way of life”; \textit{Pratum} 212 (Wortley, 191).
intelligible things are more honourable than sensible ones. Therefore, great is the disgrace and the dishonour of a monk who lays aside his habit, even if it be to become the emperor. […] Brethren, let us leave marriage and the raising of children to those whose eyes are towards earth, who long for the things of the present and take no thought for that which is to come; who do not make time for the imitation of the eternal blessings, and are unable to disentangle themselves from the ephemera of this world … Let us make haste to depart from a carnal life, even as Israel hurried to escape from slavery in Egypt … We have splendid and sweet rewards of God ahead of us, brethren, in exchange for the bitter delights of this world. 558

Abba Menas, abbot of the monastery of Abba Severian in Palestine, has a slightly different emphasis:

Those of every age ought to repent, both young men and old, since they will enjoy eternal life with praise and much glory; the young men because in the full force of desire they have bent their necks beneath the yoke, the old men because they have been able to alter the bad tendencies to which they had become habituated in the course of many years. 559

The point of the first quotation is clear: the monastic life is far preferable to the lay married state, which is characterized by sensual, earthly, ephemeral, and ultimately bitter delights. The second is more vague: monasticism is not referred to explicitly, but only repentance. In context—a discourse of the abbot Menas to his own monks or only to Moschus and Sophronius (the specific audience is unclear, but is surely monastic)—the reference to a “yoke” would more naturally

558 Pratum 152 (Wortley 126–27, emended in several places by me).
559 Pratum 159: Ἡλικία πᾶσα ὀφείλει μετανοεῖν νεωτέρων τε καὶ γερόντων, ὡς ζωῆς αἰωνίου ἀπολαύειν μετὰ ἐπαινοῦ καὶ δόξης πολλῆς μέλουσα· οἱ μὲν νέοι, ὅτι ἐν ἁμαρτίᾳ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας τὸν ἐαυτῶν αὐχένα ὑπὸ ἡμῶν ὑπέταξαν· οἱ δὲ γέροντες, ὅτι τὴν ἑκ πολλῶν χρόνων ἔθυσε ταύταν αὐτοῖς κατὰ πρόληψιν μεταθεῖναι δεδύνηται. The above is my translation, since Wortley’s (131–32) alters the sense of the original Greek.
refer to the discipline of monastic obedience, mortification, and labor. But it is also a widespread metaphor for marriage, with not dissimilar connotations of the mutual responsibility of husband and wife and the common work of the household. ⁵⁶⁰ Again, the young men’s subjugation of hot-blooded desire seems to imply monastic continence, but by extension it could refer to the restriction of the sexual drive to the the marriage bed alone. Hence while I would still see this is an exhortation to monasticism as the state of repentance par excellence, the very ambiguity of the passage renders it more accepting of married life than the previous one. ⁵⁶¹

Extensive exhortations to the monastic life can be found in the Pandect of Antiochus of Mar Saba, which is more suited by its genre to detailed reflections. As with the above passages from the Spiritual Meadow, these were directed primarily at men who were already monks, in order to strengthen their resolve to persevere in their chosen way of life. ⁵⁶² But both texts were also intended to be read by laypeople, as discussed in the introduction to this chapter. If we turn to Antiochus, we find that in his very first chapter he hints at monasticism as the work of perfect

⁵⁶⁰ Lampe, ζυγός 1c and ζύγιος 1 (p. 592).
⁵⁶¹ There might even be here an echo of the ascetical thought of Basil of Caesarea, who scrupulously avoided the terminology of monasticism out of a desire to see all orders of Christians take up the responsibilities of asceticism to the best of their ability, as discussed briefly in Ch. 2.
⁵⁶² This is a constant theme in the Catecheses of Theodore the Studite in the early ninth century, indicating the constant temptation monastics faced to return to the world. To my knowledge there has been no study of this phenomenon, which must have been rather widespread based on the frequent mention thereof in such anecdotal sources as the various paterika. By our period, the highly developed state of monasticism and monastic communities, as well as imperial and ecclesiastical sanctions, tried to prevent reversion to the lay state. But in a large empire it would not have been particularly difficult. A time of troubles such as the early seventh century (or the early ninth century, with the revival of iconoclasm which threatened the Stoudite communities) was even more conducive to the abandonment of the habit. For an interesting discussion of how legal restrictions would have affected a monk or nun who sought to marry, see Constantin G. Pitsakis, “Clergé marié et célibat dans la législation du Concile in Trullo: le point de vue oriental,” in The Council in Trullo Revisited, edited by George Nedungatt and Michael Featherstone, 291–306 (Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute, 1995).
faith, if we understand “to rest from all works, as God rested from all of his own” as a reference to monastic renunciation. His chapter “On Virginity” is, as we might expect, more explicit:

Virginity is neighbor to chastity, but being higher than the latter and the rest of the virtues, it rivals the angels and draws near to God on account of its purity. Hence great indeed is the possession of virginity, and angelic and heavenly.

Here he acknowledges the virtue of chastity (i.e. within marriage) and its existence on a spectrum of Christian sexual virtue, but distinctly subordinates it to virginity, the angelic and heavenly virtue par excellence. This idea is presented in lapidary fashion in Antiochus; we will find a lengthier articulation thereof in the Ladder of John Climacus, discussed in a later chapter of this study.

Another aspect of monastic renunciation is covered in Antiochus’ chapter “On Non-Possession”:

For when one alienates all temporal wealth, then he finds the place wherein the grace of God is hidden. For it is very fitting that, once we have come to know the way of piety, we should sell all that belongs to us, and to manage the monies derived thereby according to the commandment of the Lord; and that we should not, from the pretext of forever doing commandments, disobey the salvific command. For from this first will stem the good carefreeness, and thence the poverty which does not attract intrigues.

The second and third sentences are a quotation from Diadochus of Photikē. They are aimed at those who would attempt to justify continuing in a lay state by the opportunities it provides to do

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563 Pand. 1 (Kephalas 19). Maximus the Confessor offers several interpretations of the Sabbath rest, revolving around the idea of contemplation (θεωρία) as cessation of active works (πράξις). This would, of course, be difficult to achieve as a layperson, though not impossible.
564 Pand. 21 (Kephalas 64).
565 Pand. 89 (Kephalas 216–17).
566 Capita 65.
good works, namely by providing a steady stream of wealth to give for good causes such as alms and hospitality. From the perspective of Antiochus, following Diadochus, this is simply an excuse: in order to avoid keeping the one great injunction of the Lord to sell all one’s goods and follow him, such people busy themselves with apparent good works. This was a long-running debate in early Christianity and important for the formulation of lay piety. It was not definitively resolved then, and as we will see below, it was further complicated by the wealth of many monasteries themselves and their distribution of alms.\textsuperscript{567}

Antiochus also explicitly warns monastics against frequent converse with laypeople, in a chapter entitled “On Avoiding Unseasonable Conversations”:

> For there is one disposition belonging to those outside the world, and another to those in the world. Therefore as the conjunction of the ox and buffalo is not in agreement, nor that of the beast of burden and the wild ass, so also that of monks and those living according to the world.\textsuperscript{568}

Despite this initially stark division between lay and monastic disposition, he goes on to say that only perfect monks can completely withdraw from the world, and in other places in the work he has a more positive view of monastic and lay interactions, as we shall see. The statement of difference just quoted should then probably be taken as intended to set a certain baseline for the monastic stance toward the world and those in it, which could then serve as a criterion for the interactions that do, in fact, occur.\textsuperscript{569}

\textsuperscript{567} In the next chapter we will see Maximus the Confessor continue to uphold the strict monastic argument of Diadochus and Antiochus, but in an explicit hierarchy—and hence an explicit balance—with the stewardship of wealth by laypeople. Cf. the discussion of Clement of Alexandria in the introductory chapter, with his argument for the latter, especially in his famous discourse, \textit{Who is the Rich Man who will be Saved?} \textit{Pand.} 102 (Kephalas 241).

\textsuperscript{568} Cf. the famous apophthegm of St Anthony, found both in the \textit{Apopthegmata Patrum} and the \textit{Vita Antonii}, comparing a monk in the world to a fish out of water.
Finally, in a chapter “On Renunciation,” Antiochus exalts the monks as a kind of angelic and apostolic order, “a seed blessed and holy,” whose example leads all to glorify God. In order to fulfill this eminent calling, they must practice every virtue, and to accomplish this, they must in no wise be assimilated to the worldly, but to their own “godly teachers of godliness.”

This emphasis is strengthened in the chapter “On the Fear of God,” which argues that this fear will draw a man away from all worldly things and lead him to renunciation of the world and its nets: “For because he hungers for the better things, he has renounced the world, that he might live a life divine, heavenly, angelic, in pure and unpolluted and holy religion.” Indeed, “one cannot come to the fear of God unless he come to be outside all the cares of life.” In Antiochus’s understanding of spiritual life, this fear of God is already very close to the love of God, and by purifying him brings him to the latter. Hence the ancient Jewish concept of the fear of God, which as we saw in the first chapter was translated and transmuted into piety (eusebeia) by Hellenistic Jewish and Christian authors, is reconnected here with a more stark and exigent ethic of the fear of God. If we consider this fear as the defining feature of piety, we see that Antiochus sets a high bar for it, hardly attainable except for the monastics who have set aside all earthly cares.

Monasticism and martyrdom

The idea of monasticism as an imitation or continuation of martyrdom and even of the Passion of Christ himself is also an implicit source for some of these monastic conversions. This is most clear in the case of Anastasius the Persian, for whom monasticism is precisely a training-

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570 Pand. 112 (Kephalas 172). Contrast this placement of “On Renunciation” as chapter 112 out of 130 with John Climacus’ placement of it as the first of the 30 chapters of his Ladder.
571 Ibid. (Kephalas 273).
572 Pand. 127 (Kephalas 306).
573 Ibid. (Kephalas 307).
ground for his martyr’s contests.\footnote{Cf. Vit.Anast. 9–13.} It is also hinted at in two anecdotes about Abba Stephen, priest of the Lavra of the Aeliotes, in the \textit{Spiritual Meadow}. In the first he excused his inhospitable silence to a group of visiting monks thusly: “I can see nothing else, either by night or by day, but our Lord Jesus Christ hanging on the cross.”\footnote{Pratum 64 (Wortley 48–49).} In the second, his natural brother, a devout layman, visited him while he was sick and found him eating meat, according to the doctors’ orders. The brother was scandalized, but then saw a divine vision rebuking him for his judgment: “He said that he turned round and saw the priest crucified, just as Christ was crucified, and the apparition said, ‘You see to what glory he has attained?’”\footnote{Pratum 65 (Wortley 49).} Abba Stephen apparently lived according to the apostolic model of being “crucified to the world.”\footnote{Cf. Gal. 6:14.} In this case, it is not stated that this was the original motive of his renunciation, and is more likely the result of his years of ascetic experience. In this sense it can be considered more of a final cause of monasticism, whereas the aforementioned would be efficient causes, to employ Aristotelian terms.

Anastasius’ ability to achieve actual martyrdom of blood, rather than the metaphorical martyrdom of asceticism, points to one last motive for renunciation for us to consider here: the troubled nature of the times. Antiochus, writing in the wake of the sack of Jerusalem and the devastation of his own monastery by Arab raiders while also observing the afflictions of his monastic compatriots in Galatia and the whole \textit{oikoumenê}, remarked several times in his \textit{Pandect} on the desirability of renouncing the world especially in these times of woe. The contemporary troubles colored his interpretation in general: the chapter “On Disobedience” mentions the slaughter of the sons of Eli and the captivity of the Tabernacle as precedents for the devastation.
of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Cross, and he misquotes John 8:44 to refer not to the Devil but to the Antichrist, evincing the eschatological trepidation on many contemporary Christians’ minds.\textsuperscript{578} More specifically for monks, the times were the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies of mourning (\textit{penthos}), which was supposed to their constant labor anyway, aided by non-possession.\textsuperscript{579} The times were also a prompt to quiet retirement (\textit{hēsychia}), since Amos had said “for this reason the one who understands will keep quiet at that time, because it is an evil time.”\textsuperscript{580} Antiochus’ contrition in the face of the devastation wrought by the Persian invasions is expressed most fully in the supernumerary chapter appended at the end of his work, a lengthy prayer of confession.\textsuperscript{581} The captivity of the Cross is mentioned in this prayer, but at the end the Cross is still invoked as an instrument of God’s mercy. This reminds us of the emphasis placed on the monk as crucified to the world in the tales of Abba Stephen the Aeliote in the \textit{Spiritual Meadow}, and especially on the captive Cross in the dossier of Anastasius the Persian, where its captivity was redeemed by its role in transforming a Magian into a Christian monk-martyr.\textsuperscript{582}

An interesting combination of the eschatological, martyrlic, and penitential motives of monasticism might be found in a source not otherwise considered in this chapter, the anti-Jewish apologetic \textit{Teaching of Jacob the Newly-Baptized}.\textsuperscript{583} The characters in the text speculate that they are living in the end times because of the humbling of the Roman Empire under the blows

\textsuperscript{578} \textit{Pand.} 38, 42 (Kephalas 105, 114). Antiochus also exhorts his readers to a godly sense of shame, “so that we may have boldness in the coming of the Lord; for it has drawn nigh and is at the doors” (\textit{Pand.} 69 [Kephalas 164]). While this closely follows New Testament language that may have become cliché by then, in the larger context of Antiochus’ times and thought we should see it as possessing a literal urgency. The curious story of a contemporary Sinaïte monk who had apostasized to Judaism on the basis of dream visions is capped with a quotation of Mat. 24:42–43, perhaps implying that the incident was a harbinger of the end times. The warning to his addressee, Eustathius, about a Monophysite takeover of the patriarchal throne of Antioch is also expressed in eschatological tones (\textit{Pand.} 130 [Kephalas 316]).

\textsuperscript{579} \textit{Pand.} 90 (Kephalas 218–19).

\textsuperscript{580} \textit{Pand.} 103 (Kephalas 245), quoting Amos 5:13.

\textsuperscript{581} \textit{Pand.} Conf. (Kephalas 321–25).


of external enemies and the coming of a false prophet of the Saracens (i.e. Muhammad and the early Muslims). At the end two “antagonists” of the “dialogue,” Justus and Jacob, after the conversion of the former by the latter, go their separate ways to their implicit ultimate ends. Justus heads to a possible martyrdom at the hands of a mixed host of Jews and Saracens in Palestine.\(^{584}\) Jacob is directed by a divine vision to a life of withdrawal from men and penitence:

“Flee men, Jacob, and in fasting and weeping weep for your numberless sins, which you committed irreverently against Christ; for if you love glory before men, they [i.e. the sins] will become unforgivable to you.”\(^ {585}\) Regardless of the doubtful historicity of the episodes depicted in the text, this combination of elements captures the strong religious sentiments of that age of dislocation and uncertainty and the kind of interpretations and reactions that its events elicited. It is particularly important that these are to be found in a putatively lay text, rather than one primarily directed toward or dealing with monks.\(^ {586}\)

*The monastic habit*

As a final consideration of the status of monasticism in these texts, let us glance at the significance of the monastic habit itself, the *schêma*. Each of the sources in this chapter deals with it slightly differently, depending on the spiritual emphasis of each. In the *Spiritual Meadow*

\[^{584}\textit{Doctr. Jac.} 17\text{ (Dagron and Déroche 213).} Justus does not set out for intentional martyrdom: he returns home with the intention of converting his brother and their respective wives and children. But in response to Jacob’s fear that he might be turned back to Judaism, Justus declares himself willing to be cut in pieces rather than deny Christ.\]

\[^{585}\textit{Doctr. Jac.} 20\text{ (Dagron and Déroche 215, my translation).} This life of penance is not named as monasticism, but the reference to flight from men, in addition to fasting and weeping, points to monasticism specifically rather than lay asceticism; cf. ibid. 215, n. 134.\]

\[^{586}\text{The alleged transcriber of the discourses of Jacob the newly-baptized is Joseph, another of the forcibly-baptized Carthaginian Jews (\textit{Doctr. Jac.} I.43, Dagron and Déroche 137). In reality it may well have been composed or redacted by a Christian cleric or monk. Even in that case, the content matter of the discourses is not specifically monastic or even ascetic in nature, and it sketches a vivid picture of lay Jewish piety, with its culture of intense interest in and discussion of the Scriptures and interpretation thereof in contemporary circumstances, and of the commercial and urban contexts of this piety in both Carthage and Palestine.}\]

it is essentially shorthand for monasticism itself: to become a monk is to receive the habit, often with the tonsure being noted as well, and to quit being a monk is to abandon the habit. It is so highly thought of that one monk prays to God as the one who “the one who has made me worthy to come to this habit.” We find it even in the case of ascetics who we might otherwise be assumed to make do without it. For example, the Tarsian actor and his concubines effect their repentance by immediately immuring themselves in ascetic cells on the outskirts of the city, rather than passing through a formal monastic training. Yet it is stated that they took the habit: presumably they found a qualified monk or cleric to carry out the ritual. The habit is thought to separate the monk from the normal enjoyments and temptations of secular life: thus when an elder from Scetis admonished a young monk about his going into a public house, he began, “Brother sir, don’t you know that you are clothed in the holy habit?” The young monk tried to excuse himself by claiming that God only requires a pure heart, whereupon the elder thanked God out loud that this youngster had attained a pure heart, which he had not managed to do after fifty years of retirement in the desert. This conclusion is intentionally ironic, rebuking a tendency to use “inner spirituality” as an excuse for neglecting the specific disciplines of monasticism that tangibly set the monk apart. Here the habit is a synecdoche for the whole struggle of the monk to flee the things of the world. In two stories there is a sharp contrast between the habit of monks and the garb of laypeople. In the first, the soldier-monk John would spend the daylight hours at his monastery dressed in a coarse cloak—his habit—plaiting baskets and praying silently, and

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587 Pratum 212: ὁ καταξιώσας με ἐλθεῖν εἰς τὸ σχῆμα τούτο.
588 Pratum 194 (Wortley 169).
589 Booth, Crisis of Empire, 122, mistakes this story as an example of urban ascetic trumping the holiness of the idealized desert. The Spiritual Meadow certainly contains instances of such edifying reversal, but this is not one of them. The Latin chapter heading captures the moral of the story: Admonitio senis qui morabatur in Scythi, facta cuidam monacho ne ingrederetur tabernas (PG 87c:3075).
would then put on his uniform at the ninth hour to go on duty. In the second, already mentioned, the Palestinian bandit who lived out nine years of penance as a monk requested his lay clothes back so that he might surrender himself for execution to fully expiate his sin. He probably did not need the lay clothes to turn himself in, but perhaps thought that he might not receive as strict a sentence as he desired if he turned up in the garb of a monk; he probably also did not wish to dishonor the habit by his own confession as a criminal.

This sense of the innate honor and potential dishonor of the habit is explicitly present in the *Life and Martyrdom of Anastasius the Persian*. With obvious contempt, the Persian officer who first interrogated him asked, “So you like wearing the habit in which you are clothed?” and Anastasius replied boldly that “this habit is my pride and joy.” Later, when he was about to be tortured, he requested that he be stripped of the habit, “lest it be insulted.” The monastic habit was part and parcel of his identity as a Christian, in conscious and militant contrast to his Zoroastrian past. We have already observed how monasticism was a natural preparation for his martyrdom. His outward relinquishing of the habit marked the actual beginning of the process of physical martyrdom, but he recovered it through that very sacrifice, since he appeared posthumously to suppliants as a monk, according to the *Miracles*. The author of the *Translation* (almost certainly identical with the author of the *Life and Martyrdom*), also uses the

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590 Pratum 73 (Wortley 55–56). Although the word σχῆμα is not found here, it seems to me clear that the rough cloak is a habit, since John belongs to a monastery (which may have simply been a “cell,” in the late antique sense of the word as a monastic house of small to moderate size). Even today, the habit of Coptic novices consists of little more than the *galabiyah* of Egyptian peasants. The ninth hour falls in the late afternoon. The solder had the evening watch.
591 Pratum 166 (Wortley 136–37).
592 Vit.Anast. 19 (Flusin 61).
593 Vit.Anast. 21 (Flusin 65).
594 Mir.Anast. 7, 12 (Flusin 133, 143). Apart from the apparitions recorded in the *Miracles*, most later depictions show him thus: the *Menology of Basil II* even shows him being strangled and decapitated wearing his habit—against his express wishes, but we must allow for artistic license! See *Menologio di Basilio*, 343. Most modern icons also show him as a monk, at least according to a Google Images search.
habit as shorthand for the monastic order as a whole, which the emperor Heraclius honored (through financial donations, as we know from other sources).\textsuperscript{595}

Sophronius, Antiochus, and Anthony of Choziba also use the word \textit{schêma} with reference to the habit, although in some cases it is unclear whether they do not mean the more general sense of the Greek word for “shape” or “form.” This points to their more complex views, since they tend to criticize reliance on the mere habit as an outward mark of holiness. Their criticism of contemporary monasticism and appreciation of lay holiness brings us to the next section.

\textit{Appreciation of the laity}

Appreciation of the laity is expressed in self-reflective terms in the \textit{Pandect} and especially in the \textit{Life of George of Choziba}, through criticism of monastic vanity and pride. In the chapter “On Vainglory,” Antiochus says that “it hides in everything, in dress (\textit{schêma}) and in appearance and in gait and in voice and speech and in silence and in work and in vigils and in fastings and in prayer and in reading and in solitude (\textit{hêsychia}) and in long-suffering.”\textsuperscript{596}

Although \textit{schêma} here does probably not mean the monastic habit per se, the whole list of seeming virtues can only suggest the monastic lifestyle. These practical exercises are, however, lauded in the chapter “On Humility,” which we might expect given Antiochus’ views on the benefits of monasticism already discussed above.\textsuperscript{597} His final word on the subject, however, does tend toward an emphasis on inner rather than outward proofs of holiness:


\textsuperscript{596} Pand. 43 (Kephala 115): Ἐν παντὶ γὰρ ἐπιτηδεύματι παρυφίσταται, ἐν τε σχήματι καὶ ἐν μορφῇ καὶ ἐν βαδίσματι, καὶ ἐν φωνῇ, καὶ ἐν λόγῳ, καὶ ἐν σωφρ. καὶ ἐν ἔργῳ, καὶ ἐν ἀγρυπνίας, καὶ ἐν νηστείαις, καὶ ἐν εὐχῇ, καὶ ἐν ἀναγνώσει, καὶ ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ, καὶ ἐν μακροθυμίᾳ.

\textsuperscript{597} Pand. 70 (Kephala 168).
For he who has truly made himself a eunuch for the sake of the kingdom of heaven or practiced virginity is a debtor to show himself worthy of the kingdom through everything. For not by word or dress or family or appearance or strength or time is the kingdom of heaven attained, but by the power of faith that also shows works of faith.\textsuperscript{598}

Again, dress here does not necessarily mean the monastic habit, and the list of indifferent things includes several more earthly advantages. But the reference to eunuchs and virgins implies the monastic life.\textsuperscript{599} True nuns and monks are not those who have practiced chastity alone, but those who have kept all the commandments.

George of Choziba addressed the dangers and reality of monastic pride more directly. Although calling monasticism an “angelic and heavenly way of life,” he warned against voiding this blessing through pride.\textsuperscript{600} In one passage, the immediate occasion for this admonition was the rather critical reception given to a layperson who had come to the monastery to make his renunciation. Despite displaying suitable asceticism and ready obedience in the labors of the monastery, some of his habits seem to have rubbed several of the brethren the wrong way. George begins his admonition with a homely proverb: “Do you wish to have a donkey that neither eats nor drinks, nor brays nor kicks?”\textsuperscript{601} The author Anthony understands that this signifies that nobody is perfect in everything. George continues in this vein:

And if someone does boast that he has a new heart, even though he has spent so many years in monasticism, that man is certainly deluded and futile. But even if he is not, he

\textsuperscript{598} Pand. 130 (Kephalas 314): Ὅ γὰρ ὅντος εὐνουχίας ἑαυτὸν διὰ τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἢ παρθενεύσας, διὰ πάντων ὀφειλέτης ἕστιν ἀξίων ἑαυτὸν ἀποδείξα τῆς βασιλείας. Οὖ γὰρ ἐν λόγῳ, ἢ σχῆμα, ἢ ὠνόματι, ἢ γένει, ἢ μορφῇ, ἢ ἱσχύ, ἢ χρόνῳ, ἢ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν καταλαμβάνεται, ἀλλ’ ἐν δυνάμει πίστεως, ἐπιδεικνυμένης ἔργα πίστεως.

\textsuperscript{599} Cf. Mt. 19:12.

\textsuperscript{600} Vit.Georg.Choz. 10.47: Ἀναλογίσασθε δὲ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, ἀδελφοί, τίνι λόγῳ ἐάσαντες τὸν κόσμον μετεταξάμεθα εἰς τὴν ἀγγελικὴν ταύτην καὶ οὐράνιον πολιτείαν.

\textsuperscript{601} Vit.Georg.Choz. 9.38: θέλεις ὅνων ἔχειν μήτε τρώγοντα, μήτε πίνοντα, μήτε κράζοντα, μήτε λακτίζοντα;
nevertheless condemns the layman who is making his renunciation! For look, we have spent so many years exhausting ourselves in monasticism in the desert and we have not grasped the beginning of the rope, that is, to consider ourselves sinners and to mind our own evils and to not be puffed up by the self-esteem of self-justification and reproach our neighbor. For tell me, brothers, why did we utterly renounce the world where there is wealth and glory and luxury and come to this desert where such things do not exist? Because of our sins and passions, in order to repent? Or as if we were sinless, fleeing those who are impassioned and sinful?  

George’s defines monasticism here not as a state of exaltation, but rather of humiliation, as the life of repentance. In a later passage some younger monks consulted him about the spiritual malaise they sensed in their days. He locates the root of the evils in pride:

And we made a solemn agreement to be humbled before the Lord and we renounced the pompous and deceitful occasions for falling offered by the world. And look, by the small defects in our monastic life we are secretly proud against God; because whereas we are clothed in a habit of humility, in the swelling of our heart we despise God. For having only the profession of humility, in reality in our mind we reclaim our secret passions.

George’s disciple Anthony was the one who recorded these oral teachings of the saint, and he seems to have taken them to heart. In the conclusion to the Life he summarizes the monastic theology of humility.

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603 Vit.Georg.Choz. 10.47.
Teach me what are the signs of humility, in which are life and light and joy and peace; and what it is to not contemn one’s neighbor. For in these two virtues, I think, lie the entire profession of our habit and the kingdom of God. In humility is the love of God fulfilled, and in not contemning one’s neighbor, love toward one’s neighbor.\footnote{Vit.Georg.Choz. 11.60.}

There is nothing in this interpretation of the Great Commandment that would not also be applicable to laypeople. But the emphasis on not judging is of particular importance for monastics whose very profession made them prone to this besetting sin. It is clear that the monastic habit, with the whole life of withdrawal and renunciation that it symbolizes, is precious to the monks George and Anthony of Choziba. Their love of monasticism therefore compels them to seek to purge it of the venomous tendency to judge others, whether fellow monastics or those still in the world.

\textit{Lay virtues: sexuality}

Thus far we have clarified the place of monastics in the early seventh century Palestinian sources and their attitude toward monasticism itself in relation to lay life. Now we turn to laypeople themselves and their piety. We begin by considering normative lay sexuality, which sometimes did and sometimes did not mark an important distinction between the two ways of life.

Our sources frequently mention celibate laypeople, whether single or married. They are not the first to do so; lay celibacy had a long pedigree in Christian piety. From for the \textit{Spiritual Meadow} we have already mentioned the case of Paul of the Thebaïd, who lived as a single philoponos before becoming a monk. Others remained in the world, as far as we can tell from the anecdotes, but their way of life was similar to that of monks and was fleshed out by many other
virtues. One celibate was a hired hand on an estate where the master would not pay him his wages; his asceticism consisted of his putting up freely with this injustice and adding a strenuous regimen of fasting. 605 Theodore the philosopher and Cosmas the lawyer in Alexandria combined bare-bones poverty with stringent theological study while Zoilos the reader in the same city practiced an equal poverty but was more reclusive. 606 We shall have more occasion to discuss these Alexandrian ascetics, but for now we shall remark that their virginity was not their only or even their primary virtue; rather it allowed them the freedom to concentrate on these other labors.

Married celibacy in the *Spiritual Meadow* is exhibited in two ways. In one case a young and pretty widow in Constantinople prayed for God to afflict her with illness to chastise her body so that she would not yield to the temptation of a second marriage; this conforms with the ideal of strict monogamy in early Christianity. 607 In another, a priest on Samos who had been married against his will convinced his wife to live with him in continence. This is another early Christian ideal, the so-called “spiritual marriage.” 608 Its expression in the form of cohabitation of a monk and a nun had attracted the withering ire of such as John Chrysostom. There could be less objection against an arrangement such as this, protected by the legal form of marriage, except for the strains that it might place on marital concord. 609

We would expect to find such approval of lay celibacy in monastic texts; after all, it amounts to a sort of semi-monasticism. More interesting are the accounts of non-celibate,

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605 *Pratum* 154.
606 *Pratum* 171–72 (Wortley 139–42).
607 *Pratum* 236/Mioni 5 (Wortley 219–20).
609 Cf. 1 Cor. 7:5–6.
affectionate married couples in the *Spiritual Meadow*. In two cases these emphasize the marriage-bond itself. One takes place in Ascalon, recounted to the authors by a priest at the monastic hospice of that city. A merchant survived a shipwreck but lost all his goods, causing him to be thrown into debtors’ prison, where his wife would visit to share her food with him. A local grandee who came to the jail to distribute alms was smitten by her beauty and offered to redeem her husband in exchange for sex. The exchange that follows demonstrated her and her husband’s marital piety:

But she, being truly most beautiful and chaste, said to him, “I have heard, my lord, the Apostle saying that a woman does not have authority over her own body, but rather the husband. Let me go, my lord; I will ask my husband, and what he commands, I will do.” And she came and reported all to her husband. He, full of intelligence and of affection for his wife, was not carried away by the chance of being freed from the jail. Instead, heaving a great sigh, with tears he said to his wife: “Go and bid farewell, my sister, to the man, and we will hope in God that he will by no means abandon us to the end.”

Fortunately a highwayman in a nearby cell observed all that had happened. Impressed by their honor and chastity, since he was slated for execution, he revealed to them a secret location where he had hidden his stash. They were thus able to restore their situation without resorting to immoral transactions.

The second case takes place in Constantinople, recounted to the authors by a monk who while on business there had heard it from the subject of the tale himself. With his own full agreement, he had been left without an inheritance by his wealthy father, who distributed his fortune in generous alms, both trusting in the providence of Christ. Meanwhile a noble matron in the same city had agreed with her pious husband not to give their only daughter in marriage to

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*610 Pratum 189 (Wortley 162–63, but the above is my translation).*
one chosen for his wealth and rank; “but let us rather find for her a man lowly and God-fearing, that he may love and cherish her in godly manner.”\(^{611}\) They agreed that the mother should go to church to pray about the matter and accept the first man to enter as a sign of God’s choice. The narrator of the tale happened to be the man, and when the matron learned whose son he was and how he had come to godly poverty, she brought him home as the suitable suitor: “Behold, the good guardian whom you chose has sent you a bride—and riches, so that you may enjoy both in the fear of God.”\(^{612}\)

Another account, of a Christian woman of Nisibis who converted her pagan husband through faith in God’s providence, is not so closely concerned with the marital relation itself, but is nevertheless striking in its depiction of a trusting and gentle relationship between husband and wife, even when the latter is not at first Christian.\(^{613}\) The husband trusts his wife enough to agree to her proposition to try out the generosity of the providence of the Christian God in their situation of pecuniary embarrassment. Interestingly, he calls her “sister,” a term also used above in the story of the merchant and his wife in debtors’ prison. This term suggests that married lay piety was supposed to involve a loving spousal relationship. The case of the merchant also contrasts his position of godly and gentle authority over his wife’s body to the stark social dominance and potential sexual exploitation of her by the lustful grandee. Thus normal (i.e. non-celibate) married piety entailed affection and fidelity within the normal sexual union of marriage. But it was grounded on attention to the will of God and his providence rather than brute domination by the husband or attachment by either spouse to fleeting earthly goods.

The faith in Providence that frames these three stories of happy marriages may be extended in another account, this time of a family of three: a philochristos named Martyrius and

\(^{611}\) Pratum 201 (Wortley 179, but the above is my translation).
\(^{612}\) Pratum 201 (Wortley 180).
\(^{613}\) Pratum 185 (Wortley 155–158).
his wife and child, who were in the habit of hospitably receiving monks at their home. During one such visit, while awaiting the monks’ blessing in the upper chamber where they were being entertained, the child fell out of the door to the ground, expiring immediately. This was at first only noticed by the father, who continued to calmly entertain his visitors and had his equally tranquil wife lay out the child on his bed. They asked the priest among the monks (the narrator of the story to the authors) to say a prayer over the child as if he were merely ill. It was only several days later, when the monks passed by again, that they learned of the child’s death and of his resuscitation thanks to their unsuspecting prayers. As in the story of the poor pious youth who found a wealthy pious bride, the familial relationship between spouses is complemented by that of parents with their children. The family is presented as a loving one, joyously sharing its food and drink with monastic guests. This atmosphere of homely piety is further emphasized by their calm acceptance of calamity and their faith in the blessing of God through the agency of the monks. While that blessing effects the child’s recovery, the emphasis of the story is on the faith and piety of the parents.

In general our sources demonstrate an appreciation of the natural life of the family and in particular of the virtues of women. Antiochus, in a chapter “On Honoring Parents,” points out that this is an obligation from the natural law. He writes of the fact that parents have brought us forth not just to the light of biological life, but to the spiritual light of baptism, and mentions their natural affection for their offspring and the labor and care they endure day and night to protect and nourish them and to leave them an inheritance. He continues with an exhortation to honor and care for one’s parents, especially in their old age, supporting his argument with the example of a species of bird, where the younger avians were observed to be especially solicitous

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614 Pratum 233/Mioni 2 (Wortley 216–17).
615 Pand. 108 (Kephalas 259): ἐκ τῆς φυσικῆς νομοθεσίας.
of their old parents: “And the young become their parents, saying to their own parents, ‘As you made a nest for us and grew weary working hard and feeding us, we will also do the same for you.’” At the end of chapter, Antiochus extrapolates from this natural law to the even greater reverence due to one’s spiritual fathers. But it is clear that in his case, the law of nature is not simply a metaphor for a higher spiritual meaning, but a natural symbol, which must still be taken seriously and fulfilled in its own right. This is confirmed by the following chapter, “On Showing Reverence to One’s Elders.” This virtue is described as pleasing both to God and to men and also good policy given that we will also be old one day and enjoy such respect. Antiochus specifies that it is not our place to judge which elder is worthy, but to offer everyone their due according to their advanced age.

Regarding mothers in particular, even a saying warning monks against women in the *Spiritual Meadow* acknowledges their importance:

> An elder said: ‘Children, salt comes from water. But if it comes back to water, it is dissolved and disappears. So the monk comes from a woman; and if he comes back to a woman, he is undone and, insofar as his being a monk is concerned, he dies.’

This gnomic utterance still suggests a certain wariness, if not hostility, toward women. Moschus, however, presents some more positive cases of laywomen who through their prudence and courage managed to fend off advances made on them by monks. These all took place in marginal situations when the monk was sent on business outside his monastery, lodging with laypeople and thus outside his normal shelter from the temptations of the senses. In two stories a monk was temporarily alone with a young woman, the daughter of the pious layman who was hosting the monk, and in another the woman was hosting the monk herself, providing him with medical

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616 Pand. 108 (Kephalas 259–60).
617 Pand. 109 (Kephalas 261–62).
treatment for a snake bite. In each case the woman realized what was happening before things came to a head and managed to talk and reason with the monk, allaying his lust and bringing him to remorse. She reminded him of all his monastic labor that would be lost if he went ahead with his intentions. One reminded him of the financial burden necessary to support her, threatening that she would hang herself if he disgraced her and then abandoned her; another claimed that she was menstruating and described the disgust this would engender in him if he uncovered her nakedness.\textsuperscript{618} The healer also showed much compassion for the embarrassment and contrition of her patient once he came to his senses. She allowed him to stay because he still needed time to heal, and consoled him by telling him that “those sinful thoughts did not arise from your pure soul; it was a dart of the envious one that caused them.”\textsuperscript{619} The last of these stories ends with the monk thus saved “giving thanks to God who, by the woman’s prudence and temperance, had prevented him from taking an irremediable fall.”\textsuperscript{620} Although these three stories are based on the danger that women could present to a monk’s soul, they turn the typical prejudice on its head, and show that female lay chastity could sometimes surpass monastic celibacy and even offer it a lesson.\textsuperscript{621}

\textit{Lay virtues: asceticism, alms, and hospitality}

In the foregoing survey we can see that asceticism was not just for monks, but an important component of lay piety as well. Antiochus is clear on this point, since he begins many

\begin{footnotes}
\item[619] \textit{Pratum} 204 (Wortley 183).
\item[620] \textit{Pratum} 205 (Wortley 184).
\item[621] In a rather different context, the monks of Choziba are taught by the Mother of God herself to abolish the ban on women entering their monastery by allowing in a patrician woman seeking healing (\textit{Mir.Virg.Choz.} 1).
\end{footnotes}
of his chapters on ascetical virtues with a statement of the kind: “x should be practiced by all, but especially by monks.” For laypeople it consisted especially of fasting. In addition to the examples from the Spiritual Meadow adduced above in the course of discussing lay sexuality, we can add several more. It seems that fasting until sundown was a fairly common lay practice. This makes sense considering that, unlike long offices of psalmody, fasting was available at any time and place, as long as one had the fortitude to endure it. It could be combined with other virtues: with hospitality, in the case of a fasting woman whose husband was particularly hospitable to monks; with alms, in the case of a poor woman who fasted all week long and used the savings gained thereby for charity; with miracles, in the case of a ship-master who fasted habitually, but increased it to a period of three days so as to intensify his supplications for rain when his ship ran out of water. The case of the imperial guardsman Christopher is particularly striking in combining several of these virtues. He fasted all day while on duty, only taking a repast of dry bread and boiled vegetables in the evening; he wore a hair shirt under his splendid uniform; after-hours he would spend all night wandering the city and dispensing alms to the homeless

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622 Examples abound: “For all it is necessary to force oneself to keep the belly under control, especially for those who want to serve God” (Pand. 4, Kephalas 27); “Self-control is fitting for all, and especially for those who wish to please God” (Pand. 6, Kephalas 31); “Since the sacred Scripture has clearly shown to us that distraction is the life of the ungodly, we ought to run away from it, especially we who have supposedly renounced the world and chosen the angelic life” (Pand. 14, Kephalas 47); “Laughing is not at all permitted to Christians, and especially to monks, who have crucified themselves to the world” (Pand. 95, Kephalas 227); “[Psalmody] is also fitting for all people—for “let every breath praise the Lord” [Ps. 150: 6]—but especially for monks, who have chosen the angelic life ...” (Pand. 105, Kephalas 248); “So all of us men ought to offer first fruits and tithes to God ... And the monks especially are debtors to offer to God first fruits and tithes ...” (Pand. 120, Kephalas 290).


624 Pratum 75 (Wortley 56); Pratum 127 (Wortley 104–5), though her saving up alms through fasting is only recorded in the Latin translation, which Wortley includes in brackets in his own version; Pratum 174 (Wortley 143).
huddled in the porticoes and to the prisoners in the jails of the city. Some nights he would keep vigil alone in various oratories.

There is a close connection between asceticism and alms in several of the above examples. We should understand alms here in a broad sense. They could include management of a ministry (diakonia) in Antioch by a devout layman (philochristos). He did not expend his own money but administered the dispensing of clothing and other provisions to the needy, presumably paid for from the funds of the Church and the offerings of various people. Perhaps on account of this responsibility, he tried to stop a poor man from taking advantage of the ministry by coming back for more than his share, but was then rebuked by a divine vision that instructed him to give freely and without judgment. He repented: “Forgive my faint-heartedness, Lord, for I reckoned this matter in human terms.” This attitude is in keeping with the preponderance of Byzantine edifying literature, which prefers undiscriminating almsgiving to tight-fisted accounting, even if the latter is intended to forestall exploitation of the system.

In one case, involving a donation to a church rather than alms per se, a pious patrician had commissioned a gold cross and the pious young goldsmith decided to add his wages in gold to the cross; when this was discovered by the patrician he was so impressed by the young man’s generosity, even though it amounted only to the “widow’s two mites,” that he adopted him as his heir. The story that immediately follows in the published text is the one about the young man left poor at the death of his prodigal almsgiver of a father, who subsequently married the rich heiress of a pious couple, discussed above with regard to lay sexuality and marriage. Another

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625 Pratum 234/Mioni 3 (Wortley 217–18); cf. Patlagean, Pauvreté, 192.
626 Pratum 235/Mioni 4 (Wortley 218–19).
628 Pratum 200 (Wortley 178–79).
629 Pratum 201 (Wortley 179–80).
tale involves a young gentleman merchant reduced to penury by losses at sea, whom the patriarch of Alexandria Apollinarius (r. 551–569) contrived to help through an elaborate fiction that the patriarchate owed his father fifty pounds of gold; presumably such measures were necessary to avoid injuring the gentleman’s dignity.\textsuperscript{630} The fairy-tale endings of these stories are of great interest, because they indicate a certain easy-going attitude toward wealth in the \textit{Spiritual Meadow}. Moschus does not criticize laypeople for possessing riches or expect them to give up all and live in poverty. In fact he seems to express deference to social rank and family honor, something alien to monastic rigor, at least theoretically. What matters is godly use of wealth, namely generosity in gifts to churches and to the poor.\textsuperscript{631}

The customs and dynamics of social hierarchy are also evident in the kind of “alms” one might seek to give. In an empire where the difference between rich and poor increasingly came to be seen in terms of power—where one might be stripped suddenly of his wealth by the \textit{dynatoi}, using intrigue or force—the most valuable kind of alms might be influence in high places. Thus the man who encountered the courageous widow who was praying for God to afflict her in order to curb her desire for remarriage, at first thought she was suffering some kind of need or oppression and offered to help her in some way, himself being one of the \textit{illustres (tôn lamprôn)}.\textsuperscript{632} The use of intercession is only implied here, but it is explicit in a similar situation where a monk saw a widow praying emotionally at a martyr’s shrine: “I supposed it likely that, being a widow, she was being oppressed by somebody. Since I was acquainted with the deputy

\textsuperscript{630} \textit{Pratum} 193. Practically the same story is told of John the Almsgiver by Leontius of Neapolis. Most likely, Leontius adapted it from the \textit{Spiritual Meadow}, but he may also have picked up an oral tradition related to the one that John Moschus recorded; see Vincent Déroche, \textit{Études sur Léontios de Néapolis} (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 1995), 126–27.

\textsuperscript{631} Such an attitude, embracing the practical realities of social hierarchy, is also found in Sophronius’ \textit{Miracles of Cyrus and John}, as we have seen in the previous chapter.

\textsuperscript{632} \textit{Pratum} 236/Mioni 5 (Wortley 219–20).
prefect, I waited until she had finished her prayer … I told her what I supposed …”

In both these cases, social patronage is offered as a form of alms, of *eleêmosynê* in a broad sense.

Alms or some other act of mercy figure in the particular category of lay piety that involves an otherwise wicked or indifferent person being saved and even sanctified by one deed of great generosity. The *Spiritual Meadow* records a legend about emperor Zeno, that the Mother of God was prevented from avenging a woman and her daughter on him—for having wronged the latter, perhaps by deflowering her and thus making it difficult to find a suitable husband for her—because “‘his right hand prevents me’—for he was a very good almsgiver.” As a counterpart to the stories of brigands converted to monasticism discussed earlier in this chapter, we find one about a bandit-chief Cyriacus, who had rescued some newly-baptized infants from his subordinates and attributed his being spared execution to this kindness. Another jailbird, a merchant of Tyre named Moschus, had been arrested for alleged misdeeds while holding the post of *commerciarius*. He believed that he was then pardoned and even raised to greater dignity by the emperor because of a previous act of generosity to a prostitute. The woman’s husband had been thrown into debtor’s prison and she had resorted to prostitution to supply him with basic necessities while he was there. The *commerciarius* had contracted her services but when she broke down and told him her situation, instead of continuing the transaction he generously paid

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633 *Pratum* 224/Nissen 5 (Wortley 201): ἔγὼ δὲ μᾶλλον ἐλογισάμην, ὃτι χήρα ἔστι καὶ καταπονεῖται ὑπὸ τινος, ὡς οὖν ἔχων γνώσιν πρὸς τὸν σύνεδρον τοῦ αὐτοῦ κυρίαν ἔμεινα, ἔως ὁδ ἐπλήρωσε τὴν εὐχὴν αὐτῆς, καὶ προσκαλέσαμεν ένα τῶν παιδῶν αὐτῆς εἰπον· „κάλεσόν μοι τὴν κυρίαν σου‟. ὡς δὲ ἐπήρισασέν μοι, ἀπερ ἐλογισάμην εἶπον αὐτῇ.

634 As noted in Ch. 4, the Greek word is the etymological root of our “alms” but has wider range of meanings.

635 *Pratum* 175 (Wortley 144): πολλάκις ἦθελον ποιῆσαι τὴν ἐκδίκησίν σου, ἀλλ' ἡ δεξιὰ χεῖρ αὐτοῦ κωλύει με. Ἡν γὰρ ἐλήμων πάνυ.

636 *Pratum* 165 (Wortley 135–36). Cyriacus said that he used to see the children in his dreams while he was in prison, reassuring him that they were making a defense on his behalf.
her husband’s entire debt. Perhaps the most touching example of this category of sanctity is the story of an aristocratic young woman in Alexandria who had inherited a large fortune when her parents died, but gave most of it to a man about to commit suicide to escape from his creditors. As a result of her generosity, however, she herself became destitute and began to prostitute herself to make ends meet. At some point she fell ill, repented of her lifestyle, and sought to be baptized, but her neighbors laughed at her and refused to sponsor her candidacy to the patriarch. In the end, angels, disguised as officials on the staff of the augustal prefect, sponsored her and she was baptized; soon after, she “fell asleep in the Lord, released from both her voluntary and her involuntary deeds of sin.”

In all of these examples, except for the case of Zeno, the holy sinner expressed a proper sense of remorse and repentance, following on a great life crisis, wherein the spiritual benefits which hitherto lay concealed were manifested. This indicates that their salvation was not purchased, as it were, by the generous deed. They still had to undergo a penance of sorts, constituted by the afflictions that they endured in each case (prison for the brigand and the commerciarius, social ostracism for the high-born prostitute). So we should perhaps see the “one generous deed” not as a magical waving of a wand that renders the doer holy once for all, but as a kind of opportunity for repentance, a seed of goodness that awaited the shower of divine grace.

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638 This is, incidentally, evidence for adult baptism around the turn of the seventh century. The story is supposed to have taken place during the patriarchate of Paul (537–542) and was recounted to Moschus by Abba Theonas and Abba Theodore. Even if the story is legendary, it testifies to the fact that adult baptisms could still be considered unremarkable in the late sixth or early seventh century, when Moschus recorded the tale without comment on this aspect of it.
639 Pratum 207 (Wortley 187): ἀνεπαύσατο ἐν Κυρίῳ ἔλευθερωθείσα καὶ αὐτή τῶν ἐκουσίων καὶ ἀκουσίων τῶν πλημμελήματον. This is yet another case of holy persons (here angels rather than saints) appearing in the guise of living human beings, which we have seen previously.
640 See Déroche’s discussion of the problem of alms as buying heaven, and the attempts to solve it, by various authors of this period, in Études sur Léontios de Néapolis, 242ff.
The case of Zeno is hard to decipher; it lacks the narrative details of the other stories and thus stands out as a legend from a more distant time and place that Moschus decided to record. We might imagine that Zeno did not demonstrate the kind of compunction found in the other cases, but he also falls under the special rules of imperial lay piety, discussed in Ch. 3. In any case, the story does not state that he was saved, only that he did not suffer some kind of punishment, probably an earthly one, that might have otherwise been inflicted by the Mother of God—an ambivalent earthly reprieve for an earthly sovereign. Maurice, as we have seen, was instead pictured as choosing to undergo an earthly punishment in order to secure eternal bliss.

_Lay virtues: sacramental piety_

Alms served to bind the religious community together and legitimate social hierarchy as an opportunity for Christian virtue. The center of the unity of the Church, however, was worship. In fact most of the examples of alms-giving adduced above take place in ecclesiastical contexts: alms were distributed inside the church or at its doors, miracles both supernatural and moral occur in circumstances surrounding baptism, and so on. To this we can add, from all our sources, examples of attendance at the divine office (particularly at vigils), Eucharistic piety, and pilgrimage to saints near or far, including veneration of their relics and icons. I designate all these as elements of _sacramental_ piety based on a broad definition of “sacrament” as any visible or material sign and conduit of spiritual grace.

The most complete and striking collection of evidence for lay participation in all these elements of sacramental piety are found in the dossier of Anastasius the Persian. According to

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641 In a famous passage in one of his sermons, John Chrysostom presents almsgiving to the poor as the equal of the Eucharistic sacrifice on the church altar. For the liturgical context of alms, see Susan R. Holman, _The Hungry are Dying: Beggars and Bishops in Roman Cappadocia_ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 62–63.
the *Life* he first acquired his longing for martyrdom by frequenting churches with his Christian host at Hierapolis and gazing at the frescoes of the martyrs there. After departing his monastery to turn himself in at Caesarea, he fortified himself with visits to various Palestinian oratories in the region of Diospolis (including the Justinianic church on Mt Gerizim but, oddly, not the Church of St George) and in Caesarea. 642 After his arrest in Caesarea, he was visited in prison by his monastic companions and a group of local laypeople to celebrate the vigil of the Exaltation of the Cross. By the intercession of the local commerciarius with the Persian commander, he was allowed to go to church the next day—presumably to complete the feast with attendance at the liturgy and reception of the Eucharist; his presence greatly comforted the downcast the local Christians, who felt that they had a real live martyr in their midst. 643 The local Persian Christians in Bethsaloe where he is held before his execution display a similar devotion, visiting him to seek his prayers and venerate his chains, of which they make wax imprints to take away as a blessing. 644

In the *Translation of the Relics of Anastasius*, when the saint’s relic is brought back to Palestine, it is escorted by a Saracen phylarch and received with candles and incense at Tyre. 645 The remainder of the body (after subtracting the portions that were donated as blessings to various people and cities on the way) is laid out at church of St. George near tower of David in Jerusalem and there venerated by all people, clergy and monks and laity of all sexes and ages. 646 The *Miracles*, however, contain the greatest wealth of information on lay devotion to the saint’s

642 Vit.Anast. 15.
643 Vit.Anast. 29. The visitors to his prison are designated οἱ εὐημένοι φιλόχριστοι δύο ἄνδρες καὶ τινὲς τῶν τῆς πόλεως εὐλαβῶν. Flusin, *Anastase le Perse*, 216-20 comments on the development of a new ideology of martyrdom in this period in the wake of the wrecking of the more confident older ideology of a *pax romana christiana*.
644 Vit.Anast.Pers. 36. Anastasius refused to give them something as a material blessing himself, so they resorted to producing the wax impressions.
relic, which encompasses several other sacramental phenomena. The *Translation* records that in Seleucia-Ctesiphon relic portions had been given to the Catholicos of the Church of the East and one of his bishops, but in the *Miracles* it is also claimed that portions had been granted to laypeople. Thus a mint worker used fragrant oil that had passed over the relic as a balm for a demon-possessed friend to drink and a doctor cured himself by wearing a relic as a phylactery, and subsequently foreswore his usual medical arts for treating patients, relying instead on balm from the relic. A local chariot-driver names Calotychus even built an oratory in his home to house a relic. There cures were effected variously by balm from the relic, by wearing it as an amulet, and by incubation in the chapel. Various people who had received cures there contributed to the lighting of the lamps. Anastasius was also credited with getting Calotychus and his colleagues their jobs back after a period of unemployment after the overthrow of Khusro, who had been paying their salaries; the charioteers all chipped in to celebrate a banquet in honor and gratitude to the saint.

As the relic moved into the Roman Empire, the acts of piety continued, especially the use of balm produced from the relic. In Palmyra, a young man requested healing of his inflamed eyes, and the monk carrying the relic gave him a balm to anoint his eyes, requiring him also to fast from wine for a week. The youth could not endure longer deprivation of drink; this shows us something of a more moderate level of lay fasting, in contrast to the all-day fasters we discussed above. In Caesarea, the city where Anastasius had surrendered himself to the Persian authorities, the presence of his relic roused the inhabitants’ zeal much as his living presence had. The townsfolk were summoned by the sound of the *sêmantra* to the New Church of the

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647 *Mir.Anast.Pers.* 1, ἀπομυρίσας δέδωκεν αὐτῷ πιεῖν; *AnM* 2. Making a balm or ointment by pouring oil over a relic was a common practice in late antiquity; the oil thereby itself became a kind of “contact relic.”


Theotokos and went solemnly to meet the relic with processional crosses. After public deliberation they commenced the building of a church to house their portion of the relic, next to the Tetrarpylon at the center of the city, a prominent location that demonstrated Caesarea’s devotion to the new saint. An icon of him was placed there and helped a woman who had initially refused to venerate a “relic coming from Persia,” to recognize the saint, who had appeared to her in a dream and punished her temporarily for her unbelief. As in Seleucia-Ctesiphon with Calotychus the charioteer, laypeople also received small fragments of the relic at Caesarea and at Ascalon in Gaza. Miracles of the saint also occurred at other churches. For example, at Abydos on the Hellespont a monk carrying the relic had stopped to attend the Sunday liturgy and receive the Eucharist along with the master and crew of the ship in which he was returning to Palestine from a tour of the relic in Constantinople; he was in the right place at the right time to effect an exorcism by means of the relic. The fragmentary extant end of the collection preserves part of lengthy story of a demoniac who required the long tarrying of a relic of the saint along with his icon in order to be exorcized. When his cure was complete both were returned to the house of their owner, a certain Theophanes. Based on comparison with the earlier chapter of the collection, Theophanes may have had a private chapel to house these precious items. Probably it was more common to obtain balm from the relic. A deacon of the cathedral of Caesarea had a supply in his house but forgot to use it on his terminally ill son until a friend reminded him—a detail showing that in contemporary lay piety the saints and their blessings could sometimes be taken for granted. After the healing of his son the deacon built a

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650 The *semantron*, a wooden board struck repeatedly with a mallet to announce the time for services in church, is still used today in the Orthodox East, although almost exclusively in monasteries.
652 *Mir.Anast.Pers.* 10. In the latter case she also anoints the girl with balm.
chapel to the saint and celebrated a festival annually on the anniversary of the miracle.\textsuperscript{656} Balm was not always made with oil, because a goldsmith whose wife was suffering from a broken hip-bone obtained from the monk two jars of balm, one of wine to anoint her entire body and one of water for her to drink.\textsuperscript{657}

The unbelief of the woman of Caesarea referred to above seems to have been due specifically to Anastasius’ being a Persian, but a more widespread doubt about his sanctity is evident in two other stories.\textsuperscript{658} A deacon in Diospolis whose child was ill was advised to seek the help of the newly-arrived relic, but despondently declared that he would not believe “that he [Anastasius] had contested for Christ” unless his child was healed, which duly happened.\textsuperscript{659} Nearby in Samaria, the quartermaster or paymaster of a regiment suffered from some kind of facial palsy, allegedly due to poison snuck into his food by a Samaritan on whom he was quartered.\textsuperscript{660} He had been urged by some of his soldiers to use balm from Anastasius, but when he consulted some of his fellow-officers he was dissuaded by them: “When they heard this they laughed and dissuaded the optio, as if belittling the saint and saying, one that ‘There is no martyr greater than Theodore’ and another ‘than St George’ and another ‘than St Mercurius,’ and each

\textsuperscript{656} AnM 9.
\textsuperscript{657} Mir.Anast.Pers. 10bis.
\textsuperscript{658} Mir.Anast.Pers. 7. Flusin, Anastase le Perse, 338 argues that her unbelief was not necessarily a sign of religious nationalism, but rather a justified suspicion of a relic whose provenance was unclear and suspicious. This is an ingenious interpretation and is in keeping with the evidence for scepticism about saints and relics (generally or in specific cases) in late antiquity. But I think that, at least in the story as redacted in the Miracles, it is indeed a case of Roman chauvinism, because the woman is made to say: “For now I know, having been taught, to venerate even a relic originating from Persia and to honor it and to not call common what God has purified’ (Ὅδε γὰρ νῦν διδαχθέντα καὶ ἀπὸ Περσίδος ἔρχομεν λείψανον προσκυνεῖν καὶ τιμᾶν καὶ ἂν ὁ θεὸς ἐκαθάρισεν μὴ κοινοῦσθαι). But Flusin’s hypothesis is not ruled out with regard to the underlying events since the latter phrase is a quotation of Acts 10:15 and the words may simply have been put into the woman’s mouth by the redactor (probably monastic) who interpreted an anecdote this way.
\textsuperscript{659} Mir.Anast. 11.
\textsuperscript{660} The term used for his rank is optio, which in this period meant paymaster or quartermaster; see Walter E. Kaegi, “Notes on Hagiographic Sources for Some Institutional Changes and Continuities in the Early Seventh Century,” Byzantina 7 (1975): 61–70.
of them according to his faith.” This rivalry constitutes important evidence for lay devotion (“faith”) to particular patron saints, in this case the established military saints whose help was sought by soldiers, as well as the difficulty of a parvenu saint to break into this privileged cult. We may find the competition amusing, but Anastasius made it clear in a dream to the optio that he did not. The latter then hastened to anoint his afflicted face and received healing as expected; this implies that some of the soldiers who had urged him to have recourse to the saint in the first place were carrying a supply of his balm. In another story, a soldier suffering from a disease of the liver did not know of the saint until told by one of the chaplains of his unit, who required him to show faith in the saint before giving him balm. In this last case the soldier did not show any inclination to doubt; rather the chaplain’s insistence on a clear profession of belief “in the God of St Anastasius” demonstrates a tendency among many of the clergy (evident in several of the sources discussed in this study) to ensure that their flock realized that it was ultimately to God, and not only to the saint as some kind of independent deity, that their reverence was owed. This concern to clarify the theology of sainthood is also evident in the fragmentary final miracle, where the demoniac sees two monks, one beating him and the other protecting him; the first is identified as St Cyrus of Menouthis and the other as Anastasius. The author comments that this strange scene does not indicate that the saints are in competition, but to show that they accompany each other in indivisible love. This explanation seems embarrassingly incomplete, but perhaps it is meant to imply that Cyrus was chastising the demoniac for some sin (the fragmentary state of this story does not allow us to discover what that might have been) and

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Anastasius succoring him, thus representing the dialectical synergy of divine justice and divine mercy.  

It is natural to find such a concentration of sacramental piety surrounding the relic of a saint in the making, as tangible material factors promoting devotion to his cult. The texts recording these physical miracles were, as it were, the foundation-charter of the cult of Anastasius. They ensured its perpetuation, even after the probable desolation, in the wake of the Arab invasions, of the cult’s original centers at his monastery near Jerusalem and at the church dedicated to him in Caesarea. By comparison, the many stories of pilgrimage by both monastics and layfolk in the Spiritual Meadow, covering a longer period and broader geographical area, show a background of constant diffuse sacramental piety in which the sudden concentration of spiritual power in the nascent cult of Anastasius flares up in our sources, like a supernova against the fixed stars of the night sky.

Another interesting comparison is the monastery of Choziba. It treasured the tombs of its founder (a Syriac-speaking monk from Mesopotamia) and his four successors, from which holy oil had formerly flowed until an accident due to carelessness that, according to the belief of the monks, incurred the ire of God. The monastery was, however, dedicated to the Theotokos and she was perceived to be its ultimate patron, although it possessed no relic of hers. It was through her intervention that the ban on women entering the monastery was lifted and that the abbot was

663 Flusin notes that Anastasius may be standing in for Cyrus’ usual companion John because both Anastasius and John had been soldiers: Mir.Anast. <18> (pp. 152–53, n. 108).
664 Flusin, Anastase le Perse, 352.
665 Lay pilgrimage: Pratum 174 (a scribe and his wife and servants embark on a ship to go pray at the Holy Land but their prodigal use of water puts everyone aboard at risk of dying of thirst), 224 (the woman who prayed for God to afflict her, discussed above, prays for this at an unnamed martyr’s shrine in Alexandria; in her highly emotional speech it is unclear when she is speaking to the martyr and when to God!). Monastic pilgrimage will be discussed below.

rebuked for attending to wealthy pilgrims more than poor ones. David Olster reads the text of the *Life of George of Choziba* and the *Miracles of the Virgin at Choziba* as an attempt to justify the continued importance of the monastery as a destination of pilgrimage and donations even after the cessation of the flow of holy oil, especially given the monastery’s acute material needs in the wake of the Persian invasions. The lack of the material blessing of holy oil led to a search for other means to attract pilgrims, namely the patronage of the Theotokos herself and the presence of the new holy man George. So whereas we can see the Anastasian dossier as establishing a brand-new cult, the Choziba dossier suggests the struggle to maintain the sense of holiness of an older spiritual center by a combination of cults old and new amidst the fluctuations of spiritual and temporal circumstances.

In addition to sacramental piety surrounding the cults of saints, *Spiritual Meadow* emphasizes practices and beliefs surrounding the central sacraments of baptism and communion. It seems particularly concerned with the validity of baptisms, with various stories telling of solutions to ambiguous cases. There are also two back-to-back stories of miraculous baptismal


668 Olster, "Construction of a Byzantine Saint." His argument is perceptive and probably largely correct. I would disagree with him, however, in his rather cynical view of all this. The struggle to maintain the monastery’s reputation for holiness was not a simple economic operation, but a labor of love by the author Anthony, for whom Choziba was his monastic home and George his spiritual father.

669 A clairvoyant monk in Palestine discerned that a monastic postulant hailing from the West whose parents were pagans has not been baptized (*Pratum* 138, Wortley 113); The clergy of Ascalon debated the validity of the clinical baptism by sand rather than water of a dying Jew, at his own request, by his Christian companions while they traveled through a parched desert area; although he miraculously recovered when thus christened, the bishop deemed it prudent to have him baptized properly at the Jordan River (*Pratum* 176, Wortley 144–46). The bishop, however, rewarded the philoponos who had performed the clinical baptism by ordaining him deacon. Wortley mistranslates philoponos as “fellow with initiative,” which conceals this important testimony to that category of pious laypeople. The fact that he is a philoponos seems to be significant to the plot of the story; perhaps because of his strict piety he is looked up to by his companions as the closest thing to a priest that they have, which is why they assign him the task of the clinical baptism. Perhaps it also makes him more eligible to be raised to clerical rank. Elsewhere Moschus (or perhaps the erudite Sophronius) inserted two patristic passages concerning such questions, one the tale of the seaside baptisms performed by St Athanasius of Alexandria with his playmates while a child, and another a reply by the same saint to someone who asked him about the validity of baptisms of those lacking faith (*Pratum* 197–198, Wortley 174–77).
fonts: one in a village near Coeana that “sweated” water until it was full on the feast of Theophany (January 6, celebrating the Baptism of Christ, a major feast in the East), another in a village near Oenoanda that filled up of its own accord on the Paschal night and then drained after Pentecost. The timing of these miracles corresponded to two major seasons when baptisms took place and thus helped confirm the Church’s traditional liturgical cycle.

The concern with validity in the *Spiritual Meadow* revolves primarily around orthodox provenance of the Eucharist. Some stories tell of a heretic who was supernaturally prevented from entering a shrine until converting to orthodoxy. Others involve the correction of holy but simple-minded monks unwittingly involved in heretical practices and then corrected by a combination of divine and human aid. Yet others miraculously the reality of the orthodox Eucharist against the monophysite one. One particularly interesting story involves a monophysite merchant and his orthodox manager (or agent) in Seleucia Pieria, the ancient port of Antioch.

Following the local custom, the manager received communion on Maundy Thursday, placed it in a box inlaid with mosaic and locked it up in his safe. Now it happened that after Easter the manager was sent to Constantinople on business and he inadvertently left the holy species in his safe. But he gave the key of the safe to his master. One day the master opened the safe and found the mosaic box containing the holy species. This rather upset him, and he did not know what to do with them. He was unwilling to consume them.

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671 Pratum 48–49 (Wortley 39–40). By contrast, in the *Miracles of the Virgin at Choziba*, at the behest of the Theotokos a heterodox woman enters the monastery of Choziba, and it only after her entrance that, convinced by her healing obtained there, that she receives Orthodox communion (*Mir.Virg.Choz.* 1). Cf. Lorenzo Perrone, “Christian holy place and pilgrimage in an age of dogmatic conflicts: Popular religion and confessional affiliation in Byzantine Palestine (fifth to seventh centuries),” *PrOC* 48 (1998): 5–37, esp. 27–30 on Moschus.
672 Pratum 178, 199 (Wortley 147–48 and 177–78).
673 Pratum 29 (Wortley 21).
since they originated in the catholic Church, whilst he was of the sect of Severus. So he left them in the safe, thinking that the manager would return and consume them. When it came around again to the great day of Maundy Thursday and the manager had still not returned, the master wanted to burn them so that they would not remain there for a second year. When he opened the safe he saw that all the holy portions had sprouted shoots. He was overcome with much fear and wonder at this strange and unexpected sight. He and all his household took the holy particles and, with a cry of ‘Lord, have mercy,’ off they went at a run to the holy church in search of the saintly bishop Dionysios. This great and fearful wonder which defied all reason was not seen merely by two or three persons or even by a few who could easily be counted. The whole church saw it: townsfolk and countrymen, natives and immigrants, all who travelled by land or by sea, men and women, old men and children, youths and elders, masters and slaves, rich and poor, rulers and their subjects, literate and illiterate, those dedicated to the clerical life and those who had espoused virginity and asceticism; widows and decently married people; those in and those under authority. Some cried out ‘Lord have mercy’ whilst others praised God in different ways. Yet all gave thanks to God for his extraordinary and unspeakable marvels. Many joined the holy catholic and apostolic Church on account of their faith in this miracle.\footnote{Pratum 79 (Wortley 63–64).}

The story makes a point of the public nature of the miracle by its enumeration of all the orders and classes of the ecclesiastical and civil community, including various subsets of laypeople. While reinforcing the external boundaries of orthodoxy, it thus also promoted internal cohesion of all these diverse components of the local Church.
Setting these boundaries was especially important to Moschus because Eucharistic communion was one of the only markers of difference between orthodox and monophysite for the majority of people. Only one story mentions the Four Ecumenical Councils as a criterion of orthodoxy, and even there without any mention of their dogmatic content (especially the confession of Christ “in two natures”), but rather describing the choice between orthodoxy and monophysitism as a choice between Jerusalem and Egypt—that is, between a geographical rather than a dogmatic symbol of one or the other. One converted by switching Eucharistic communion, which apparently did not involve any formal ceremony of abjuration of heresy or confession of Orthodoxy, but could be as simple as calling the shrine’s deacon or priest over in order to commune from his hands.

On the other hand, this patrolling of Eucharistic boundaries was mostly self-imposed. It was easy to partake of the other side’s Eucharist without anybody noticing: a simple elder who was admonished with the criterion of the Four Councils was a member of an apparently orthodox community in Egypt (the Lavra of Monidia) and consulted an orthodox colleague for advice on a vision directing him to mend his syncretistic ways, but until that point did not think twice about receiving communion in a non-orthodox church. We also have a story of a laywoman crossing

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675 Pratum 178 (Wortley 147–48). This practice is confirmed by other contemporary testimonies, such as in Sophronis’ Miracles of Cyrus and John. The practice with clerical converts was probably more stringent; John the Almsgiver took the special precaution of requiring written confessions from refugee clergy from Palestine, even if they claimed to be Orthodox. In his case he was also providing stipends and benefices for these refugees, requiring greater vigilance to avoid the embarrassment of maintaining heretical clergy on the Orthodox patriarchate’s roll.

676 Pratum 48–49 (Wortley 39–40). It is possible that Monidia was not an all-Orthodox community, given the evidence for mixed communities elsewhere in Egypt for the sixth and seventh century (e.g. at Labla, Scetis, and even at one Pachomian coenobium). For a summary see Berhnard Palme, “Political Identity versus Religious Distinction? The Case of Egypt in the Later Roman Empire,” in Visions of Community in the Post-Roman World, edited by Walter Pohl, Clemens Gantner, and Richard Payne (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2012), 81–98. But the frequent mention of Monidia the Spiritual Meadow and the high esteem that is attributed to it therein suggest that it was an exclusively orthodox foundation. As a lavra, however, the organization was rather looser than in a coenobium, so it would have been relatively easy for the elder in question to visit other, potentially heterodox churches elsewhere.
confessional bounds, a monophysite of Melitene who visited her orthodox next-door neighbor to receive her communion. There is no hint that she was intending to commit to Chalcedonian orthodoxy herself. In that case her husband ran to stop her and forced her to spit up the Eucharistic portion, which was miraculously taken up by a flash of light when it fell in the dirt. So even between a married couple of the same confession we see different views of acceptable confessional interaction. The miracle led the husband to become a monk in an orthodox monastery on Cyprus in order to repent deeply of his sacrilege. But switching confessions was not the only possible outcome: his wife and their orthodox neighbor could conceivably have seen the miracle as a confirmation that the Chalcedonian communion was valid as well as the anti-Chalcedonian, not instead of it. This is suggested in the story of the sprouting Eucharist quoted above. The monophysite merchant who found the reserve portions of his orthodox agent did not want to consume them himself because of their Chalcedonian provenance and he considered burning them. But this latter course may, in fact, have been intended to dispose of them properly, rather than to desecrate them. Many late antique Christians reconciled the evidence for miracles on both sides by concluding that both were of approximately equal orthodoxy and holiness and quietly continued to resort to both.

The *Spiritual Meadow* manifests a concern for the strict control of the Eucharist from a confessional perspective, in terms of eligibility to receive based on whether one adhered to Chalcedonian orthodoxy or not. In this it may have been swimming against the current of common practice. But within those boundaries, it describes approvingly custom that were more

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678 Pratum 30 (Wortley 21–22).
679 In the Orthodox Church today, burning is the proper course for elements of the Eucharist that have for some reason become unusable, e.g. if someone vomits them up. If the monophysite businessman had really considered them as worthless or worse, he could have simply thrown them out, in a manner similar to the husband in Melitene when he forced his wife to spit up the orthodox Eucharist she was in the middle of consuming.
680 See the discussion of the same issues in Anastasius of Sinai in Ch. 8 of the present study.
fluid in the handling and the uses to which the Eucharist was put than would become the norm in later Christian tradition. We have already mentioned earlier in this chapter the tale of the Apamean shepherd boys who unwittingly drew down fire from heaven on their play-Eucharist. Another tale tells how an unordained monk of Choziba accidentally consecrated the supply of bread he was bringing to his monastery for liturgical use by reciting the anaphora while on the road. 681 This seems to be a version of the original anecdote as preserved in the Miracles recorded by Anthony of Choziba, where the monk in question is the fifth spiritual father of the monastery, while he was still a novice. 682 The Spiritual Meadow also shows the consumption of the Eucharist by laypeople outside normal liturgical times and places. In addition to the story of the monophysite woman visiting her neighbor to partake of the latter’s Eucharist at home, another tale 683 Thus on a natural level, it was apparently common for laypeople to keep portions of the Eucharist at home for self-communion, an early Christian practice that would become less and less common in the course of the Middle Ages. 683 On a supernatural level, several stories shows the Eucharistic consecration itself taking place miraculously in abnormal situations, namely outside the physical boundaries of a consecrated church and the hierarchical boundaries of priestly ordination, and thus demonstrating what Derek Krueger has called the “unbounded body of God.” 684 But even the proper people use the Eucharist in potentially scandalous ways. Julian the Stylite tosses it into a boiling pot to prove its superiority over the false monophysite Eucharist. 685 Regardless of the polemical use, this would be unthinkable in later medieval

681 Pratum 26 (Wortley 17).
682 Mir.Virg.Choz. 5.
683 The agent in the tale above has an ornately decorated box in which to keep the sacrament.
685 Pratum 29 (Wortley, 21).
theology and practice and certainly today would be considered sacrilegious in most quarters. But it is in line with the numerous examples, in other sources, of the free use of the Eucharist in late antiquity, beyond its simple ingestion in the context of the liturgy. We must note that Sophronius and John Moschus, despite their known theological erudition, did not disapprove of such uses or even question their factuality. What counted for them was not the formalities of the ritual, but the action of the Spirit therein. Of course this does not mean the dismantling of all canonical norms. In fact the unbounded Eucharist often helped to reinforce what they saw as the most important boundaries, the canonical limits of the Church. But this polemical purpose does not exhaust the meaning of the tales: they also urged readers to be open to realizing when God’s sovereign grace is at work and accept it with wonder and joy, as edification.

This is evident in one final example of Eucharistic piety. At the estate (ktêma) of Mardardos near the city of Aigai in Cilicia, there was a church of John the Baptist serviced by an elderly priest, against whom the inhabitants (oikêtores) lodge a complaint with the bishop of Aigai for his erratic celebration of the liturgy, starting late in the afternoon (instead of the usual morning-time) and even then not following the normal order of the service. The priest revealed to the bishop that this was due to the fact that he conducted the service only when he perceived the overshadowing of the altar by the Holy Spirit; this explanation satisfied both the bishop and the church-goers. It is notable in this example that laypeople object to what they

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686 E.g. Gorgonia anointed herself all over her body with the Eucharist in order to be healed of an ailment; the host was placed on the chest of a monk when he was buried, as a viaticum for the journey out of this life, in the Dialogues of Gregory the Great; and in a following chapter we will see Anastasius of Sinai’s tale of a woman who clutched an extra portion she had secured at the Liturgy as an apotropaeic device while walking through a demon-haunted place. In a Monophysite context, cf. Jacob of Edessa’s disapproval of the burying of Eucharistic portions at boundary markers on farmer’s fields to ward off pests and adverse weather.
687 Pratum 27 (Wortley 19).
688 Pratum 27 (Wortley 19).
perceive as clerical carelessness and take it into their own hands to lodge a complaint with the local prelate.

*Lay virtues: orthodoxy and philosophy*

As we can tell from the discussion of the Eucharist above, orthodoxy was a major concern of our sources and a major component of piety. The word “piety” itself, *eusebeia*, is often simply a synonym for right belief in the vocabulary of the time. Orthodoxy trumped asceticism: the concern of the stories mentioned above about the holy but simple elders was to show how they were corrected by a combination of angelic and human admonition, thus saving them from the sorry fate of losing the reward for their hard work due to their straying into heterodoxy. 689 According to the *Spiritual Meadow* it was preferable for a monk to succumb to fornication than to cease venerating the icon of the Theotokos, and the exemplary poverty and psalmody of a Syrian monophysite monk staying at a hostel in Alexandria was proved to be of no worth by an orthodox monk’s vision of plucked and soot-blackened dove, representing his heterodox faith, hovering above his head when he stood up to pray. 690 Although these tales involve monks alone, they were of great import for laypeople too, who could be spiritually superior to certain monks in orthodox belief even while not matching them in ascetic exercises.

The strong emphasis on miracles in the *Spiritual Meadow* is explicitly justified by one of the final chapters, where it is attributed to the need to firm up “weaker souls” and even convert the schismatics, if they are so disposed. Such miracles are ascribed both to the ancient foci of Christian veneration, the martyrs, but by now also to the Fathers of Orthodoxy, both dogmatic

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689 The final sentence of *Pratum* 178, on the monk who had to choose between being buried according to the manner of Jerusalem (orthodoxy) and Egypt (monophysitism), is “This was done so that the elder would not lose his labour and be condemned as a heretic” (Wortley 148).

690 *Pratum* 45, 106 (Wortley 35–36 and 85–86).
These were indeed “select Fathers,” to use Patrick Gray’s term, since by this
time the monophysites had also established their own canon of fathers and holy men, especially
in the writings of John Rufus and John of Ephesus. Such Fathers were also necessary because
the older martyrs could be ambiguous: even if a particular confession controlled a given martyr
shrine, members of the opposing group would often frequent it anyway to venerate the relics and
take of its holy oil. In this context of practical openness, it was the task of apologists to render the
shrines rhetorically exclusive: thus, as we saw in the previous chapter, Sophronius, despite his
disavowal of propagandistic intentions in the Miracles of Cyrus and John, recounts several cases
of pressure from the saints on Monophysites and at least one pagan to join the Orthodox
Church.

Yet informed authors such as Sophronius and John Moschus would have been aware that
the Monophysites had their own saints and miracles too. Although they probably lent more
credence to their own side’s miracles than to their opponents’, they would have realized that
reliance on miracles alone could not vindicate Chalcedonian Orthodoxy. The justification of the
need for miracles as catering to “weaker souls” seems to me to indicate that they thought
miracles to be useful specifically for shoring up the strength of unlearned people such as the
simple monks referred to above. Even if miracles were not the final word, they were nevertheless
necessary, if only to avoid yielding the field of battle to the Monophysites at the very outset. The

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691 Pratum 213: Πρός γὰρ διὰ τῶν θείων Πατέρων, καὶ εἰ τι ἀνωθεν διὰ τῶν ἁγίων μαρτύρων
ἀνημέρας γνωμένων σημείων, ἐν τῇ καθολικῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ Ἐκκλησίᾳ, ἐτε καὶ σήμερον. The Greek text is
somewhat corrupt, but the sense seems clear enough.
693 Cf. Phil Booth, “Orthodox and Heretic in the Early Byzantine Cult(s) of Saints Cosmas and Damian.”
In An Age of Saints? Power, Conflict, and Dissent in Early Medieval Christianity, edited by Peter Sarris, Matthew
was purposefully maintained as a neutral ground of sorts by the authorities in late sixth century
Constantinople when imperial policy still called for a carrot and stick approach to Monophysites.
Chalcedonian theologians needed to adduce their own miracles just to stake a claim on the attention of the great mass of Christians, learned as well as unlearned.\textsuperscript{694}

We know, however, that for John and especially Sophronius the argument went further. They were the theological advisers and point men for the Chalcedonian Orthodox patriarch of Alexandria, John the Almsgiver, during the 610s, and Sophronius of course came into his own as a theologian in the 630s in his struggle, now as patriarch of Jerusalem, against imperial monoenergism. Their interest in the finer points of theology is evident in the \textit{Spiritual Meadow}, in their account of Theodore the Philosopher and Cosmas the Scholarius, on whose asceticism we commented briefly earlier in the chapter. They frequented the lectures of the former, who dressed in a philosopher’s cloak and only owned a few books, and enjoyed the library of the second, who owned nothing but a mass of books, out of which he operated a kind of theological lending library.\textsuperscript{695} His specialty was anti-Jewish polemic, for which he both wrote his own arguments and would send others out for oral debates with Jews, as he himself did not like to interrupt his cultivation of tranquility (\textit{hêsychia}) by leaving the house. Theodore did not enjoy the same tranquility: “But he had also the consolation of the company of the brethren, contact with friends; a not inconsiderable distraction when he was active and when he was teaching.”\textsuperscript{696}

This comment forms part of a \textit{comparatio vitarum} performed by Cosmas the Scholarius at the request of some monks, between Theodore and another lay ascetic we have already mentioned, Zoïlus the Reader. The latter was characterized by great reclusion and by the laborious occupation of copying manuscripts in addition to keeping house on his own and not allowing

\textsuperscript{694} Note also \textit{Pratum} 26, where the holy elder Cyriacus at the Lavra of Calamon counsels a Mesopotamian monk from Dara about his struggle with lewd thoughts. The monk confesses that he is a Nestorian and when urged ardently by Kyriakos to convert, he responds that he is bewildered because all of the sects claim the truth for themselves. He is finally convinced by a miraculous vision through the prayer of the elder.

\textsuperscript{695} \textit{Pratum} 171–172 (Wortley 139–42).

\textsuperscript{696} \textit{Pratum} 171 (Wortley 140).
himself any refreshment from reading.\textsuperscript{697} Cosmas concluded that they were “equal in their humility, poverty, and self-discipline” and that each would receive the reward consonant with the sum total of all of these spiritual labors.\textsuperscript{698}

Thus, although John Moschus and Sophronius greatly appreciate the rational learning of such men, this admiration was founded not only on their erudition but on their philosophical, i.e. ascetical, way of life. In two other passages philosophers visit monks seeking a good word, only to be rebuked for pursuing the study of words rather than the study of true philosophy, which requires silence; they are \textit{philologoi} rather than \textit{philosophoi}.\textsuperscript{699} The philosophers, however, are presented as seeking to hear an edifying word from the monk; this shows that we are in a world very changed from the early fourth century when pagan philosophers came to St Anthony seeking to ridicule him.\textsuperscript{700} But true philosophy is not limited to monastics. The woman mentioned earlier who feared that God had abandoned her because he had not recently allowed her or any of her household to suffer is qualified as having a “philosophical soul,” a turn of phrase that harks back to John Chrysostom’s sermons to his lay congregations.\textsuperscript{701}

\textsuperscript{697} Ibid. Wortley translates \textit{τὰ καλλιγραφία [sic]} as calligraphy, but Lampe defines \textit{καλλιγραφεῖον} simply as "scriptorium, writing-room"; \textit{καλλιγραφέω} can mean "write beautifully" but in the sense of writing longhand, in contrast to shorthand writers, \textit{ταχυγράφοι} (pp. 696–97). The reference to not enjoying refreshment from reading must refer to secular literature, such as philosophy or rhetoric, which would serve as a kind of break from the intensity of spiritual reading. It is instructive that this is marked as an ascetical labor, and recalls somewhat Jerome’s famous self-criticism for being a Ciceronian rather than a Christian.

\textsuperscript{698} Ibid. p. 141. Wortley’s translation of the final phrase in this \textit{comparatio} as “the good pleasure of God, which is hidden and concealed from people” seems to suggest a wild card of God’s arbitrary grace, but it is a mistranslation: \textit{τῆς κεκρυμμένης ἀπὸ ἀνθρώπων καὶ λεληθυίας εὖαρεστήσεως τοῦ θεοῦ} is an objective, not a subjective genitive, and would be better translated as “the pleasing of God that is hidden and escapes the notice of men.” But this is not to deny the deep commitment of Moschus to the incomprehensible freedom of God’s grace, as show in various forms of hidden holiness and miracles in unexpected places.

\textsuperscript{699} \textit{Pratum} 156 (Wortley 129–130). It continues: “How long will you cultivate the art of speech, you who have no understanding of what it is to speak? Let the object of your philosophy be always to contemplate death, possessing yourselves in silence and tranquility.” In \textit{Pratum} 222/Nissen 3 (Wortley 199): “You spend your money to learn how to speak: I left the world to learn how to keep silent.’ They were filled with amazement on hearing this and went their way edified.” These are almost certainly different versions of the same story

\textsuperscript{700} \textit{Vit.Anton.} 72. The stories in the \textit{Spiritual Meadow} may well be reworkings of this episode rather than original occurrences.

\textsuperscript{701} \textit{Pratum} 224/Nissen 5 (201).
Whereas the *Spiritual Meadow* enshrines a specific form of polemic against heresy, namely the use of edifying and often miraculous stories, it has offered us glimpses of the facts on the ground, a world less carefully divided between along confessional lines. The other sources for this chapter add to this picture. Antiochus was strongly opposed to the Monophysites, as is evident from a passage at the end of the *Pandect* where he expressed his worry about the enthronement of a monophysite, Athanasius the Camel-Driver, as patriarch of Antioch. He proceeded to give both a concise profession of faith, phrased in impeccably Chalcedonian terms, and a short catalogue of heresies.\(^\text{702}\) This polemical section is an afterthought, and fits awkwardly in the flow of the chapter, which is supposed to be “On the Kingdom of Heaven.” The rest of the text has little to say about those outside the pale of Orthodoxy. Even in the introduction and the first chapter “On Faith,” where we might expect Antiochus to expatiate on polemics, he only gives brief overviews of the distinction between canonical scripture, apocrypha, and patristic writings, and of right belief in the Trinity, which would have been unobjectionable to mainstream monophysites.\(^\text{703}\) Elsewhere he made only a few references to Jews and pagans, for the sake of contrast and warning rather than polemic. The most interesting is his story of a Sinaïte hermit who was led astray by trusting in his own dreams, which the demons manipulated to make him convert to Judaism.\(^\text{704}\) He reported it as a recent occurrence, an anti-apophthegm in the growing collection of ascetical wisdom. But we should not neglect it as evidence for the lure of Judaism in our period, an attraction that would only grow with the removal of the authority of the Christian empire during the Persian and then the Arab conquests of the Roman Near East.

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\(^\text{702}\) *Pand*. 130 (Kephalas 316–19).
\(^\text{703}\) That is, all except the Tritheists, who were admittedly quite active in the second half of the sixth century.
\(^\text{704}\) *Pand*. 84.
If we turn to the references in the main body of the text to the nature of belonging to the Church, we find him speaking in a vague but positive and edificatory manner rather than a negative polemical manner. He referred frequently to the need to exercise a given virtue toward everyone and especially toward one’s fellow-believers.\footnote{Pand. 11 (one must lend, μάλιστα τοῖς ὄμοπίστοις καὶ συγκληρονόμους ἀδελφοῖς), 96 (love of fellow-believer).} He exhorted his audience to various virtues on the basis that that is how Christians \textit{tout court} ought to believe.\footnote{Pand. 48, 51, 53, 56.} Elsewhere, he took natural civic relations and reinterpreted them as Christian solidarity.\footnote{Pand. 42 (reinterprets civic terms into ecclesiastical), 93 (equality and solidarity through common faith, in opposition to favoritism).} In several passages, without explicitly mentioning the heterodox, he ruled out anger against one’s fellow humans, reserving this emotion for one’s own passions and the demons who stoke them.\footnote{Pand. 23 (no anger against fellow-believer, but only against one’s own passions and thoughts; no mention of non-fellow-believers), 54 (no hostility against those of the same nature and faith [ἔμοιόφόλοις καὶ ὄμοπίστοις], but only against the serpent i.e. the Devil), 57 (no hatred, using the same pair of nature and faith), 709 Pand. 97 (hospitality especially to those of household of faith), 99 (visitation especially to fellow-believers).} In others, he pressed the need to help others through alms and visitation, especially “those of the household of faith”—and thus, presumably, not exclusively to them.\footnote{Pand. 97 (hospitality especially to those of household of faith), 99 (visitation especially to fellow-believers).} In other passages he used Pauline language about the Church as body and as unity in concord, with corresponding language about sympathetically coming to one another’s aid.\footnote{Pand. 58 (body), 73 (seek not your own, but the benefit τὰ τῶν ὄμοσώμων ἀδελφῶν), 107 (mourning for fellow-members/believers lost in wars), 80 (unity in concord).} In the latter he slips imperceptibly from a broad vision of the unity of the whole Church into a more narrow focus on concord within a single monastic brotherhood; the same amalgamation occurs in Basil’s \textit{Rules}, which may be the source of much of Antiochus’ rhetoric here.

With regard to higher theology and philosophy, apart from his formulaic confessions of faith, Antiochus does not go beyond moralizing citation of ancient Hellenic exempla of

\footnote{Pand. 11 (one must lend, μάλιστα τοῖς ὄμοπίστοις καὶ συγκληρονόμους ἀδελφοῖς), 96 (love of fellow-believer).}
chastity. The he does have a strong sense of mystical contemplation of the divine Light, sketched
in the propenultimate chapter “On Love for God.” This is described as a product of theology,
which here should be understood as a mystical charism rather than an analytical activity of the
mind. A start in it can be made by one’s own effort, primarily by consulting wise and holy
elders, “for such conversation is reckoned toward theology,” because when conducted properly it
is divinely inspired; furthermore, it is not wholly barred to laypeople. But while edifying
instruction is allowed to monks, its exercise and custody is primarily assigned to the clergy, led
by the episcopacy. Even these functions, however, are described largely in mystical language
borrowed from Dionysius the Areopagite. The monk, despite his holiness, is here reminded
firmly of his subordinate place in the hierarchy, near the laity.

Antiochus is thus clear on the limits of the Church and its proper internal order, but
allows some fluidity in dealing with those outside. The Life of George of Choziba and the dossier
of Anastasius the Persian are even more flexible. George was concerned with deviations from
Orthodoxy more on a practical than on a theoretical level. He was certainly upset by the wrestler
Epiphanius’ decision to resort to magicians, explaining his continued afflictions as, “Because
you forsook the saints and went out to magicians, and from them you received deceived help,
and you shamed your faith, and God was wrathful on account of this transgression and

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711 Pand. 20, referring to an unnamed king who, upon beholding a beautiful priestess in Ephesus, left
the city in order not to be tempted by her, and to Cyrus of Persia who refused to see a certain Pantheia who
was famed for extraordinary beauty.

712 Pand. 128 (Kephalas 310); there is also an evocation of the vision and comfort of the Heavenly
Jerusalem in Pand. 126 (“On the Calling of God”).

713 Most of the relevant passage is a quotation of Diadochus of Photike Capita 67, who discusses
theology in this way.

714 Pand. 102, the chapter “On Avoiding Untimely Conversations,” but which also includes much
advice on proper spiritual conversations.

715 Pand. 111 (“On Leaders”), 113 (“On Subjection”), 120 (“On Expiation”), 122 (“On Episcopacy

716 Especially in Pand. 122 (“On Episcopacy”).
Later he prohibited his disciple Anthony, the author of the text, from keeping company with a monk who had moved to Choziba from Rhaïthou (on the Sinai Peninsula), but without disparaging him in any way. The elder’s discernment was vindicated after his death, “for,” Anthony wrote, “this brother troubled me much concerning many matters and concerning incorrect dogmas; and indeed he was also a Galatian by race.”

It is unclear of what the monk’s errors consisted; apart from the mysterious final phrase, I would be inclined to see an Origenistic or Evagrian adherent here, given the recent conflict over those ideas in mid-sixth century Palestine. This supposition is reinforced by a long discourse given near the end of the Life, where George warmly admonishes his monastic brethren against the spirit of delusion, born of false speculation infected by pride. In any case, George (and Anthony afterward) were more concerned about the practical spiritual damage than heresiological labels. The reaction of George corresponds closely to that of Barsanuphius and John of Gaza under similar circumstances: resistance without condemnation unless necessary.

More surprising, though, is a remark dropped, almost casually, by George in the course of a discourse on piety toward God, as recorded early in the Life:

Piety [or, reverence] is an ordering arrangement of the entire company of the saints. For I tell you, brethren, that there is neither Greek, nor Jew, nor Samaritan, who has true piety.

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717 Vit.Georg.Choz. 4.17. George proceeded to give a discourse against the use of magic and the general low standard of Christians in that generation. The wrestler’s fans who first brought him to magicians are designated “so-called Christians” by the author.


719 Despite its official condemnation at the Fifth Ecumenical Council and the breaking of the power of the Origenist party in the Judaean desert monasteries, the ideas continued to be studied by both Orthodox and heterodox ascetics; cf. Booth, Crisis of Empire, 18–22. His Galatian origin is probably emphasized here because Galatia was generally considered a hotbed of heresy (see Canon 95 of the Council in Trullo, at Nedungatt and Featherstone, Council in Trullo Revisited, 175).

720 Vit.Georg.Choz. 51–55. This fascinating passage deserves careful in-depth study, which we cannot, unfortunately, give it here.
and fairness who is not loved and desired by both God and men. For in every nation he
who fears and reveres God is acceptable to Him. 721

The remark seems baffling at first, but in comparison with the passages examined above and
with the whole context of George’s practical piety it makes more sense, especially given the
contemporary failure of Christians to live up to the standards demanded by their own baptism
and faith and the bad example they thus set for non-Christians. In the theological context of the
time George almost certainly did not consider the beliefs of the Greeks, Jews, or Samaritans
“good enough,” but his ethical emphasis on avoiding judging and condemning others led him to
leave judgment in the hands of God. He addresses this God, even while praying for him to smite
the people of his contemporary generation for their sins, as “Master God of compassion and Lord
of mercy, who want all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.” 722 This concern
with the salvation of all was enshrined in a more theoretical way in the writings of Maximus the
Confessor, the subject of the next chapter, in his adaptation and correction of the Origenian
notion of apocatastasis.

Anastasius the Persian moved across many confessional boundaries during his life and
afterlife. The confession of Anastasius’ first Christian host, the silversmith in Hierapolis, is not
recorded, but it is likely that he was either a monophysite or a Nestorian, since it is specified that
he was a Persian. 723 The second host, the silversmith in Jerusalem, was probably orthodox,
because he brought Anastasius to the leaders of the Church of Jerusalem for baptism. 724 Over the

721 Vit.Georg.Choz. 3.14. Ἡ δὲ εὐλάβεια σύστημά ἐστι πάσης τῆς συμμορίας τῶν ἄγιων. Λέγω γάρ
ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν οὐχ Ἐλλην, οὐκ Ἰουδαῖος, οὐδὲ Σαμαριτής, ὃς ἔχει ἀληθὴν εὐλάβειαν καὶ
ἐπιείκειαν, ὃς ἀγαπᾷ καὶ ἔρασμὸς ἐστὶ παρὰ τοῖς Θεῷ καὶ ἀνθρώποις. Ἐν παντὶ γὰρ ἐθνεὶ ὁ φοβοῦμενος καὶ
εὐλαβοῦμενος τὸν θεὸν δεκτὸς αὐτῶν ἐστιν. In my translation I have surmised a missing οὐκ between δς and
ἀγαπᾷ, as seems to be required by the sense.
722 Vit.Georg.Choz. 7.30. The second half of the phrase is a quotation of 1 Tim. 2:4.
723 Vit.Anast. 8. This silversmith was probably not a native of the city, but an immigrant after the
conquest.
724 Vit.Anast. 10.
course of his martyrdom and the aftermath, we find him interacting frequently with Persian
Christians. Some of these were from the family of Yazdin, the well-known Nestorian Christian
minister of Chosroes, and along with other local Christians they frequented the prison to venerate
Anastasius’ chains and seek his prayers.\(^{725}\) After his execution, his body was recovered by his
fellow-monk from Jerusalem with the aid of the servants of Yazdin and monks from a local
monastery.\(^{726}\) He was accompanied on this journey by the Persian bishop Elias, who had been
serving as emissary between the Persian Catholicos and the emperor Heracleius and is described
by the author as “very orthodox.”\(^{727}\) On the journey back west with the relic, part of it was given
as a gift to the Catholicos. Furthermore, it was escorted to Palmyra by a Saracen phylarch, who
would have likely been either monophysite or Nestorian, depending on the tribe.\(^{728}\) So it is clear
that Anastasius, as a Persian Christian martyr, easily crossed confessional boundaries both before
and after his death.

This phenomenon requires some explanation. As monks in the tradition of Mar Saba,
Anastasius and his companion would have been trained in the most rigorous Chalcedonian
Orthodoxy. Furthermore, they were in close epistolary contact with their home monastery
through large portions of their journey, so their journey into foreign lands did not render them
free agents who, out of independence or out of perplexity, would be prone to watering down the
strictness of orthodoxy.

Other evidence, however, makes this picture more complex. On the Chalcedonian side,
this was a period of intense diplomatic activity by the highest leaders of the imperial Church,

\(^{725}\) *Vit.Anast.* 31, 36.

\(^{726}\) *Vit.Anast.* 39, *Trans.Anast.* 3–4. When the Jerusalemite monk stole the body to bring back to
Anastasius’ home monastery, he did so with the aid of a local Christian youth and made sure to leave some
small portions of the relic behind, so it is obvious that the *furta sacra* was not motivated by confessional
antagonism.

\(^{727}\) *Trans.Anast.* 2.

\(^{728}\) *Trans.Anast.* 5.
including the emperor Heracleius, the patriarch of Constantinople Sergius and a number of bishops such as Cyrus of Phasis (soon to become patriarch of Alexandria), to bring about a grand ecclesiastical union. This would have been less relevant during Anastasius’ journey toward martyrdom, when the Zoroastrian Chosroes was still alive and strong. Anastasius’ refusal to pray for the Persian Christians who visited him in prison and give them something as a blessing may have been based on doctrinal grounds, although it is more likely that it is due to humility. But the brother-monk bringing his relic back in close cooperation with the bishop Elias and the Catholicos was probably part of the current ecclesiastical politics, in the course of which Heracleius himself had received communion at the hands of the Catholicos.

The ability of a monk of the Sabbaite monastery of Abba Anastasius to participate in such activities is less incongruous than might at first appear based on two observations. Firstly, Anastasius’ immediate supervisor, who formed him in the Christian and monastic life, was Pyrrhus, soon to become a lieutenant of Sergius in Constantinople and his eventual successor as patriarch, upholding monothelete doctrine. His support for monoenergism and then monotheletism may have stemmed from his time in Constantinople and closeness to Sergius, but it is also possible that he obtained this position because of predilections already formed in Palestine. This corresponds to other evidence that the doctrinal situation in Palestine in the 620s and 630s was fragmented and that Sophronius did not enjoy unanimous support when he was elected patriarch of Jerusalem in 634. Secondly, the Church of the East itself was itself in state of conflict, both outwardly with the monophysites and inwardly between proponents of the more hard-line Nestorian (or, more properly, “Theodoran,” after Theodore of Mopsuestia) doctrine formulated by Babai and others who were more open to Chalcedonian terminology. Thus it may

730 For a review of the period in relation to the Anastasius dossier and bringing to bear texts from the monophysite and Nestorian camps, see Flusin, Anastase le Perse, 319–27.
not have been simply political compromise when the author of the *Translation* described the Persian bishop Elias as “very orthodox.”

If clergy and monastics were more flexible about confessional boundaries in the conditions of the 630s and 640s, we should therefore not be surprised that many laypeople were. What all of them revered was the ultimate form of Christian philosophy represented by Anastasius’ martyrdom and the spiritual power that flowed from it.

*Relations between monastics and laypeople*

In the passages discussed throughout this chapter we have had ample occasion to observe monastics and laypeople not just in isolation, but interacting with each other. In this section I wish to add a few more examples and to summarize and clarify these relationships.

One important factor bringing monastics closer to laypeople is their own embedding in the socio-economic relations of the world, the give-and-take that was so dangerous for the ideals of monasticism but nevertheless necessary for its continued survival and even salutary for its continued role in church and society. The *Pandect* contains a number of chapters that seem oddly out of place in a monastic primer because they deal with problems that we might think foreign to monastic life. Even if we keep in mind that the text was intended to be read (or heard) by laypeople as well, most of these chapters specifically address these topics within a monastic context. Greed, receiving gifts, lending, interest, rash speech at a symposium, strife with the powerful, keeping secrets, rendering just judgment, just weights and measures, favoritism,

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731 For an overview of the situation in theology and church politics at the time, see . Cf. Daniel Larison, “Return to Authority: The Monothelete Controversy and the Role of Text, Emperor, and Council in the Sixth Ecumenical Council” (PhD Diss. University of Chicago, 2009), arguing that monenergism and monotheletism should not be viewed as political compromises, but as developments of Neo-Chalcedonian theology in one particular direction, intended to reinforce orthodoxy rather than compromise it for political gains.
offering of first fruits: all receive their own chapters.\textsuperscript{732} This seems less strange when we remember that many monasteries were, by this time, well-endowed with land and money and had frequent interactions with the rich and powerful of society.

What Antiochus addresses as general ethical problems, we find illustrated in the \textit{Spiritual Meadow} and the \textit{Life of George of Choziba} and \textit{Miracles of the Most Holy Mother of God at Choziba}. Sometimes the economic interactions were transient and limited to the bare necessities, such as the Scetiote monks who left their desert to work as day-laborers during the harvest season, but even in that situation the monk got in an argument with his employer.\textsuperscript{733} Or they might be small favors bestowed by family members. Moschus recounts a story about the monastery founded by Gregory the Great in Rome, who laid down a strict rule of poverty. One monk received some money from a relative to buy himself a shirt, and although he promptly reported the gift to his abbot, he was nevertheless excommunicated.\textsuperscript{734} The story is intended to serve as a shocking example to impress the virtue of poverty in its strictest coenobitic form. But Moschus clearly did not expect this as the norm since he reports many other stories of monks owning small amounts of money or property without any remark. He and Sophronius carried money with them, since they had some available to give in alms to a lay beggar who may have been a holy fool.\textsuperscript{735}

The most basic temptation of economic interactions with laypeople was that it was easy to slip into being a sponger. Antiochus warned against clergy and monastics becoming

\textsuperscript{732} \textit{Pand}. 8, 9, 11, 12, 22, 37, 64, 75, 76, 93, 120. Some of these are interpreted partially in a spiritual sense, such as \textit{Pand}. 64, "On Keeping a Secret," which takes μυστήριον primarily as it connotes the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. Some activities are prohibited outright, such as taking interest on loans in \textit{Pand}. 12.

\textsuperscript{733} \textit{Pratum} 183.

\textsuperscript{734} \textit{Pratum} 192.

\textsuperscript{735} \textit{Pratum} 111. They gave him five folleis.
“traffickers in Christ and lovers of money.” The Alexandrian elder that Moschus and Sophronius consulted about the latter’s plan to renounce the world gave this dour evaluation of contemporary monasticism: “Today there is no end of our knocking on doors, our travelling around all the cities and the countryside, to see if there is anywhere we can snap up some gratification for our avarice and vain-glory and fill our souls with vanity.”

If a community of monks was to avoid these vices and stay settled, it needed some property. But property always entailed the danger of drawing down the greed of others, especially the powerful in society (hence the need for Antiochus’ chapter “On Not Disputing with the Powerful”). One monk who had retained a fine plot of land after his renunciation found that it attracted the covetousness of a local grandee. The latter was able to increase his pressure after becoming governor of the region: “he threatened him often, and put his own cattle on the other’s land.” Eventually the conflict was resolved by the intercession of a local holy man whom the governor respected, who wrote a letter stating, “He who lives the life of a monk does so in order to not possess anything through which he might be wronged. But if he possesses something, let him be wronged, for he is no monk.” Although the decision was, as it were, in his favor, the governor was touched by the elder’s impartial judgment and the implied rebuke of his own injustice, and he stopped encroaching on the monk’s land.

Apart from the danger of greedy neighbors, a more nuts-and-bolts problem was the distraction that maintaining landed property involved. In one monastery, the monk who tended the camel that turned the water-drawing wheel at the well in the courtyard had missed the sound of

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736 Pand. 36 (Kephalas 101).
737 Pratum 110 (Wortley 91).
738 Pratum 221/Nissen 2 (Wortley 198).
739 Ibid. My translation; Wortley (on p. 199) omits the second half of the syllogism, thus rendering the story unclear, as if the elder might have thought the landowning monk was wholly in the right. Compare this statement to the ἀνεπιβούλευτος πενία lauded by Diadochus of Photike and quoted by Antiochus, in the first part of this chapter.
of the sêmantron due to the noise of the machine; by the prayers of the abbot the camel was miraculously trained to stop of its own accord whenever it was time for the office.\textsuperscript{740} In another, a spring had sprung up through the prayers of the holy abbot but the monks had abused the divine bounty by building a bath, whereupon the spring ceased until they demolished the offending structure.\textsuperscript{741}

Despite the dangers inherent in these economic interactions, they allowed monastics to give alms as well as to receiving them. In one case, this kindness was not limited to human beings but extended to the rest of the animal kingdom: the daily labor of one elder at the Ennaton Monastery outside Alexandria was to feed the dogs, ants, and birds.\textsuperscript{742} A Palestinian hermit encountered an Arab Christian woman who was practicing prostitution out of hunger and was able to make her desist by providing her food from whatever he had.\textsuperscript{743} Some were wealthier than others: a certain Abba Peter who was both “rich and good” donated a New Testament to an anchorite. No laypeople here, it seems—but wait: the anchorite, out of a sense of monastic honor, decided to work for a while at an ecclesiastical construction project at Sinai as if he were a lay day-laborer, in order to pay back his benefactor.\textsuperscript{744}

Coenobitic communities had the resources and the organization to provide charity on a larger scale. We read of the ritualized dispensing of alms to the poor and orphans at the monastery of Skopelos on Holy Thursday: “half a peck of grain or five loaves of blessed bread, ... 

\textsuperscript{740} Pratum 225/Nissen 6.
\textsuperscript{741} Pratum 80 (Wortley 65). Cf. the complaints of Abba Alexander in Pratum 168: “Our fathers sought out the wilderness and affliction; we seek for cities and comfort ... Our fathers never used to wash their faces; but we indulge ourselves at the public baths” (Wortley 137–38). The last phrase can only be considered, at best, a paraphrase; the Greek is unclear but also more suggestive: ἡμεῖς δὲ καὶ τὰ λουτρά τὰ δημόσια ἀνοίγομεν. Does it mean, factually or rhetorically, that monks are opening their own bathing establishments? or that they are first in line in the morning to make sure to enjoy their daily bath? For these meanings see LSJ, ἀνοίγομαι, 1b.
\textsuperscript{742} Pratum 184.
\textsuperscript{743} Pratum 136.
\textsuperscript{744} Pratum 134 (Wortley 110). Some temporary work by monks is well-attested in this period: Patlagean, Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale, 200–3.
five small coins, a pint of wine and half a pint of honey.”\textsuperscript{745} This practice had a long life in later Byzantium, as enshrined in the various monastery \textit{typika}.\textsuperscript{746} The most detailed picture of a single monastery is that of Choziba. The \textit{Life of George of Choziba} and the \textit{Miracles of the Mother of God at Choziba} show us an open and hospitable monastery, dedicated to providing nourishment both physical and spiritual to visitors. Its location just off the Jericho road made it a favorite stop for pilgrims, and, unusually for a Palestinian desert monastery, it even welcomed women.\textsuperscript{747} The hagiographer Anthony describes the various laborious ministries from his own experience: cutting wood; maintaining water supplies on the Jericho road for pilgrims; cultivation of the garden; baking bread in the withering heat of the oven. Most of this work was for the benefit of guests. George dedicated himself to these tasks over and above the call of duty, rousing the younger monks through his example.\textsuperscript{748} This picture is confirmed and extended by the striking account in the \textit{Spiritual Meadow} of an elder at the Cells of Choziba—a dependency of the Monastery, where George had lived for a time before returning to the coenobium—who continued his good works as a layman after his monastic profession.

If ever he saw somebody in his village so poor that he could not sow his own field, then, unknown to the man who worked that land, he would come by night with his own oxen and seed and sow his neighbour’s field. When he went into the wilderness and settled at the Cells of Choziba this elder was equally considerate of his neighbours. He would travel the road from the holy Jordan to the Holy City Jerusalem carrying bread and water. And if he saw a person overcome with fatigue, he would shoulder that person’s pack and

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{745} Pratum 85 (Wortley 68). The “small coins” are \textit{folleis}, the standard copper small change in the later Empire, which fluctuated widely in value whereas the gold coinage remained relatively stable. The monastery was punished for stopping this dole one year when times were hard, by having all their remaining grain miraculously sprout in the granary. \textsuperscript{746} Demetrios J. Constantelos, \textit{Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare}. (New Rochelle, NY: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1991), 77ff. \textsuperscript{747} Not initially; \textit{Miracles} 1 describes the intervention of the Theotokos that led to this policy. \textsuperscript{748} Vit.Georg.Choz. 5.23.}
carry it all the way to the holy Mount of Olives. He would do the same on the return journey if he found others, carrying their packs as far as Jericho. You would see this elder, sometimes sweating under a great load, sometimes carrying a youngster on his shoulders. There was even an occasion when he carried two of them at the same time. Sometimes he would sit down and repair the footwear of men and women if this was needed, for he carried with him what was needed for that task. To some he gave a drink of the water he carried with him and to others he offered bread. If he found anyone naked, he gave him the very garment that he wore. You saw him working all day long. If ever he found a corpse on the road, he said the appointed prayers over it and gave it burial.  

This is a remarkable example of the flexibility of late antique monastic life. Holy men like this anonymous elder and George of Choziba were not necessarily reclusive visionaries, but managed to combine fervent charitable activity with deep prayer and spiritual insight.

Yet even the laudable aim of almsgiving could obstruct the stark imperative of evangelical, monastic poverty. One monk had made a donation of gold coins to his monastery upon being tonsured there, despite the abbot’s reluctance to accept it, even for the sake of the poor. The abbot’s fears were realized when the donor began to seek preferential treatment in the monastery for the sake of his donation. The temptation was only definitively defeated when the abbot, with the consent of the penitent monk, threw the bag of coins into a river. Again, the story is meant to be exemplary, pointing out the dangers, specifically psychological, that even well-intentioned uses of wealth could pose. In another story, a coenobium near Nisibis owned

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749 Pratum 24 (Wortley 16).
750 Pratum 231/Nissen 13.
751 The donation of part or all of one’s wealth to a monastery upon becoming a monk or nun there was quite common throughout the history of monasticism. It was often necessary to maintain the financial
fields that yielded abundant harvests of barley, which was shared with other monasteries. An imperial general passing by on a diplomatic mission to Persia was edified by conversation with the abbot and donated to it an income of thirty pounds of gold. The monks rejoiced at the gift and became even more generous in their distribution to others. But the land stopped yielding its fruit for three straight years. The abbot realized that it was because they had accepted the thirty pounds of gold and had them sell everything at once and give it to the poor, whereupon the barley crop resumed. In the case of Choziba, the frequency of guests and the need to secure continued funding for its generous hospitality sometimes carried away the monks. When the abbot put off a poor old woman in order to take care of business with an important personage, she (the Theotokos in disguise, as it turned out) rebuked him for forgetting that “this holy locale is a place of rest for the poor and strangers, and not only a meeting place for the rich.”

The purpose of renouncing wealth was not, ultimately, some kind of perfect divestment of material goods and the purpose of retaining them was not some kind of perfect non-profit charity, but inner freedom from attachment to the things of the world and pure love from a heart uncluttered
by anxieties and man-pleasing. This is why Moschus was equally eager to collect stories of austere hermits and generous laypeople.

Another way that monastics retained links with the world was through continuing family ties. We have seen how the economic aid of a natural brother could allegedly lead to spiritual disaster (in the case of the monk at the monastery of Gregory the Great in Rome). We have also seen other more benign instances, such as that of the monk who was healed as a layman by Abba Julian the Stylite and stayed to become a monk along with his father and brother. 755 When the young man Habibas was finally allowed by his father to renounce the world, he stayed in the neighborhood in a cell and maintained warm relations with his siblings:

His end was approaching. His brother was sitting with him, to whom the dying man said:

‘Go and keep company with your household, for it is a holy day’ (it was the feast of the Holy Apostles). The brother replied: ‘How could I go and leave you?’ The other replied: ‘Go; and when the time comes, I shall call you.’ When the time came, he stood at the window and knocked. The brother heard and obeyed the sick man’s signal to come. As soon as he entered, the older brother surrendered his soul to the Lord. 756

The happy ending of this story is of a piece with the general depiction of family relations between monks (or would-be monks) and their lay kin in the Spiritual Meadow: they are generally good, and even when there are conflicts or misunderstandings, they are eventually sorted out. This is a far cry from the “heroic age” of early monasticism, with its spectacular examples of renunciation of family. The other sources for this chapter are similar. Antiochus’ Pandect does not contain a chapter on xeniteia (being a stranger) but it does have chapter on honoring one’s parents. As a young man seeking to becoming a monk George of Choziba was

755 Pratum 29.
756 Pratum 202 (Wortley 181). Wortley supplies “His <monastic> brother was sitting next to him,” but it is clear from the context that it is his natural brother.
obstructed by his uncle, but on the other hand other family members supported his resolve (his other uncle and his brother). Anastasius the Persian, who broke completely with his family by becoming a Christian even before becoming a monk, cannot be fitted into this general comparison because of the unique nature of his situation. But in general, monasticism had become an established part of the thought-world of late antique Christians and families do not seem to have been as troubled by the departure of one or more of their members for monastic life—if it was even a departure. Habibas simply moved next door and set up house as a recluse.

This situation also reminds us to consider the category of lay ascetics, who lived a monastic or semi-monastic life in the world, without formally taking the habit. It is unclear whether Habibas was one of these, but his lifestyle is like many of these lay ascetics. We have also noted many instances of the class of philoponoi, who were particularly pious laypeople, often organized in confraternities of sorts, and could be married or unmarried. A mysterious bald sack-cloth-wearing man to whom Moschus and Sophronius gave five folleis in a church once may also have been a lay ascetic, living as a holy fool. One bishop was inspired by God to forsake his diocese and travel to Antioch, where he worked incognito, dressed as a layman, on the reconstruction efforts initiated by Count Ephraim, the future Chalcedonian patriarch of that city, after an earthquake. The revelation of this man’s secret virtue led Ephraim to exclaim: “Oh, how many hidden servants God has and they are known only to him alone!”

As for the more ordinary layfolk, we find that their piety overlaps with that of monastics to a large degree, especially in the practice of almsgiving and the provision of hospitality. But the practice that bound them together most was probably that of conversation. Laypeople liked to

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758 Pand. 15 (Kephals 49–50), “On Not Loving the World,” counsels the use of God-given wealth for the relief of the distressed, visitation of orphans and widows, and the aid of monasteries—a clear instance of his exhortation being directed to both monastics and laypeople. Also Pand. 99, “On Visiting,” which is tied to love of the poor and love of strangers.
talk to monks and nuns, to communicate their concerns and benefit from spiritual insights. Sometimes they had a favorite in whom they could confide. But a layperson walking into church and seeing an unknown monk could also sit down and strike up a conversation, “asking about the salvation of the soul.” Even philosophers sought the wisdom of holy elders, rather than ridiculing them as in the past. The wrestler from Constantinople plagued by magic traveled through the Holy Land specifically looking for a holy monk to counsel him regarding his affliction.

Antiochus saw all this happening and recognized it as a natural duty of monks to be willing and able to instruct and counsel laypeople, and even to be on call to perform exorcisms. But he recognized the dangers inherent in this. In two remarkable chapters, “On Avoiding Women” and “On Not Lingering with Singing Women,” he analyzes the particular temptations to which a monk is exposed in counseling women. He maps in detail the process whereby he is ensnared:

For in the beginning they have piety, and pretend thus, but later they dare everything shamelessly; before the meeting they speak meekly, and their eyes are downcast, and by continually shedding tears they have semblace of decorum and sigh bitterly. They inquire concerning chastity and listen with delight. In the second meeting they look up a little; in the third, you have smiled and she has laughed without inhibition. Then they speak words that soften the shameful passion. These things become for you hooks baiting you to death […] For the sin-loving demon contrives many devices against us. He incites them to

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759 Pratum 131: The lawyer Procopius knew which church to check to find the holy man Abba Zachaius in order to inquire concerning the health of his children in another city; Pratum 216: a layman asked a monk to mediate between him and his brother about some disagreement.
760 Pratum 201 (Wortley 179).
761 Pratum 156, 222/Nissen 3, as discussed earlier in this chapter.
763 Pand. 33, 62, 87 (more on monks consulting other monks); 99 (among other things, concerning exorcism, with a warning against vainglory).
implore with lamentation and tears that we continually visit them and provide for them because of the Lord’s reward. When we are persuaded by them, we indeed take a recompense, sores hard to heal in our souls and utterly shameful thoughts, and thereafter, the heart is troubled and tortured as if executioners were stretching it from one side and another—of the mind and of the passion.\textsuperscript{764}

The ardor of the language may make it seem exaggerated, even misogynistic, but looking past the colorful expressions, we realize that Antiochus was describing an all-too-real event that could easily befall a monk—or, \textit{mutatis mutandis}, a nun, as he goes on to counsel women monastics against meeting with men. He seems to rule out meeting with those of the opposite sex completely. But even when it comes to safer conversations, he still counsels the monk to save his breath.\textsuperscript{765}

If nevertheless they approach us concerning what is beneficial to the soul, through a few words seasoned with salt, let us hold our conversation with them and dismiss them. For they will be more edified by spiritual terseness than by wordly prolixity. […] So when people visit seeking spiritual benefit and they have faith in the Holy Spirit, first there is prayer to the Lord about everything. And then the Holy Spirit fills a man with assurance, and being filled with assurance he speaks as the Lord wills—and he wills all men to be saved. Now, it is good to benefit those who inquire through words, but it is better to cooperate with them through virtue and prayer. So those who wish to obtain the multitude of virtues should act as has been said: they should not use continuous rhetorical periods,

\textsuperscript{764} \textit{Pand.} 18 (Kephalas 56–57).
\textsuperscript{765} \textit{Pand.} 91.
or speak ill of certain people even if those thus reviled are worthy of it; nor should they speak much, even if they are able to say everything well.\textsuperscript{766}

This passage expresses very well the ideal lay-monastic interaction at the end of late antiquity. The monks are set apart and not to be lightly importuned. They are available for edification and counsel to those who approach with the proper attitude, namely one of faith. The conversation itself is not one-way; to be successful it requires the cooperation of the laypeople through prayer, through a desire to learn by example, and through respect for the limits of speech.

It is such meetings that gave birth to the texts we have been examining in this chapter. All of these sources show familiarity with Scripture, even among laypeople. They show an eagerness to search to learn from the examples of virtue set forth in the various \textit{paterika} that were already circulating in large numbers. Laypeople just as much as monastics could be a source for the tales in these \textit{paterika}. Their memories of the virtues of local holy men and the miracles of local martyrs formed a welcome addition to the anecdotes collected from monasteries.

\textsuperscript{766} \textit{Pand.} 102 (Kephalas 242, 243).
7. Love in the time of Cataclysm: Maximus the Confessor and the laity in Church and Cosmos

Introduction

Maximus the Confessor, who until the mid-twentieth century was consigned to an honorable backwater of patristics, is today recognized as one of the most important of Byzantine theologians, perhaps even the greatest of them all. His oeuvre constitutes a synthesis of the patristic classics, resolving many of their tensions and remaining as a legacy to the Byzantine middle ages. He provided the most coherent patristic refutation and critique of Origenism while preserving its genuine insights. He also thought through the implications of the ecumenical council of Chalcedon, affirming the reality of Christ’s human faculties of acting and willing in addition to the earlier doctrine of two natures in one hypostasis. In this he was aided by his anti-Origenist meditations, which had prepared him to demonstrate that diversity and unity were complementary and not opposed aspects of both God and his creation.

Since the renaissance of Maximan studies inaugurated by Hans Urs von Balthasar, Polycarp Sherwood, and Lars Thunberg, a large body of secondary literature has grown up to explore the myriad facets of his thought, in addition to ongoing work on modern critical editions of his writings. Most of these studies have focused on the intricacies of his christological and cosmological doctrines. Yet the contemporary writings by and about Maximus are also essential sources for seventh-century history. Maximus was not only a theological genius, but also a courageous religious leader, opposing what he perceived as imperial compromise and coercion in theology, even when the latter seemed justified by the state of emergency imposed by the Persian and then Arab wars. What we lack for the most part is a study of the meeting-point of his high
theology and practical activity. The problem of lay piety provides a useful point of entry for this question because Maximus offered important reflections on the place of the laity in the life of the Church. Moreover, he cultivated close relations with laymen in the course of his long and adventurous life, especially with those of high position and inquisitive spirit.

His Epistles to such figures provide the most direct evidence for his contributions to lay piety. In them he addresses some of the specific concerns of Christians trying to live out their calling in the world, fitting them into the larger tradition of orthodox asceticism and mysticism. The more general work Centuries on Love serves as an encapsulation of this tradition and also addresses some of the practical differences between monastic and lay ways of life within a broad unity. The concise gnomic style of this text renders it much more accessible than Maximus’s other works, written in an ornate and sometimes convoluted style. Its popularity in both monastic and lay contexts is attested through the Byzantine period and later.

Commentary on the Lord’s Prayer, written to an anonymous lay official, is of similar value for our task.

Other sources, while addressed to a monastic audience, also provide much that would either have been of interest to laypeople or help clarify their role. Such are the Discourse on

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767 The edition by François Combéfis, Epistulae xlv, is found in PG 91: 364–6549 and remains the main text, but a new edition is sorely needed. Additional portions of letters have been published since then, for example by Robert Devréesse, "La fin inédite d’une lettre de Saint Maxime: Un baptême forcé de Juifs et de Samaritans à Carthage en 632," RSR 17 (1935): 25–35. Corrections to the names of recipients of various letters have also been suggested. For a relatively recent summary of such work, see the French translation by Emmanuel Ponsoye, Lettres (Paris: Cerf, 1998), with an introduction by Jean-Claude Larchet.


Asceticism, a literary dialogue between a monastic elder and disciple on the fundamentals of repentance and the struggle against the passions; the Questions and Doubts, an unordered collection of brief question-and-answer units that condenses some of the insights of Maximus’ longer exegetical works and which thus may have been of more immediate interest to lay readers; and the Mystagogy, which maps out an ecclesiology connecting the concrete architectural forms and ritual movements of the liturgy with each believer’s contemplation of the eschatological kingdom of God.\footnote{Discourse on Asceticism, edited by Peter van Deun, Liber asceticus, adiectis tribus interpretationibus latinis sat antiquis (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), hereafter cited as Lib.Asc.; Questions and Doubts, edited by José H. Declerck, Quaestiones et dubia (Turnhout: Brepols, 1982), hereafter cited as QD; Mystagogy, edited by Christian Boudignon, Mystagogia (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), hereafter cited as Myst.} In a third category we can place the collection of short polemic treatises, mostly in the form of epistles, collected in the Patrologia Graeca as Opuscula theologica et polemica, two Centuries on Theology and Economy, the two sets of Ambiguities (a shorter one to an abbot Thomas and a longer one to bishop John of Cyzicus), and the Responses to Thalassius, which are the most difficult of Maximus’ works.\footnote{Opuscula theologica et polemica, edited by François Combéfis, PG 91:9–286, hereafter cited as Opusc.theol.polem.; Centuries on Theology and Economy, edited by Combéfis, Capita theologica et oeconomica, PG 90: 1084–1173 (theology here referring to God in himself as Trinity, and economy to God’s redemption of the world in Christ), hereafter cited as Cap.theol.; Ambiguities to Thomas and Second Epistle to Thomas, edited by Bart Janssens, Ambigua ad Thomam una cum Epistula secunda ad eundem (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), and Ambiguities, edited by Franz Oehler, Ambiguorum liber sive Ambigua, PG 91: 1032–1417, containing both the collection to Thomas and the collection to John. The two collections are usually numbered consecutively, based on Oehler’s edition, with Amb. 1–5 being the ones directed to Thomas and Amb. 6–71 the ones to John, a citation format I will maintain. The text of Responses to Thalassius is edited by Carl Laga and Carlos Steel, Quaestiones ad Thalassium: I. Quaestiones I–LV, una cum latina interpretacione Ioannis Scotti Eriugenae (Turnhout: Brepols, 1980) and eidem eds., Quaestiones ad Thalassium II: Quaestiones LVI–LXV, una cum latina interpretacione Ioannis Scotti Eriugenae (Turnhout: Brepols, 1990), hereafter cited as Thal.} These were written to friends within Maximus’ closest circle of monastic discussion and thus cannot be used as direct evidence for his teachings to laypeople. But in them he hammered out the fundamental insights that ground his other works, so that they are indispensable to understanding his thought.

There are several other smaller polemical works printed in the Patrologia Graeca and fragments preserved in manuscripts, such as the ones made known by Epifanovich in the early
twentieth century, apart from other works that are universally acknowledged to be spurious.\textsuperscript{772} There is also a long \textit{Life of the Virgin} preserved only in a late tenth-century Georgian translation of a lost Greek original. Several scholars have argued that the attribution to Maximus is genuine, but it remains disputed.\textsuperscript{773} Furthermore the \textit{Life}, although it might have readily served as reading material for Maximus’ lay audience, does not contain much of direct interest to lay piety as I am analyzing it in the present study, so I will omit it from discussion for now.

In what follows I will first examine the foundations for certain themes of interest to lay piety—sensible creation, the body, and sexuality—in Maximus’ longer theological works, then proceed to his understanding of the ordering of the Church primarily through the \textit{Mystagogy}, and end with an analysis of his teachings to laypeople as revealed in the ethical counsels of the \textit{Centuries on Charity} and the \textit{Epistles}. But let me preface all that with an outline of Maximus’ biography. We know very little that is certain concerning his origins and early life. His Greek \textit{Life}, composed in the ninth century, represents him as the scion of a highly-placed Constantinopolitan family. It claims that he received an extensive secular education and at an early age attained to high rank as imperial secretary to Heraclius near the beginning of that emperor’s reign, but then abruptly resigned to enter a monastery at Chrysopolis in the suburbs.\textsuperscript{774} This \textit{Life}, however, has long been recognized as unreliable, since the portion on his early years essentially plagiarizes the \textit{Vita} of Theodore the Studite.\textsuperscript{775} The Syriac \textit{Life} discovered by Sebastian Brock provides a very different picture of a poor boy from a disreputable Palestinian

\textsuperscript{772} See the entries in CPG 6988ff. for a full list of the genuine, dubious, and spurious works.
\textsuperscript{773} For an overview of the problem, see the introduction in Stephen Shoemaker, trans., \textit{The Life of the Virgin: Maximus the Confessor} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012). Shoemaker accepts Maximus as the author, but affirms the need for further research and debate.
\textsuperscript{774} \textit{Greek Life of Maximus Confessor (Recension 2)}, edited by François Combéris, Εἰς τὸν βίον καὶ τὴν ἀθλησιν τοῦ ἀγίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ ὁμολογητοῦ Μαξίμου / \textit{In vitam ac certamen sancti patris nostri ac confessoris Maximi}, in PG 90: 68–110; \textit{Greek Life of Maximus (Recension 3)}, edited by Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen, \textit{Life of Maximus Confessor: Recension 3} (Sydney: St Paul’s, 2003).
family who received his monastic formation and theological education at the Old Lavra, a center of the sixth-century Origenist controversy.\footnote{776}{"An Early Syriac Life of Maximus the Confessor," \textit{AB} 91 (1973): 299–346, reprinted in idem, \textit{Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity} (London: Variorum, 1984), XII, especially the longer discussion following the text and translation at 332–46. Brock argues for the basic reliability of work as a source for the life of Maximus.}
The text was written by a contemporary, George of Reshaina, but since he was a monothelete the text is hostile and thus might more properly be labeled an “Anti-Life.” For such reasons most Maximan scholars have tended to dismiss it, but recent work has strengthened the case for its essential reliability for the reconstruction of Maximus’ early career.\footnote{777}{See especially Christian Boudignon, “Maxime le Confesseur était-il Constantinopolitain?” in Bart Jannsens, Bram Roosen, and Peter van Deun, eds., \textit{Philomathestatos: Studies in Greek and Byzantine Texts Presented to Jacques Noret for his Sixty-Fifth Birthday} (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 11–43.}
Philip Booth, in particular, has used the evidence for a Palestinian monastic origin to link Maximus more closely to the monastic circle of John Moschus and Sophronius, a connection that is otherwise hinted at in Maximus’ own \textit{Epistles}.\footnote{778}{Philip Booth, \textit{Crisis of Empire: Doctrine and Dissent at the End of Late Antiquity} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 143–55. Maximus mentions Sophronius as his father and teacher at Ep. 13 (PG 91:533a).}

\textit{An overview of Maximus’ theological concerns}

Origenism is a vague term that denotes a recurrent tendency in Greek Christian thought to resort to the ideas of the great Alexandrian theologian Origen (ca. 184–253), whom we considered very briefly in the introductory chapter. His vision of God, the cosmos, and salvation continued to attract both supporters and critics in the centuries following his death. Origen’s broad-ranging metaphysics was sharpened and refined in the ascetical theology of Evagrius of Pontus, a one-time disciple of Gregory of Nazianzus in Constantinople who spent the last and most productive years of his life in the Egyptian desert at Kellia. Evagrius’ incisive analysis of the psychology of spiritual warfare was treasured by monks—and as we have seen in previous chapters, were incorporated into teaching directed to laypeople—but but his more speculative...
opinions were alarming to many. Even his more acceptable works on practical asceticism, when read in light of his whole metaphysics, express positions hostile to, or at least ambivalent about, the positive integration of bodily life into ultimate salvation and deification. It was probably his teachings, with their direct monastic relevance, rather than Origen’s directly that fed into the great Palestinian debate over Origenism in the sixth century. This turned over perennial questions surrounding Origenist thought, such as the pre-existence of souls, the ultimate equality of human intellects with God, and a final unitary restoration of all things to the divine simplicity (the notorious question of the *apocatastasis*). Affirmation of these propositions, as well as several other related ones, was condemned definitively at the Fifth Ecumenical Council, held at Constantinople in 553 under the aegis, or rather the insistence, of the theologian-emperor Justinian. Yet this formal ban did not fully end the debate because it did not satisfactorily solve the underlying questions which Origenism sought to answer.

Enter Maximus. He was born around 580, a generation after the Fifth Ecumenical Council and the formal condemnation of Origenist beliefs. But his early works grapple with them at length and, what is more important, in depth. The great scholar of Maximus, Polycarp Sherwood, considered him the only thinker in early Christianity to have successfully refute Origen’s errors while fully understanding the Alexandrian master’s thought. The Syriac *Life* claims that Maximus was not only of Palestinian origin, but that he received his monastic and

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780 Brian Daley argues that one of the main issues at play was disagreement over the place of speculative theological thought in monastic life, in “What did ‘Origenism’ mean in the sixth century,” in *Origeniana Sexta: Origène et la Bible*, edited by Gilles Dorival et al. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995).
781 For an overview of his acquaintance with Origenist teaching, based on the history of the controversy in the sixth century and evidence of his writings, see Polycarp Sherwood, *An Annotated Date-List of the Works of Maximus the Confessor* (Rome: Herder, 1952), 72–92.
782 Polycarp Sherwood, *Date-List*, 32.
theological formation from an Origenist at the Old Lavra in the Judaean desert. Yet neither
would a Constantinopolitan origin preclude knowledge of the condemned teaching, which was
still being debated there in some of its consequences around the time of Maximus’ childhood. 783
The Greek Life also has his opponents trying to tar him with the brush of the condemned
doctrine. 784

Maximus’ refutation-cum-assimilation of Origenism took place in two distinct but
closely-related contexts. 785 He rebutted its broader theological and cosmological claims in the
Ambiguities and the Chapters on Theology and Economy. Origenists often resorted to the
writings of the two Cappadocian Gregories to buttress their arguments with patristic authority,
since some of their expressions at first glance invited an Origenist interpretation. 786 Maximus
certainly knew Gregory of Nyssa very well—he cites him explicitly several times and borrows
implicitly from his thought in many passages—but it was Gregory of Nazianzus on whom he
focused, as the great orator had already become known as “the Theologian,” and thus the
patristic touchstone of orthodoxy. 787 The two sets of Ambiguities are formally commentaries on

783 The patriarch of Constantinople in the second quarter of the sixth century, Eutychius, had played
an important part in the condemnations of the Fifth Ecumenical Council but was accused of positing an
overly-spiritualized resurrectional body, one of the contested points in Origenist anthropology. Most likely
Eutychius was trying to walk the tight-rope between condemning the errors of Origenism while salvaging its
insights. His view on the nature of the resurrected body may actually have been similar to that espoused by
Maximus in Ep. 7 (PG 91:433bc). If this is the case, the opposition he aroused suggests how controversial
Origenism still was during Maximus’s formative years. See Yves-Marie Duval, “La discussion entre
l’apocrisiaire Grégoire et le patriarche Eutychios au sujet de la résurrection de la chair. L’arrière-plan
doctrinal oriental et occidental,” in Grégoire le Grand. Chantilly, Centre culturel Les Fontaines, 15-19 septembre
347–66, which, however, focuses on Gregory’s western background much more than Eutychius’ eastern one.
My thanks to Grigory Benevich for directing my attention to sixth- and seventh-century debates about the
resurrected body.

784 PG 90:93a.

785 For an overview of the refutation, see Sherwood, Earlier Ambigua, 92–102 and also Paul Blowers
and Robert Wilken, On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings of St. Maximus the Confessor
(Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), 23–28.

786 Sherwood, Earlier Ambigua, 73.

787 In Amb. 8 (PG 91:1065bc) Maximus treats Gregory’s writings almost as if they were themselves
Scripture. For Gregory’s authority and the crystallization of patristic authority in general, see Macé, “Gregory
of Nazianzus as the authoritative voice of Orthodoxy”, Gray, “Select Fathers”; for Maximus’s use, see Louth, “St

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controversial passages in the Theologian. Yet they are original works in their own right that allow Maximus to unfold his correction of Origenism in dialogue with the authorities of the past. Gregory was an ideal interlocutor for a project to justify the ways of God in creating and redeeming a material cosmos, because he had one of the keenest poetic sensibilities among the early Fathers. His eloquent passages on the majesty and tragedy of man’s enfleshed existence provide a fitting starting point for Maximus’ great synthesis.

The Chapters on Theology and Economy provide a more succinct refutation of Origenism, especially the first ten of the first century, which previous scholars have seen as a manifesto of theology expressed in the very terms used by Origen and Evagrius but subtly correcting them to express orthodoxy.\(^{788}\) The form of chapters in particular shows the influence of Evagrius, who used this genre to distill monastic wisdom in maxims suitable for spiritual rumination.\(^{789}\) The Chapters on Theology and Economy concerns itself more with the subjects denoted by its title but also ventures into ascetic anthropology and the methods of spiritual warfare (as do, in fact, the Ambiguities). But it is the Chapters on Love that crystallize Maximus’
thought on this topic and, when read as a whole, present a harmonious vision of the striving of both soul and body, monk and layman, toward the goal of deification in God, who is love. Many of the concepts expressed borrow heavily from Evagrius but, again, it is the small changes and the overall vision that show Maximus’ originality.790

Thus far, then, we have seen how Origenism catalyzed Maximus’s metaphysical speculation and his ascetical program. A third integral part of Maximus’s theology, also stemming from the school of Alexandria, consists of his exegetical interests and methods. These are most clearly on display in the Responses to Thalassius, which develop an elaborate allegorical reading of the Scriptures, both Old and New Testament, which addresses many of the same topics as in the other works. He clearly relies on the exegetical methods developed by Origen, the most uncontroversial element of the Alexandrian master’s teaching for late antique Christians. Yet even here he grapples polemically with unseen foes, ill-defined literalist Christian exegetes whom Maximus lumps in together with the Jews as slaves of the letter and slayers of the spirit of the Law. His interpretation of Scripture as a book of symbols leading to higher spiritual truths is inextricable from his vision of created Nature as a second book of symbols, equally important for the striver after God. This is part and parcel of his view of the material cosmos as a positive and integral part of God’s creative and redemptive plan and has some further implications for lay piety.

As a last major element of Maximus’ theological concerns, we must mention his fervent adherence to the Christological dogma of Chalcedon, which affirmed that Christ exists as two

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790 Marcel Viller, “Aux sources de la spiritualité de saint Maxime. Les œuvres d’Évagre le Pontique,” RAM 11 (1930) : 156–84, 239–68, denied Maximus substantial originality with regard to Evagrius. Thunberg corrected this view, examining Maximus’ reworking of the Evagrian tradition in many sections of Microcosm and Mediator. One of the most illuminating examples is the section on the Evagrian hierarchy of the eight vices (Microcosm and Mediator, 262–73), an ascetic tradition that we have had occasion to discuss elsewhere in this study.
natures in one hypostasis or person. Hans Urs von Balthasar and Lars Thunberg have both emphasized the importance of this dogma not just in the narrow realm of technical polemics with the Severan Monophysites, but as a key to the Confessor’s entire theological vision. For, according to his “Chalcedonian logic” (von Balthasar’s term), the union of opposites in Christ, which is both perfect and endures to eternity, justifies and explains the existence of multiplicity and diversity in a creation that is different from God.\footnote{The term is von Balthasar’s (see especially Cosmic Liturgy, 56–80) but the theme of unity and diversity in Maximus was worked out most systematically in Thunberg’s Microcosm and Mediator, esp. at 21–37, 52–67, 454–64.} Thus, in a cogent Christian answer to one of the great questions of Greek philosophy since Parmenides: the Many do not contradict the One, nor need they be absorbed into Him. They exist rather in union and communion of distinct persons. This principle, as we will see, provides a metaphysical foundation for the ecclesiological and sociological diversity, and for the role of the body and marriage, that lies at the heart of our question of the place of laypeople in Byzantium.

\textit{Creation, body, fall, redemption}

In response to the Origenist doctrine of a primordial henad from which intellects fell away and the related doctrine of the pre-existence of souls, Maximus affirmed the doctrine of creation \textit{ex nihilo} and the simultaneous fashioning of the body and soul of each human being at the time of their conception.\footnote{Amb. 7 (PG 91:1077c and 1080a). Cf. Von Balthasar, Cosmic Liturgy, 127–36; Thunberg, Microcosm, 52–54. For the earlier tradition, see Georges Florovsky, “St. Athanasius’ Concept of Creation,” StP 6 (1962): 36–57, reprinted in \textit{Creation and Redemption}, edited by Richard Haugh. Collected Works of Georges Florovsky 3 (Belmont MA: Nordland Publishing, 1976), 39–62, 283–85; and idem, “Creation and creaturehood,” in \textit{Creation and Redemption}, 43–78, 269–79.} The importance of this for his thought lay particularly in its exclusion of the possibility that matter was bad in any ontological sense. According to Maximus, the preexistence of souls and the creation of bodies (and physical universe) as punishment for fall of souls would imply that visible creation, which in its majesty proclaims the existence of
God, was not foreseen in God’s creative plan but made ad hoc in response to evil. Whether this line of argumentation would have been accepted by his opponents (whoever they were), it did isolate a key problem in their position, and conversely provided Maximus with a firm foundation on which to build a doctrine favorable to matter and flesh. Simply put, these elements of creation were good because God had willed them from all eternity and they formed an integral part of his plan for the created order.

Maximus maintains the classic Greek duality of sensibles and intelligibles, with the attendant valuation: the former category, consisting of matter and body, is inferior to the latter. There is even a fundamental opposition between the natural activities of mind and sense because of the difference between the objects subject to them. But the contrast between these is dwarfed infinitely by that between created things, under which they both fall, and the uncreated God. They are united by their common principle of being created, that is, of having come from non-existence into being; this applies to the most noble and the most base of creatures. This important conceptual move, which was by no means original to Maximus but was emphasized by him, relativizes the superiority of intelligible to sensible things. They are placed in a cosmic hierarchy which leads up to God, who is at once the principle of the entire ladder of being and totally other than it; this is the doctrine of Ps.-Dionysios the Areopagite, adapted by Maximus.

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793 Amb. 42 (PG 91:1328a).
794 Ibid. 1328b-d. On the basis of earlier patristic ideas Maximus developed a doctrine of the principles of created beings, the \textit{logoi}, contained in the divine mind so to speak, to explain God’s eternal providence; see Thunberg, \textit{Microcosm and Mediator}, 76–84. On the importance of this doctrine as a subtle rejection of Origenism, see Florovsky, “Creation and creaturehood,” 52–62.
796 Thal. 58 lI. 103–10. In the lines immediately following, however, he points out that the intellect can only come to know other intelligibles through the medium of the senses; cf. Cooper, \textit{Body in St Maximus}, 64. He seems to see the union of body and soul as never merely an ontological fact, but a moral exploit: the proper unity of flesh and soul through the law of the Spirit, guarded by the keeping of the commandments and the dogmas of discernment (Thal. 48 lI. 58–64)—these two are probably synonyms for \textit{praxis} and \textit{thêoria}, discussed below.
797 Amb. 41 (PG 91:1312ab).
798 Cooper, \textit{Body in St Maximus}, 57.
As von Balthasar comments on the Areopagite’s insight, “Because God is endlessly distant from all things, he is near, internal to every one of his creatures …” Thus God plays the supreme role in binding together the two created categories, both as their cause and as their utter opposite. But he has also granted to man a significant role in this respect, for within creation man is both microcosm and mediator. Man as microcosm is an idea from Greek philosophy that was adopted but also critiqued by Christian theologians, most notably Gregory of Nazianzus with his appreciation of the world as ordered cosmos. Man, by containing within himself both intelligible and sensible parts, is an image of the world in miniature. This then allows him to function as mediator of the two disparate realms in his own nature. Matter and the body are ennobled through the soul, because it is able to see through the natural corruption of material things to the wise principles of their creation by God.  

So man’s possession of a physical component, namely his body and the attendant relation to material things, plays a positive role in his generic definition. Yet in line with the universal ontological hierarchy, man’s mediation must involve a subordination of the body to the soul, of the soul to its highest element, the mind, and ultimately of the mind to God. The primary role of sensibles in relation to man is to serve as symbols of higher realities. Maximus’ thought is

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799 Von Balthasar, Cosmic Liturgy, 83.
800 Amb. 7 (PG 91:1092bc) and Amb. 15 (PG 91:1216c); Thal. 27 ll. 48–64; Lib.Asc. 557–61; cf. Thunberg, 140–51.
801 Amb. 7 (PG 91:1092c). The subjection of body to soul is called “the spiritual law” at Thal. 48, ll. 173–77. This basic structure is reflected in an hierarchy within the soul of the natural movements: intellectual, rational, sensible, in descending order (Amb. 10:1112df.). In this scheme intellect is that which is swept up into the direct intuitive vision of God, while reason is the discursive knowledge of immaterial realities.
802 Cf. Thal. epist.: εἰς χρήσιν μόνον τῆς τῶν κρειττόνων οίκονομίας τὴν πρὸς τὴν σάρκα τῆς ψυχῆς συζυγίαν ποιησάμενος καὶ πρὸς κατανόησιν τῆς τῶν ὀρωμένων μεγαλουργίας ὄργανον κεκτημένος τὴν αἰσθήσιν ... τὴν ἐξ [i.e. sense], τοὺς τῶν ὀρωμένων σχῆμας ὅτους λόγους τῶν νοητῶν συμβολικὸς ἐγχαράττουσαν καὶ διὰ αὐτῶν πρὸς τὴν ἀπλότητα τῶν νοητῶν θεαμάτων τὸν νόον ἀναβιβάζουσαν, πάσης καθαρῶς ἀπαλυθέντα τῆς ἐν τοῖς ὀρωμένοις ποικιλίας τε καὶ συνθέσεως ... μετὰ τὴν τελείαν τῆς πρὸς αἰσθήσιν τε καὶ σάρκα σχετικῆς προσπαθείας ἀπόθεσιν.
thus marked by a constant spiritualizing momentum leading upward along the cosmic hierarchy to God.\textsuperscript{803}

He is acutely sensitive to the tendency of sensibles to trap the mind’s attention and thus lead it downward and away from God toward non-being.\textsuperscript{804} In fact, he seems to see the Fall of Adam as simply a preoccupation of the first-created man with sensible pleasure to the detriment of his divine upward calling, into which he fell immediately upon being created.\textsuperscript{805} Instead there is a sharp sense of the downward pull of matter. Evil is defined as ignorance of the ultimate Cause and a turn toward sensual rather than intellectual knowledge, so that this ignorance combined with the natural affinity of body toward sensibles and its need for material sustenance leads to worship of creation rather than Creator.\textsuperscript{806} This has led some to accuse Maximus of an ultimately negative evaluation of material things, but Adam Cooper offers a more nuanced view:

“‘All visible things need a cross’, says Maximus in a disarmingly realistic analysis of empirical human nature. That is to say, all corporeal phenomena—including the human body—need some critical means of limiting the scope and influence of their sensual, affective impulses.”\textsuperscript{807}

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\textsuperscript{803} This led von Balthasar to claim that there was “a danger, very real in Maximus, of a one-sided spiritualism” (\textit{Cosmic Liturgy} [The Problem of the Scholia to Pseudo-Dionysius], 374).
\textsuperscript{804}\textit{Amb.} 10 (PG 91:1156cdf. and 1164d). Non-being, however, is never completely attained, because God does not let the creatures he made dissolve into complete nothingness. In his salvific work Christ unites the senses to the mind in a spiritual manner, overcoming natural division due to the law of the body and the tendency of the passions toward sin (\textit{Thal.} 62, II. 225–50).
\textsuperscript{805}\textit{Amb.} 10:1112cd. However, he remarks elsewhere that, though nothing slips more easily into sin than the organs of sense when not chastised by reason, nothing is more ready for salvation when reason puts them in order (\textit{Myst.} 24, 1154–65). In constrast to Augustine, with whom he otherwise shares so many uncanny resemblances, Maximus does not see pride as the original sin; cf. Berthold, "Did Maximus the Confessor know Augustine?". For Maximus on original sin, see Boojamra, “Original Sin”; Larchet, “Ancestral Guilt.” For speculation in Latin writers on the nature of the original sin as pride or covetousness, see Newhauser xyz.
\textsuperscript{806} \textit{Thal.} Prol.
\textsuperscript{807} Cooper, \textit{Body in St Maximus}, 251, quoting \textit{Cap.Theol.} 1.67 (PG 90:1108b); cf. \textit{Cap.Theol.} 1.46, 70, 81. For an overview of Maximus’ view of the material world, see Cooper, \textit{Body in St Maximus}, 1–14.
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In the passage quoted by Cooper, Maximus continues to state that all intelligible things need a tomb, when the mind ceases from regarding them, and by grace perceives the Logos himself risen as from the dead. As already noted above, God’s transcendence of all created things assures, paradoxically, their fundamental equality with each other.

Maximus’ analysis of the mechanics of Adam’s Fall and its lasting consequences is grounded in his correction of Origenism. The Origenist schematic that Maximus identifies and refutes is one of \textit{stasis-kinēsis-genesis}: creatures fall from an original stability (\textit{stasis}) in the divine unity, fall in downward movement (\textit{kinēsis}) and thereby come into being as bodies of more or less subtle nature (\textit{genesis}). Maximus reversed the triad, so that creatures first come into being out of nothing (\textit{genesis}), then use their natural power of movement, in synergy with grace, to approach God (\textit{kinēsis}) and finally come to complete stability in him (\textit{stasis}).\footnote{808} This reversal is worked out in \textit{Ambiguum 7}, as Maximus seeks to explain an important passage from Gregory of Nazianzus where man is described as a portion from God that has slipped down from above and the weaknesses and limitations of the body as a form of training.\footnote{809} Against an Origenist use of the passage, Maximus explains the fallen body’s weaknesses and passions as punishment and pedagogy, but the body itself is an original and integral part of man’s nature, a portion of God insofar as contained in his predestined plan for man and called to share with the soul in the final likeness to God, becoming resplendent with glory.\footnote{810}

\footnote{808}On movement as inherent in creation in Maximus, see Thunberg, \textit{Microcosm and Mediator}, 85–88. Stability in God is explored by Maximus through allegorical exposition of the various forms of sabbath rest to be found in the Old Testament (e.g. at \textit{Cap.theol.} 2.64). These have implicit ascetical corollaries, corresponding to the interpretation of the Sabbath in Antiochus’s \textit{Pandect}.\footnote{809} \textit{Amb. 7} (PG 91:1068d), from Gregory’s \textit{Or.} 14.7 (\textit{On Love for the Poor}, PG 35:865c); Blowers and Wilken, \textit{Cosmic Mystery}, 45.\footnote{810} \textit{Amb. 7} (PG 91:1085 and 1096). On providential punishment and paedagogy, cf. \textit{Thal.} 52 ll. 89–102. On a dispassionate love of the body: \textit{Cap.Char.} 3.9; on the body ennobled through philosophy and synergy between men and God: \textit{Amb. 10} (PG 91:1113bd); on the deification of the body: \textit{Amb. 21} (PG 91:1249bc).
The process of man’s primordial crime and punishment is explained as a turning away from spiritual to sensual pleasure.

When God created human nature, he did not create sensible pleasure and pain along with it; rather, he furnished it with a certain spiritual capacity for pleasure, a pleasure whereby human beings would be able to enjoy God ineffably. But at the instant he was created, the first man, by use of his senses, squandered this spiritual capacity—the natural desire of the mind for God—on sensible things. In this, his very first movement, he activated an unnatural pleasure through the medium of the senses. Being, in his providence, concerned for our salvation, God therefore affixed pain alongside this sensible pleasure as a kind of punitive faculty, whereby the law of death was wisely implanted in our corporeal nature to curb the foolish mind in its desire to incline unnaturally toward sensible things.\(^{811}\)

Although he does not see sensible things as evil in themselves, he seems to completely rule out their enjoyment, at least in the ideal state.\(^{812}\) He continues this line of thought in his description of the fallen state of humanity.

After the transgression pleasure naturally preconditioned the births of all human beings, and no one at all was by nature free from birth subject to the passion associated with pleasure; rather, everyone was requited with sufferings, and subsequent death, as the

\[^{811}\] Thal. 61; Blowers and Wilken, Cosmic Mystery, 131–32.

\[^{812}\] Maximus here omits entirely the traditional narrative of the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve from Genesis 3. He discusses elements of it elsewhere but generally allegorizes it in order to apply it to humanity’s present condition. For example, in Thal. epist. he interprets the two Trees in Paradise (of Life and of the Knowledge of Good and Evil) as different attitudes toward God and the world; on the Trees see Thunberg, Microcosm and Mediator, 172–78. I use the term allegory here and throughout this chapter in its early Christian, not its modern literary sense, and as roughly equivalent to anagogy. In general his thought operates along metaphysical rather than narrative lines. Yet recently Doru Costache, “Living above Gender: Insights from Saint Maximus the Confessor,” JECS 21, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 261–90 has argued that Maximus cannot be accused of recurring to Origenist myths of the Fall, but of grounding his anthropology in the ideal of the image and likeness of God, which is already present to a degree in the saints as realized eschatology. He bases this analysis on similar readings of Gregory of Nyssa, who is Maximus’s primary authority for his thought on the Fall.
natural punishment. The way to freedom was hard for all who were tyrannized by
unrighteous pleasure and naturally subject to just sufferings and to the thoroughly just
death accompanying them.\footnote{Thal. 61; Blowers and Wilken, Cosmic Mystery, 133.}
The state of fallen man is a kind of Catch-22, a perennial dialectic of pleasure and pain.\footnote{The pairing is a wordplay in Greek, based on the assonance of pleasure (hēdonē) with pain or suffering (odyné). But Thunberg points out that Maximus also uses synonyms ody né, such as lypē (grief) that do not involve the wordplay (Microcosm and Mediator, 166–69). Cf. Schönborn, “Plaisir et douleur dans l’analyse de S. Maxime, d’après les Quaestiones ad Thalassium,” in Felix Heinzer and Christoph Schönborn, eds., Maximus Confessor, Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur Fribourg, 2–5 septembre 1980 (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1982), 273–84.}
Maximus follows Gregory of Nyssa and most Greek Fathers in believing that the mode of human
generation without the Fall would have been some kind of asexual or at least dispassionate
reproduction, like the angels.\footnote{Amb. 7 (PG 91:1309a) and 41 (1309a); Maximus qualifies this as his opinion (ὡς ομα).}
The current mode of sexual reproduction reduces man to the
level of the animals and is necessarily involved in corruption (phthora), and the passions are a
consequence of the Fall, a superaddition on human nature.\footnote{Or.Dom. II. 403–7; Thal. 1; Amb. 8 (PG 91:1104ab); Cooper, Body in St Maximus, 207–18.}
Maximus observes the sorry human
condition in the constant frenetic and futile attempts of men to obtain pleasure and ward off pain,
and encapsulates mankind’s tragedy in the concept of self-love (philautia).\footnote{Thal. epist.; another powerful summary is found at Thal. 21, II. 9–71.}

Given the above suppositions, Maximus suggests the way out of this condition:
In order for unrighteous pleasure, and the thoroughly just death which is its consequence,
to be abolished (seeing as suffering humanity has been so pitifully torn asunder by them,
with human beings deriving the beginning of their existence from the corruption
associated with pleasure, and coming to the end of their life in the corruption of death),
and in order for suffering human nature to be set right, it was necessary for an unjust and
likewise uncaused suffering and death to be conceived—a death “unjust” in the sense that
it by no means followed a life given to passions, and “uncaused” in the sense that it was
in no way preceded by pleasure.\footnote{Thal. 61; Blowers and Wilken, 133.}

Developing the Pauline doctrine of the New Adam from Romans 5, Maximus shows how Christ
assumed and redeemed the sin of the Old Adam through his incarnate economy. Christ’s birth
from a virgin without the taint of carnal pleasure meant that he was naturally free from the
vicious circle just described. However, he freely accepted to undergo the penalties of suffering
associated with it, culminating in the Passion and Cross. By thus undergoing “unjust and
likewise uncaused suffering and death” he broke the vicious circle. The relation of Christ to
Adam’s nature and sin brought subtle points of Christology into play, points that had inflamed
theological debate for the previous three centuries. Maximus had to show how Christ had taken
up the full burden of human nature in its fallen state without, however, participating in its sin.\footnote{Christ’s “selective” participation in man’s twofold origin, of \textit{genesis} (coming into being generally)
and \textit{gennēsis} (birth through procreation) is discussed in detail in \textit{Amb. 42} (PG 91:1316ff.).}

By emphasizing the virgin birth so much, Maximus seemed to separate Christ from the common
human condition. Maximus is sensitive to this problem; he insists that the principle (\textit{logos}) of a
given nature cannot be altered, especially not by God who created it.\footnote{Thal. 59 ll. 93–99; cf. \textit{Amb. 42} (PG 91:1341d).}

Yet the mode (\textit{tropos}) of nature, which is enacted by the individual hypostasis or person, is open to renewal and
transformation.\footnote{Ep. Thom. 2; cf. \textit{Opusc.theol.polem. 4} (To George the Presbyter and Abbot, asking about the Mystery
of Christ, PG 91: 60cff.).} He argues that sin does not actually corrupt nature itself, but only the mode of
human life in the fallen world. Neither does Christ’s virginity clash with the principle of nature,

since Adam himself and Eve his wife were formed by God apart from sex. In the case of the New
Adam, God redeemed the mode of human nature and by grace offered it the possibility of a
supernatural existence in Christ. This openness to grace was, in fact, the original intent of God for man: in Greek patristic thought, nature and grace do not constitute opposing categories.\footnote{Cf. \textit{Thal.} 11 ll. xyz.}

Maximus’s understanding of human nature should also be seen in light of his fundamental triad of \textit{genesis-kinēsis-stasis}. Man was \textit{made} for motion, pushed into existence, as it were, by God, already moving on a trajectory toward God. Passion, understood technically as the state of being acted upon, is thus natural to man and to all created being; only the divine nature is utterly dispassionate.\footnote{\textit{Amb.} 7 (PG 91:1073b). In fact, the state of deification in the age to come is described as a wholly passive state: \textit{Thal.} 22 ll. 77–82.} The Fall did not introduce motion, as Origen thought, but it did reverse its direction: instead of the ascent toward God, man descended to chaos, toward nothingness.\footnote{Asymptotically, since God does not allow what he has once created to cease to exist.} But with the coming of Christ, this change in motion became only a detour. Christ redirected human motion toward its proper end, which is himself, as God, and gave it the means to do so, through his own assumed humanity. This understanding of Christ as not only the new, but also the true, Adam provided Maximus a source for his ideal of human nature.\footnote{Cf. \textit{Thal.} 59 ll. 262–68, 280–83. Schönborn, “Plaisir et douleur,” 275 notes that the influential modern interpretations of pleasure and pain, such as the Freudian, Marxist, and evolutionary, must also be understood within a given protology and/or eschatology.} Christ thus provides the model for man’s origin as well as his end.

Therein the Lord destroyed both extremes—both the beginning and the end—of the mode of human generation inherited from Adam, such as were not originally of God’s doing; and he liberated from liability to those extremes all who are mystically reborn by his Spirit and who no longer retain the pleasure of sexual conception derived from Adam, but retain only the pain which Adam brought upon them—for this pain operates, not as a debt owed for sin, but according to the economy of salvation, because of the natural condition which counteracts sin: death. For death, once it has ceased having pleasure as its
“birthmother”—that pleasure for which death itself became the natural punishment—clearly becomes the “father” of everlasting life … He [Christ] judged sin in the flesh and innocently suffered, the righteous for the unrighteous, and converted the use of death, turning it into a condemnation of sin but not of human nature itself …

This refusal of pleasure and conversion of death does not happen automatically, however. One lays hold of it initially through baptism, which replaces man’s carnal regeneration with a new spiritual origin of water and the Spirit, and by which man is incorporated into Christ’s death and resurrection. But baptism must be lived out through a lifelong spiritual struggle. Christ again modeled this struggle in his own earthly life. Since Christ was not obliged to suffer, his voluntary and sinless undergoing of human passions redeemed them for the use of the rest of mankind. In the Ascetical Discourse Maximus derives asceticism entirely from the life of Christ: after himself undergoing baptism as an exemplar, he defeated Satan’s temptations of pleasure during the forty days in the wilderness and then defeated temptations of pain through his forbearance before the attacks of his enemies, throughout his ministry and especially at the time of his voluntary Passion. Furthermore, in his assumption of human nature he accepted the blameless passions which were attached to human nature after the Fall, that is, the ones connected to his mortality but not in themselves incurring moral culpability: such experiences as hunger, thirst, labor, weariness, sorrow, and anger. In normal human experience, these passions often lead to sin, as man tries to deal with them in a way catering to his sinful self-love, defined

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826 Thal. 61; Blowers and Wilken, Cosmic Mystery, 136.
827 Discussed in the course of Amb. 42 (PG 91:1316ff.) on the “three births” of Christ.
828 This is the theme of Thal. 6, in which Maximus explains why believers’ lives often fail to manifest the grace imbued by baptism (Blowers and Wilken, Cosmic Mystery, 103–4).
829 This is summarized at QD 194 and treated from a different angle in Thal. 21 (Blowers and Wilken, Cosmic Mystery, 109–13).
as irrational love of the body. Through Christ’s use of these in the course of his economy, he showed human beings how they might convert them into opportunities to defeat sin. As the vicious circle of pleasure and pain was summed up in sinful self-love, this new virtuous circle constitutes a kind of healthy “tough love” for oneself that leads to blessedness.

Maximus speaks only of spiritual pleasure as being unqualifiedly positive. The original sin was Adam’s perversion of his innate capacity for spiritual pleasure toward engrossment in the delights of the senses. Thunberg demonstrated that the natural faculties—usually analysed by Maximus following the ancient trichotomy of rational, aggressive, and appetitive—are conceived by him as truly natural, that is, part of man’s ideal creation according to the image and likeness of God. The faculties themselves can be understood as passions in a very basic sense because they are subject to impressions from nature and from grace. Hence Maximus can speak of a pure passion of love, the blessed erotic yearning of the mind for God. But in general he designates as passions those impulses that were added to human nature as a providential arrangement for mankind’s survival and reproduction in the world. They also chastise man, through their innate finitude and inability to satisfy his longing, to seek the true satriety which is found only in God. Some of the passions, moreover, can actually be wrested from their attachment to sin and used as instruments for virtue. In Maximus’s thought, however, this is generally true only of the “blameless” passions, those incurring no personal guilt because they are the common lot of fallen mankind, and were thus experienced by Christ himself, as the only sinless human being. It is no

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830 Cap.Char. 3.57.
831 Thal. epist. Πάντων δὲ τῶν κακῶν ἐστὶν ἀπαλλαγὴ καὶ σύντομος πρὸς σωτηρίαν ὁδὸς ἢ ἀληθῆς τοῦ θεοῦ κατ’ ἐπίγνωσιν ἀγάπη καὶ ἡ καθόλου τῆς κατὰ ψυχὴν πρὸς τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὸν κόσμον τοῦτον στοργῆς ἐξάρνησις, καθ’ ἦν, τῆς μὲν ἡδονῆς τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν, τῆς ὀδύνης δὲ τὸν φόβον ἀποβαλόμενου, τῆς κακῆς ἐλευθερούμεθα φιλαυτίας, ἐπὶ τῆς γνώσεως ἀναβιβασθέντες τοῦ κτίσματος, καὶ, ἰσθανόμεθα ἀγαθὴν ἀντιλαβόντες νοεράν φιλαυτίαν, σωματικὴς κεχωρισμένην στοργῆς, οὐ παυόμεθα λατρεύοντες τῷ θεῷ διὰ ταύτης τῆς καλῆς φιλαυτίας, ἐκ θεοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀεὶ ἐμποτίζετε τὴν σύστασιν.
832 Thal. 61. As in Augustine, there are not two separate loves, one for the Good and one for evil, but a single amor that is turned by man in either direction (pondus meum amor meus in Confessions 13.9.10).
833 Cap.Char. 3.67.
accident that the passions described under this heading are almost always the negative, painful ones: the voluntary embrace of pain, in imitation of Christ, is the beginning of healing from sin. The pleasurable passions are always suspected of ensnaring the soul deeper into sin. Furthermore, the concept of “passion” as commonly used by Maximus retains something of its negative coloring from the previous ascetical tradition: the blameless passions can be used for virtue, but they will not endure in eternity.\footnote{Thal. 55, ll. 123–42, an allegorical interpretation of a passage from 1 Ezra, discussed in more detail below.}

\textit{Sexuality and natural passions}

Let us begin with sexuality before moving on to consider marriage, which we defined in the introductory chapter as a definitive difference between monastics and laypeople. As in most of the Fathers, there is an intricate conceptual knot surrounding this topic, a tension between the orthodox affirmation of the goodness of marriage and the ascetic wariness of sexuality as a phenomenon consequent on the Fall. In Maximus it is intensified by the starkness of his pleasure-pain dialectic. Von Balthasar, concludes that “the sexual synthesis, then, remains, for Maximus as for most of the Fathers, too overloaded by the tragedy and the despairing dialectic of original sin to find a positive place among the syntheses achieved by Christ.”\footnote{Cosmic Liturgy, 203–4. Von Balthasar’s interpretation is slightly handicapped, in my opinion, by a certain existentialist pathos. As Daley acknowledges in the introduction to the translation, Von Balthasar’s goal was not so much to write a monograph in historical theology, but to bring the thought of Maximus to bear on pressing modern religious questions (Cosmic Liturgy, 16). Cf. Thunberg’s more patient analysis of the question in Microcosm and Mediator, 192–208.} This evaluation has been broadly accepted by Maximus scholars, but some have added important qualifications and modifications, especially regarding the role of gender in the human constitution. It seems to me, however, that modern studies tend to focus either on the ideal state of the deified body or on the depravity of human passions after the Fall and as a result have neglected to fully address
Maximus’s thought on sexuality and marriage in the here and now. I cannot be exhaustive in what follows, but I hope that by bringing attention to some neglected passages I might clarify Maximus’s teaching on marriage itself.

In a key passage in *Amb.* 10, where Maximus interprets Moses and Elias, present at Christ’s Transfiguration, as types of, among other things, marriage and celibacy respectively. Or again we learn that the mysteries related to marriage and celibacy are present with the Logos: through Moses, who was not hindered on account of marriage from becoming a lover of the divine glory, and through Elias, who remained entirely pure from marital intercourse. It is as if the Logos were proclaiming that he mystically incorporates into himself those who conduct these two ways of life by reason, according to the laws divinely laid down concerning them.\(^{836}\)

As Cooper points out, although this statement strongly validates marriage as a Christian way of life, in context with the other pairs to which Moses and Elias are assigned, there is a certain order with celibacy being superior to marriage. This is, of course, what one would expect given the preceding patristic tradition. Furthermore, one of the other pairs mentioned in the passage is *praxis* and *theòria* (approximately, action and contemplation, discussed in greater detail later in this chapter), suggesting that Maximus sees marriage and celibacy as supporting one another.\(^{837}\)

What, then, are the “laws divinely laid down” for marriage; how is it possible for the lover of

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\(^{836}\) *Amb.* 10 (PG 91:1161d).

\(^{837}\) Cooper, “St Maximus on the Mystery of Marriage and the Body: a Reconsideration,” in *Knowing the Purpose of Creation through the Resurrection: Proceedings of the Symposium on St Maximus the Confessor, Belgrade, October 18–21, 2012*, edited by Maxim Vasiljević (Belgrade: Sebastian Press, 2013), 204–7. Cooper’s insistence on reading the marriage/celibacy pair in the context of the others, as containing a definite ordering, is in general correct; but several of the other pairs are not as straightforward as he suggests. For example, wisdom/kindness and time/nature are both ambiguous and cannot be simply mapped onto an ordering of inferior/superior.
God not to be “hindered” by it; and how is it that the virgin ascetic remains “pure from marital intercourse”?  

The last two questions suggest two themes to tackle with regard to marriage: sex and care. These correspond, roughly, to Maximus’s favored antinomies of pleasure and pain. It is clear that, for Maximus, the current mode of human reproduction is a result of the Fall—that is to say, both punishment and providence of God. According to him, the image of God in man pertains solely to his soul, “according to which he is naturally divided from the other animals and has no suggestion at all of a potential for relation with them.” Adam’s body before the Fall was finer and not subject to death, and he would have reproduced in an angelic way. A recent study by Doru Costache has suggested that for Maximus the division of the sexes is not itself necessarily a condition of the fall and that the suggestion of an angelic mode of reproduction may actually refer to a sexual marital relation not subject to passion and corruption. He establishes the first part of the conclusion convincingly, but I am not so sure of the latter part. In a passage in the *Questions and Doubts* explaining Ps. 50:5, Maximus seems to see marriage itself, or sexual intercourse—*gamos*, which can be understood either way—as a result of the original transgression. Given his argument elsewhere that Christ’s virgin birth does not violate

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838 Cooper ("St Maximus on the Mystery of Marriage," 205–6) notes that the concessive tone with regard to marriage not hindering spiritual life may seem faint praise, until one considers that it implicitly conditions a *locus classicus* for the superiority of virginity, 1 Cor. 7:33–34. Purity from intercourse is a more difficult phrase to justify, although it too reflects traditional terminology. Perhaps *katharos* should be translated with its alternative meaning of “free from.”

839 Myst. 6, ll. 535–39. The majority tradition of the Fathers locates the image of God solely in the soul, but there is an important minority strand that also posits its of the body, Thunberg’s masterful analysis has clarified Maximus’s teaching that the body participates in the image and likeness through its proper use by the soul to manifest the glory of God through action and contemplation (*Microcosm and Mediator*, 120–37).

840 Costache, “Living above Gender,” 269–74; he achieves this result by re-evaluating Gregory of Nyssa’s thought on this subject, on whom Maximus draws here, as well as Maximus’s own words.

841 QD 1,3; cf. Cooper, “St Maximus on the Mystery of Marriage,” 208–9. I disagree with his interpretation of the language of sexual desire in that passage, however, seeing it as an observation about indulgence in sensual pleasure in general rather than on sexual pleasure in particular.
the natural principle of humanity, since Adam and Eve themselves came into being without intercourse, he most likely hypothesized an ideal asexual reproduction.  

Be that as it may, in man’s fallen condition, Maximus sees pleasure as a concession. This becomes apparent in two passages. First, he comments on a passage attributed to Basil.  

From the ethical works of St Basil, a difficulty in the discourse On Fasting: “When,” he says, “perfection was despaired of, then enjoyment was permitted.” Perfection was despaired of when through disobedience man perverted the natural faculties given to him. Thus it is was impossible for nature, held fast in attachment to material things, to ascend back to perfection until the Creator of nature, having supernaturally become man, led nature back up to the natural state. He says that enjoyment was permitted rather than being surrendered to the independence of delusion.  

For Maximus, then, humanity would only be completely freed from passion by the coming of Christ. It is less clear whether the last sentence should be seen as simply a gloss on the pseudo-Basilian phrase: i.e. that “for enjoyment to be conceded” is equivalent to “being surrendered to the independence of delusion”—in which case bodily pleasure would be viewed as almost wholly negative—or whether enjoyment was conceded as legitimate in order to prevent humanity from being surrendered to delusion—in which case earthly pleasures would have a positive, though temporary, usefulness in spiritual terms.  

A second passage may help clarify

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843 It is not actually found in Basil’s extant works. Cf. Prassas, Questions and Doubts.
844 Ἐκ τῶν Ἡθικῶν τοῦ Ἁγίου Βασιλείου ἀπορον ἐν τῷ Περὶ νηστείας λόγῳ ὅτε, φησίν, ἀπενώθη ἡ τελείωσις τὸ συνεχομένη ἢ ἀπόλαυσις. Τότε ἀπενώθη ἡ τελείωσις ἢ τὰς δοθέισας τοῖς φυσικοῖς δυνάμεις ὁ ἄνθρωπος διὰ τῆς παρακολούθησας παρετρεπέναι. Ἀδύνατον οὖν ἢ ἐν τῇ προσπαθείᾳ ἐπαναλαμβάνει εἰς τὸ τέλειον μέχρι τῆς φύσεως ποιητῆς, ὑπὲρ φύσεως γενόμενος ἀνθρώπως, τῆς τῆς φύσεως εἰς κατὰ φύσιν ἐπανήγαγεν. Συγχωρηθήκαι δὲ τὴν τὴν ἀπόλαυσιν λέγει ἀντὶ τοῦ παραδοθῆναι αὐτοῦ τὴν αὐτονομία τῆς πλάνης.
845 The latter explanation corresponds with the traditional patristic explanation of the provision for earthly rewards to the Israelites in the Old Testament—to at least keep them from straying after false gods,
the question. Interpreting Rom. 15:8, “I say that Christ became a minister of circumcision on behalf of truth,” Maximus writes:

In the beginning man was deceived and being found in transgression was made like the cattle and was condemned to be born and to die in the same way as them. But the Lord, since he did accept for the work of his own hand to be utterly destroyed, managed his salvation according to different periods. And in Abraham he made more manifest the future salvation which was to come about through his visitation in the flesh. Hence after all His promises to him he gives him circumcision, which manifested the removal of the part of the soul subject to passion, since all of the saints circumcised the passionate part of the soul, but they did not completely remove it, for they were subject to the condemnation of nature as having been born of intercourse. When the Lord himself came, the master of nature, he who had also given circumcision to Abraham, he became a true minister and fulfiller of it. For he accomplished the complete removal of passionate generation, being conceived without seed and born without corruption.⁸⁴⁶

According to this passage, then, the Old Testament saints were able to limit and control the passions, but not be completely freed of them, due to their generation from sexual intercourse, until the coming of Christ who initiated a new mode of generation. This supports my reading of the previous passage; the saints could not be accused of being in a state of delusion, but rather as since they were incapable of being content with spiritual blessings alone—as well as the tenor of 1 Cor. 7:1,9, which sees marriage as a concession to prevent fornication.

⁸⁴⁶ QD 113: Ἐπειδὴ κατ’ ἀρχὰς ἀπατηθεὶς ὁ ἀνθρώπος καὶ ἐν παραβάσει γενόμενος παρεσυνεβλήθη τοῖς κτήνεσιν καὶ κατεδικάσθη κατὰ τὸν αὐτῶν τρόπον καὶ γεννᾶσθαι καὶ ἀποθνῄσκειν, ὁ δὲ κύριος τὸ ἱδιὸν πλάσμα εἰς τέλος ἀπολέσθαι μὴ ἀνασχίμασθαι κατὰ μὲν διαμόρφωσιν καταδίκῃ τὴν αὐτὸς διεπραγματεύσετο σωτηρίαν, ἐν δὲ τῷ Ἀβραάμ ἐκδηλότερον ἐποιεῖτο τὴν μέλλουσαν ἐσεσθαι διὰ τῆς ἐνσάρκως γένεσις ἐπιδημίας σωτηρίαν, οὕτων μετὰ πάσας τὰς πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐπαγγελίας δίδωσιν αὐτῷ τὴν περιτομῆν, ἣτις ἐκδήλου τὴν περιαίρεσιν τοῦ παθητικοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς μέρους, ἐπεὶ οὖν πάντες οἱ ἀγαθοὶ περιετέμοι μὲν τὸ ἐμπαθῶς τῆς ψυχῆς μέρος, οὐ μὴν εἰς τὸ παντελῶς περιελαῖον—ὑπέκειντο γὰρ τῇ καταδίκῃ τῆς φύσεως, γεννηθέντες ἐκ συνουσίας—, αὐτὸς ἐκλήθην ὁ κύριος ὁ καὶ δισθέντις τῆς φύσεως, ὁ καὶ δώσει τῷ Ἀβραάμ τὴν περιτομήν, διάκονος ταύτης καὶ πλήρωτις ἀληθῶς γέγονεν, τὴν παντελῆ τῆς ἐμπαθῶς γεννήσεως περιαίρεσιν ποιησάμενος· ἀνευ γὰρ σποράς συνελήφθη καὶ δίχα φθοράς ἐγεννήθη.
being conceded a measure of “enjoyment” since under the old dispensation they were unable to remove the passions completely.

In both of the above passages Maximus sees Christ as bringing freedom from the state of liability to passion introduced by the Fall and perpetuated by procreation. That state in itself is not culpable but it is still a generic kind of “sin” (keeping in mind that *hamartia* in Greek has the general meaning of “missing the mark”). The culpable form of sin is that deliberately committed by the individual. But in human experience the latter is inextricably bound up in the former because the demonic powers take advantage of human passibility: through the exigencies of natural passions they drive man to unnatural ones. The natural passions are part of man’s fallen condition or circumstance (*persistasis*) and through the interaction of natural and unnatural passions man finds himself bound in a conditional or circumstantial (*peristatikōs*) law of sin. He deliberately binds himself in this way through the shunning of pain and the pursuit of pleasure. Procreation seems to be related to all this not as an act of the culpable sort of sin, but as falling under the second, generic, sin of passibility and perpetuating the dominion of sin which takes advantage of it. We all are born liable to passibility, but we also reproduce Adam’s sin of choice through our own deliberation: Maximus, like many patristic authors before and after him, frequently expresses Adam’s conundrum in the first person singular or plural. Christ took on passibility and thus “became (generic) sin” (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21) without, however, deliberately choosing sin, and was thus able to defeat in himself the principalities and powers and infuse into human nature the ability sin through passibility itself. As we noted above, however, this occurs only when the individual person through baptism receives a new birth, not conditioned by sin
and passibility, and then goes on to deliberately oppose the vicious circle by enduring pain and avoiding pleasure bravely. 847

We see here how Maximus can distinguish between elements of the fallen condition that are natural—though not in the primary sense of man’s capacity for being moved, as a creature, toward his Creator—and those which are unnatural. 848 It is still somewhat unclear whether sexual intercourse involves a natural or unnatural pleasure. Maximus defends the sexual act, in passing, from those who would besmirch it in order to support the belief in the soul of a person coming into existence after his body.

If … you say say that it is not right for that which is according to the image of God and itself divine (thus denominating the intellectual soul) to exist together with flux and sordid pleasure, and that it is more decorous to have to say that it enters forty days after conception, you will clearly be seen to blame the fashioner of nature, and you will be shown to be running the terrible risk of blasphemy that arises from this argument. For if marriage is bad, clearly the natural law of coming into existence is also bad; and if such a law of natural coming into existence is bad, it is clear that he who created nature and gave it a law of coming into existence would rightly be blamed, as you claim. 849

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847 My primary sources for this summary are Thal. 21 and 42. The term “deliberately” (kata gnomên) is important in Maximus’ thought. Especially as developed in his later anti-monothelete polemics, gnomê (deliberation) is a process of fallen man. It involves a hesitation and wavering between choices, due both to human ignorance and moral weakness. Christ, although possessing a natural human will (thelêsís) did not have deliberation, since this would imply moral imperfection. In the process of individual redemption, however, deliberation plays a necessary and positive role, somewhat like the natural passions when put to a virtuous use. By exercising deliberation ascetically a man forces himself to choose pain and avoid pleasure, thus strengthening a habit of virtue and gradually freeing himself from passion and ignorance. Eventually this leads to Christ-like harmony of the human with the divine will, as a foretaste in this life and permanently in the age to come. See Thunberg, Microcosm and Mediator, 220–244.

848 Though the connection between these lowly passions with the “blessed passion of holy eros” is, I suspect, profound: the primary reason they are natural is that they have the potential of being used to support the supremely natural desire for spiritual pleasure in God.

849 Amb. 42 (PG 91:bc): φάσκοντες μὴ δίκαιον εἶναι τὸ κατ’ εἰκόνα θεοῦ καὶ θεοῦ (οὔτω τὴν νοεράν καλούντες ψυχήν) ἑυτίκει καὶ ἢδονὴ ρυτιαρὰ σύνυπάρχειν, μετὰ δὲ τὰς τεσσαράκοντα τῆς συλλήψεως ἡμέρας ἐπεισκρίνεσθαι λέγειν εὐπχημονόστερον ὑεσθαι δεῖν, τὸν τῆς φύσεως δημιουργὸν σαφῶς αἰτιώμενοι
This seems a clear statement of the goodness of marriage and sexual intercourse. Maximus does not, however, use here his usual term for sexual procreation (gennêtésis) but rather that for coming into existence (genesis)—hence my rather awkward translation of the last sentence in the above quotation. In the same Ambiguity, just a few pages later, Maximus shows Adam, by his turning away from intellectual contemplation,

fittingly condemned to have the involuntary and material and transitory birth from procreation … the birth which is passionate and servile and forced, according to the likeness of the irrational and unintelligent cattle, he exchanges for freedom and the birth that is dispassionate and freely-chosen and pure, and in exchange for honor with God that is divine and ineffable, he lays hold of dishonorable fixation in matter together with the unintelligent cattle.  

Christ then undergoes incarnation and baptism, “for the purpose of setting aside procreation from bodies.”

The solution to this apparent contradiction is in fact rather simple. The first statement regarding the time of ensoulment emphasizes that sexual intercourse is good and acceptable by God with reference to its function of bringing beings into existence. The second emphasizes the regrettable form that this intercourse takes in the fallen world. Maximus seems to be saying that

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850 Amb. 42 (PG 91:1348a): σωμάτων εἰκότως ἀπροαιρετον καὶ ὑλικὴν καὶ ἐπίκεισθον ἔχειν καταδικάζεται γέννησιν … τὴν ἐμπαθή καὶ δούλην καὶ κατηναγκασμένην, καθ’ ὁμοιότητα τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς ἀλόγων τε καὶ ἀνόητων κτηνῶν γέννησιν τῆς ἐλευθερίας καὶ ἀπαθοῦς καὶ αὐθαυστίας καὶ ἄγνης ἀνταλλάξας γεννήσεως, καὶ τῆς σὺν θεῷ καὶ θείας καὶ ἀνεκκλαλήτου τιμῆς τῆν μετά τῶν ἀνόητων κτηνῶν ἀτιμὸν ἀντιλαβέας συμπαρενύλησιν.

851 Amb. 42 (PG 91:1348b): εἰς ἀθέτησιν τῆς ἕκ σωμάτων γεννήσεως.
sexual intercourse is not polluted but it is degraded, an animal mode of reproduction. It is one of the natural passions to which man is liable in his fallen existence.

A more detailed discussion of the natural passions as well as the pleasures arising from their satisfaction occurs in an anagogical interpretation of the census of the Israelites who returned from Persia at the time of Ezra (Esd. 5:41–42).

The children are perhaps the thoughts about the natural, blameless, and involuntary passions; women are either the conceptions or the natural appetites and pleasures, which do not bring blame to those who have them, since they are a necessary consequence of natural appetite. For any food causes pleasure even if we do not wish it to, when it relieves a preceding want; so does a drink when it drives away the distress of thirst, and sleep, when it renews the strength spent in wakefulness. And likewise for whatever other passions we have that are both necessary for the maintenance of nature and useful for obtaining virtue to those who are diligent. And these passions, though not numbered among the men, yet they go out together with every mind fleeing the confusion of sin, lest on account of these it remain held in servitude to those passions which are voluntary and blameworthy and unnatural and which have no other origin in us than the motion of the natural passions. But they are not numbered together, for they are not of a nature to cross over together with us to the immortal and long-lasting life, these passions which maintain nature for the present life.⁸⁵²

⁸⁵² Thal. 55, II. 123–42: Παιδείς εἰς τυχόν οἱ περὶ τῶν φυσικῶν καὶ ἀδιαβλήτων καὶ οὐκ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν παθῶν λογισμοί, γυναῖκες δὲ ή αἱ ἐνθυμησιες ή αἱ κατὰ φύσιν ὀρέξεις καὶ ἡδοναί, μὴ φέρουσι τοῖς κεκτημένοις διαβολῆν, ὡς ἀναγκαῖον παρακολούθημα καθεστῶσας φυσικής ὀρέξεως. Ἡδονή γὰρ ποιεῖ κατὰ φύσιν, καὶ μὴ βουλομένων ἡμῶν, καὶ ἡ τυχοῦσα τροφή, προλαβοῦσαν ἐνδεικνύουσαν παραμυθουμένη, καὶ πόσις, ἀποκρουμένη τοῦ δίψους τὴν ὀρέγειν, καὶ ὑπὸς, τὴν ἐκ τῆς ἐγγενείας ἐκπαραθέοντος ἀναγεννομένης δύναμιν, καὶ διὰ τῶν καθ’ ἡμῶν φυσικῶν ἔτη τυγχάνει, πρὸς μὲν σύστασιν φύσεως ἀναγκαία, πρὸς δὲ κτῆσιν ἀρετῆς ὑπάρχοντα χρῆσιν τοῖς σπουδαίοις· ἀπερ κἀν μὴ συναρθηθεῖ τοῖς ἀνδράσιν, ἀλλὰ συνεκβαίνει παντὶ νοὶ φεύγουν τῆς ἀμαρτίας τῆς σύχθειν, ὅπως μὴ δι’ αὐτὰ μείνῃ κρατούμενον εἰς δουλείαν τῶν ἐφ’ ἡμῖν καὶ διαβεβλημένων καὶ παρὰ φύσιν παθῶν, οὐκ ἔχοντων ἄλλην ἀρχήν ἐν ἡμῖν πλὴν τῆς
Maximus again emphasizes the provisional nature of these passions. He only mentions the most basic and necessary passions: hunger, thirst, fatigue. Sexual intercourse does not figure among them, but it is perhaps suggested by using the women in the narrative as a symbol for all pleasures. It is physically necessary by nature to feel these passions and pleasures, and morally necessary by choice to wrest them from service to the vicious passions which, as mentioned here and noted above with reference to the effects of the original sin, arise from the natural passions through the incitement of the demons.\footnote{Right after the passage quoted above Maximus discusses the redemption of the natural passions through contemplation (ll. 347–64); incitement by the demons of the natural passion of desire to shameful appetites for pleasure (and acknowledgment of the violence of these natural appetites) is mentioned at Thal. 50 ll. 160–63. Cf. Blowers, “Gentiles of the Soul,” which takes its title from a similar analysis at Thal. 51, making a distinction between culpable passions and natural sensible things: both are called Gentiles, as foreign to soul and mind, but as the ancient Israelites distinguished between hostile and non-hostile Gentiles, the soul is commanded not to fight sensibles if they do not fight it. Cf. Thal. prol. where Maximus says that sense has sin somehow mixed into it because the sympathy of the soul for flesh in natural things easily leads to the unnatural; the exercise of reason is necessary to master the passions and be freed from the senses; Thal. 65, ll. 197–209.}

The mention of the basic needs of the body reminds us that pleasure is intertwined with pain. What is in question here is the whole range of man’s experience, and this brings us to the second theme, that of anxious care. Maximus sketches this out in an interpretation of Adam’s eating bread in the sweat of his brow.

The earth cursed in the works of Adam is Adam’s flesh, always becoming cursed by the works of Adam, I mean the passions of the mind made earthly, with barenness in the virtues which are works of God. He eats of it with great pain and sorrow and enjoys the small amount of pleasure that it produces. The flesh, in return for this corruptible enjoyment, sprouts for him cares and worries, like thorns, and great trials and dangers, like thistles, which in his reasoning and anger and desire grievously prick him from all over. The result is that he just barely takes care of the flesh’s health and prosperity, like...
grass that is withering; and he eats—that is, obtains, and that only after much repetition of calamities—in the sweat of his face—meaning in the sensible labor and toil of the anxious observation of sensible things—like bread the resources for the sustenance of the present life, either through technical skill or through some other method devised for survival.\(^{854}\)

In essence, civilization as we know it, with both its attendant blessings and its inevitable cares, resulted from the Fall. In one of his most moving poems, a hypothetical contest between wordly and spiritual life, Gregory of Nazianzos had assigned to marriage all the benefits of civilization and shown virginity voluntarily depriving itself of them in order to shed all cares and focus on God alone.\(^{855}\) Maximus does not make an explicit connection like Gregory does, but his consideration of fallen life suggests a similar view. Individual redemption requires purification from the passions, ceasing from busying oneself with technology, and finally transcending of investigation of nature.\(^{856}\)

\textit{Cosmos and Church}

\(^{854}\) Thal. 5: Ἡ κατηραμένη γῆ ἐν τοῖς ἑργοῖς τοῦ Ἀδάμ ἐστιν ἢ σάρξ τοῦ Ἀδάμ, ἀεὶ γινομένη διὰ τῶν ἑργῶν τοῦ Ἀδάμ, λέγω δὲ τῶν παθῶν τοῦ γεωβέντος νοῦ, κατηραμένη τῇ τῶν άρετῶν, ὡς ἑργῶν θεοῦ, ἀκαρπία· ἵνα μετ’ ὑδώνης πολλῆς καὶ λύπης ἐσθίει τῆς κατ’ αὐτὴν μικρᾶς ἥδονης ἀπολαύων. Ἡ περιεράσθαι καὶ καθάπερ ὑπὲρ ταύτης τῆς φθαρτῆς ἀπολαύσεως ἀνατέλλει αὐτῷ μερίμνας καὶ φροντίδας, καθάπερ άκάνθας, καὶ μεγάλους πειρασμοὺς καὶ καθᾶνους, ὡσπερ τριβόλους, κατὰ τε λόγον καὶ θυμὸν καὶ ἐπιθυμιᾶν ἄλγειν ἀυτῶν πανταχόθεν κατακεντοῦντας, ἵνα μόλις δυνηθῇ τὴν ταύτης ὑγείαν τε καὶ εὔεξίαν, ὡς χόρτον μαραίνομεν, περιποίουσασθαι καὶ φαγεῖν, τοστέστι τυχεῖν, καὶ τότε μετὰ πολλὴν τῶν δεινῶν ἑπανακύκλησιν ἐν ἱδρώτι τοῦ προσώπου, τοστέστιν ἐν τῷ κατ’ αἰσθήσιν καμάτῳ τε καὶ κόψῳ τῆς περιέργου κατασκοπῆς τῶν αἰσθητῶν, ὡσπερ ἄρτον, τὴν πρὸς σύστασιν ἔχειν τῆς παρούσης ζωῆς ἀφρωμίαν, ἢ διὰ τέχνην ἢ δι’ ἄλλης τινὸς περιενεπομένης τῷ βίῳ μεθοδίας. Cf. a brief suggestion of this at Amb. 45 (PG 91:1353bc), where in contrast to his carefree condition as created by God, man is distracted (literally, pulled apart, \textit{perispómenon}) by such cares as well as by the unnatural passions.

\(^{855}\) \textit{Carmina moralia 8 [De comparatio vitarum]} (PG 37:649–67).

\(^{856}\) The term is simply natural contemplation, which as we saw was a natural and exalted part of spiritual life; hence I think Maximus is referring both to the investigation of nature in the fallen state and to purified natural contemplation, which, as we will see below, must eventually be transcended by mystical theology. Man was created originally to first rise to God through yearning, and then descend to study of created things and raise them up to God; Christ restores this sequence in his incarnation so that we may follow it again (\textit{QD} 64).
Before turning to consider how the theological anthropology sketched above is developed by Maximus in the concrete ethics of monastic and lay life, we shall consider his understanding of the place of the body, specifically Christ’s incarnate Body and its fulness, the Church. From the end of the previous section it might seem as if Maximus only sees the use of the body and the passions in a negative light, as, to put it baldly, an opportunity for mortification. But as Adam Cooper has argued:

All of this might suggest that Maximus’ commitment to the primacy of spirit would preclude any concession to the material order of an importance beyond its contingent, secondary ontological status. Yet, on the basis of the mystery of the incarnation, it is exclusively in the harmony proper to this contingent, subordinate relation that all material phenomena, including the body, exceed their finite boundaries and so become vehicles of divine theophany. To the extent that in this life the soul is adorned with the virtues, in which God the Word takes on visible, fleshly contours, the body—no less than the soul—already ‘suffers’ deification, anticipating under the veil of humility and mortification its glorious participation in the soul's future beatitude.

Through the fall Adam had abdicated humanity’s noble task of serving as microcosm and mediator. The unnatural dominance of body over soul and the resulting loss of internal integrity within man led him to lose his proper rule over creation and contributed to the relative disintegration of the cosmic order. But Christ as New Adam allowed humanity to resume its original task. In himself he achieved the requisite order and harmony, so that his very body was holy, glorious, and life-giving, as manifested especially in his Transfiguration and the

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858 Amb. 41 (PG 91:1308cd).
Eucharist. These events are not, however, complete if considered only in the person of Christ; rather they must be completed in the work of the Church, “the fullness of him who is filled all in all” (Eph. 1:23). This translation differs from the usual rendering in English Bibles (“the fullness of him who fills all in all”) but is more correct philologically and was thus understood by most of the Greek Fathers. Based on this, Cooper concludes, for Maximus,

Christ is the concrete meeting point at which the fullness of God and the totality of the new creation co-penetrate, each filling and being filled by the other. For if, as he says, the creature moves in harmony with its logos, it will come to be ‘in God, filling its own place and achieving its proper dignity as a useful member of the body of Christ.’ […] In these passages we have witnessed a close correspondence in the spiritual topographies of the individual soul, the cosmos, and the Church. Maximus knows of no opposition between the individual, communal, and cosmic.

This is encapsulated in Maximus’s famous dictum: “For the Word of God and God wills always and in all things to accomplish the mystery of his embodiment.”

All creatures participate in God like the radii of a circle in its center and are thus related to each other. As cause and unifier of all things, he does not destroy their attributes but overcomes their individual relations as the whole is superior to its parts.

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859 Maximus contemplates the former at length in part of the long Ambiguum 10, and in summary fashion in Questions and Doubts 191. The Eucharist is discussed in various places; most especially, with respect to its physical vivifying power, in the Mystagogy.

860 Body in St Maximus, 192–93.

861 Cooper, Body in St Maximus, 193, on Questions and Doubts 173.1–16 (CCSG 10.120). Cf. Amb. 31, where Maximus interprets Gregory of Nazianzene’s comment in his Nativity sermon that “the upper world must be filled” (πληρωθήκας δει τον άνω κοσμον), PG 91:1273d–1276d.

862 Amb. 7 (1084d): Βούλεται γὰρ ἢ καὶ ἐν πάσιν ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος καὶ θεός τῆς αὐτοῦ ἐνσωματώσεως ἐνεργεῖθαι τὸ μυστήριον (Blowers and Wilken, Cosmic Mystery, 60).

863 Chap. Theol. 2.4 and Mystagogy ll. 189-93. The analogy was not original to Maximus.

864 Myst. 1, ll. 132–62.
According to Maximus, some of the differences in creation are original and God-willed, whereas others are caused by sin. He gives several different listings of these divisions. His most systematic treatment occurs in *Ambiguity* 41. He begins with the difference between uncreated and created, which is not in fact a difference, properly speaking, but a total incommensurability because of the divine transcendence. The second division is between intelligibles and sensibles, the third is within sensible nature between heaven and earth, the fourth is the division of the earth into paradise and *oikoumenē* (lit., inhabited world), and the fifth is that which divides humanity between male and female. Man is an all-embracing workshop and mediator between this differences, called to ascend through them from inferior to superior, recapitulating all creation in himself, and then to be united to God through grace (bridging, in a way, that absolute incommensurability). In the wake of humanity’s trangression, Christ accomplishes the recapitulation. He started from the lowest step, becoming perfect man without sin, and without the normal means of sexual intercourse. He then reconciled paradise and *oikoumenē* through his walking on earth among the disciples after the Resurrection and thereafter sensible heaven and earth through his Ascension; then he united the intelligible and sensible worlds by passing through the angelic hosts with his soul and body as a complete instance of human nature. With these four mediations he manifested all of creation completely undivided and free of discord according to its primordial general (catholic) principle. Finally, he appeared on humanity’s behalf before God the Father, from whom as Word he had never been separated.

These divisions and their resolution are of some interest for us because they relate to some of the ways in which the laity differed from monastics—at least in terms of the tropes used

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865 *Amb. 41* (PG 91:1304d–1308a).
866 τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἀκολουθίας γαμικῆς οὐδόλως εἰς τοῦτο προσδεηθείς (PG 91:1309a).
867 *Amb. 41* (PG 91:1309b–1312a). The same five divisions and their mediation are listed briefly in *Thal. 48* ll. 65–81.
to characterize the two categories, for in Maximus’s thought the divisions cut, first and foremost, through the heart of each human being.\footnote{The spiritual man becomes a vast spiritual world of God (Chap. Theol. 2.79); idea of love as unity and equality within individual soul instead of between men (Thal. 49 ll. 56–67).} The first division between male and female is obviously of relevance to the question of marriage and celibacy; that between earth and heaven, and between sensibles and intelligibles, can be mapped to some degree onto the way that monks were viewed as pursuing a heavenly or angelic way of life in contrast to the earthly-minded laity. In other works Maximus gives different lists of opposing pairs, which are less relevant to our purpose.\footnote{For example, in Thal. 63 ll. 510–521, he interprets the two olive trees in Zachariah 7 as Old and New Testament, practical virtue and theoretical knowledge, Gentiles and Jews, body and soul, sensibles and intelligibles, present and future life, and more. In QD 63 he applies Eph. 2:14–15, about breaking down the middle wall of enmity, to a similar purpose. Cf. Or. Dom. 287–88.}\footnote{Myst. 1, ll. 129–31.} More importantly, they are mediated by the believer within the Church.

This is the central theme of Maximus’s liturgical commentary, the Mystagogy, where the Church is presented as the type and image of God insofar as it possesses the same energy as him, uniting in herself the whole vast spectrum of human differences.\footnote{} It is in this way that the holy Church of God will be shown to be working for us the same effects as God, in the same way as the image reflects its archetype. For numerous and of almost infinite number are the men, women, and children who are distinct from one another and vastly different by birth and appearance, by nationality and language, by ways of life and age, by opinions and skills, by manners and customs, by pursuits and studies, and still again by positions, fortunes, characteristics, and habits. All are born into the Church and through it are reborn and recreated in the Spirit. To all in equal measure it gives and bestows one divine form and designation, to be Christ’s and to carry his name. In accordance with faith it gives to all a single, simple, whole, and indivisible condition which does not allow us to bring to mind the existence of the myriads of differences.
among them, even if they do exist, through the universal relationship and union of all things with it. It is through it that absolutely no one at all is in himself separate from the community since everyone converges with all the rest and joins together with them by the one, simple, and indivisible grace and power of faith. “For all,” it is said, “had but one heart and soul.”

Maximus’ use of the closing quotation, from Acts 4:32, is telling. This verse was often used in the early period of monasticism as a justification for the common life: the monastery was supposed to renew this ideal of apostolic community. Here Maximus interprets it in a way that is both closer to and farther from the original citation than the “monastic” exegesis. On the one hand, he restores its reference to all believers, regardless of individual differences, as in the primitive Church in Jerusalem. On the other, he stretches it onto the immense canvas of the entire world, whereas the “monastic” interpretation sought to recapture the Jerusalem ideal on something like the scale of the Jerusalem reality, that is, on locally.

This tension between all-embracing catholicity of the Church and its concrete manifestation is worked out in the rest of the Mystagogy through a commentary on the physical church building in its basic structure and the rite of the liturgy that takes place in it. He applies this on many levels. The church, divided into nave and sanctuary, brings into mutual communion several divisions, some of which overlap with the five-fold division in Ambiguum 41. These are: sensible and intelligible, earth and heaven, soul and body (with the altar as the intellect, the highest element of the soul) and, corresponding to these, natural contemplation and practical

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871 Myst. 1, ll. 163–82, George C. Berthold, Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 187 (slightly emended). Maximus gives some of the same differences in a shorter list at Amb. 10 (PG 91:1192df.), in the course of arguing that God’s providence covers particulars as well as universals.
philosophy (with the altar as mystical theology).\textsuperscript{872} Then within the soul itself there are five more pairs that together encompass the various aspects of the theoretical and practical life. These are called syzygiai, yokings, implying their mutual dependence and also leading up to a marital analogy for the union of Christ with the Church and the individual soul.\textsuperscript{873} The mediation of these divisions is enacted ritually in the church through the various movements and moments of the sacred liturgy, which itself must be contemplated and assimilated by the individual believer.

Whoever has been fortunate enough to have been spiritually and wisely initiated into what is accomplished in church has rendered his soul divine and a veritable church of God. It is perhaps for this reason that the church made by human hands, which is its symbolic copy because of the variety of divine things which are in it, has been given to us for our guidance toward the highest good.\textsuperscript{874}

In the rest of the discourse Maximus interprets most of the key elements of the liturgy along these contemplative lines, showing their import first for the worship of the community toward God (in Chapters 8–21), and then more specifically for the inner development of the individual soul (Chapters 22–23). The concurrence of theoretical and practical aspects is a motif that recurs throughout and shows Maximus’s concern for the variability of the liturgical experience for different people. He is aware that they will benefit from the ritual differently according to their spiritual state, and thus seeks to provide correspondingly varied instruction. The long concluding Chapter 24 offers extensive reflections on this topic. In fact this sensitivity to diversity, not just of earthly but of a spiritual status, within the Church, is present throughout Maximus’s works.

\textsuperscript{872} Myst. 2–4, ll. 207–84. In Amb. 61 (PG 91:1385df.) the same typology is applied to the Old Testament Tabernacle. Note the similarity with Cosmas Indicopleustes’s sacred geography: the main difference is that Maximus this was precisely a typology and not a direct model for the actual structure of the cosmos.

\textsuperscript{873} Myst. 5, ll. 288–506; marital analogy at ll. 450–85, invoking the New Testament locus classicus, Eph. 5:31–32. Earlier he referred to the nave and sanctuary in terms reminiscent of the interpenetration of divine and human natures in Christ (ll. 220–25).

\textsuperscript{874} Myst. 5, ll. 501–506; Berthold, Selected Writings, 195.
and helps situate the role of laypeople in his thought. We will thus consider its role in the conclusion of the Mystagogy before turning to its broader use in his thought.

He exhorts every Christian to spend time in Church and never to neglect the liturgy performed there, on account of the grace of the Spirit which invisibly abides there, but in a special way during time of the synaxis. This grace transforms all those present toward the divine realities manifested by the mystical rites. Even if someone does not perceive it, if he is a “child in Christ” and unable to peer into the depth of what is happening, the Spirit works in him the grace of salvation through each of the divine symbols performed. God, through the Church as his image, brings together all those who participate differently, according to their ability, in these symbols, “joining together the faithful to each other according to one grace and calling of the faith: the active and virtuous according to one identity of will, and the contemplative and gnostic to these also according to unbreakable and indivisible concord.” In reviewing the exegesis of the opening stages of the second half of the liturgy, he adds, in addition to the active and contemplative, a lower stage of beginners in the faith, and shows them all progressing, both within their own spheres and toward the next level.

In a particular way it means the progress of the faithful from simple faith to learning in dogmas, initiation, accord, and piety. The closing of the doors indicates the first thing, the entrance of the holy things the second, the kiss the third, the recitation of the creed the fourth. For those at the active stage it means the transfer from activity to contemplation of those who have closed their senses and who have become outside the flesh and the world

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875 Myst. 24, II. 883–899. By "spend time” I translate scholazein—from scholê, leisure—meaning the kind of undistracted, carefree time that allows for spiritual contemplation. As we will see in the following chapter, Anastasius of Sinai also emphasizes the benefits of attendance in the same way in his Sermon on the Divine Liturgy. Maximus repeats this exhortation at Myst. 24, 1076–82.

876 Myst. 24, II. 950–59. my translation: κατά μίαν τῆς πίστεως καὶ χάριν καὶ κλήσιν τοὺς πιστοὺς ἄλληλοις ἐνοικίως συνάπτουσα, τοὺς δὲ πρακτικοὺς καὶ ἐναρέτους, κατὰ μίαν γνώμης ταυτότητα, τοὺς δὲ θεωρητικοὺς καὶ γνωστικοὺς πρὸς τούτοις καὶ καθ’ ὁμόνοιαν ἄρραγη καὶ ἀδιαίρετον.
by the rejection of the activities involving them, and the ascent from the mode of the commandments to their principle, and the connatural kinship and union of these commandments in their proper principles with the powers of the soul and the habit which is adapted to theological thanksgiving. For those who have knowledge, it involves the passing of natural contemplation to the simple understanding according to which they no longer pursue the divine and ineffable Word by sensation or anything visible, and the union with the soul of its powers and the simplicity which takes in under one form by the intellect the principle of Providence.\footnote{Myst. 24, ll. 1017–1033; Berthold, Selected Writings, 209–10, emended.}

This threefold distinction is also applied to the Sanctus:

In particular it signifies, for the faithful, the theological rivalry with the angels in faith; for the active ones, it symbolizes the splendor of life equal to the angels, so far as this is possible for men, and the vigor in theological hymnology; for those who have knowledge (\textit{gnôstikôn}), the intellections, hymns, and perpetual motion about the Godhead which are equal to the angels, so far as humanly possible.\footnote{Myst. 24, ll. 1042–47; Berthold, Selected Writings, 210, emended.}

As with his use of Acts 4:32, Maximus’ application of equality to angels here is striking: instead of following the tradition that saw monasticism as the “angelic life,” he extends this privilege to all believers, who participate in it differentially according to their progress. He then reflects briefly on the final union of all in the divine simplicity foretold introductory communion hymn “One is Holy” before returning to a final consideration of the three categories.
He used to call believers, virtuous, and knowing (gnôstikous) the beginners, those progressing, and the perfect, that is, slaves, hired hands, and sons, the three orders (taxeis) of those being saved.  

This threefold classification of slaves, hired hands, and sons was traditional by the time of Maximus. The dynamism of this ordering, where one can graduate successively from one stage to the next, is emphasized here through the corresponding terms—beginners, progressing, and perfect—which indicate a trajectory and final goal.

Coming now to the conclusion of the Mystagogy, Maximus repeats his exhortation to attend Church assiduously so that in those who do so she may manifest the grace of adoption conferred by baptism.

The clear proof of this grace is the voluntary disposition of good will toward those akin to us whereby we make the man who needs our help in any way our friend as much as possible, and we do not leave him abandoned and forsaken but rather that with fitting zeal we show him in action the disposition which is alive in us with respect to God and our neighbor. For a work is proof of a disposition. Now nothing is either so easy for righteousness or deification—the nearness, so to speak, to God—as mercy offered with pleasure and joy from the soul to those who stand in need. For if the Word has shown that the one who is in need of having good done to him is God—for inasmuch, he says, as you did it for one of the least of these, you did it for me—on God’s very word then, he will much more show that the one who can do good and who does it is truly God by grace and 

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879 Myst. 24, ll. 1057–59; Berthold, Selected Writings, 210, emended.
participation because he has taken on in happy imitation the energy and characteristic of his own doing good.\textsuperscript{881}

The fruits of contemplation reaped by the believer during the course of the liturgy, whereby through the unifying rites of the Church he comes to grasp the unifying power of God himself, are thus manifested in the active labors of charity.\textsuperscript{882} The individual believer thus becomes an image of the dynamic goodness of God by catching the divine rays refracted through the prism of the Church’s manifold activity. Thus Maximus draws together the differing strands of his commentary, showing the active works of charity indissolubly linked with the contemplation of divine realities.

\textit{Action, contemplation, and spiritual progress}

In the \textit{Mystagogy} we have seen Maximus contrasting, broadly, two aspects of the Christian life, the active and the contemplative, but then bringing them together in his peroration. These two English words are a rough translation of the Greek \textit{praktikos} and \textit{theorētikos}, actually a calque via Latin. They do not correspond directly to the late medieval Latin distinction between active religious orders, with their focus on good works, and contemplative ones, with their focus on study and meditation. The practical aspect contained in \textit{praktikos} means primarily the work of cleansing one’s own soul of sins and passions, which then permits the contemplation (\textit{theōria}) of

\textsuperscript{881} \textit{Myst.} 24, ll. 1110–24; Berthold, \textit{Selected Writings}, 211–12, emended by me: Σαφῆς δὲ τῆς χάριτος ταύτης ἐστὶν ἀπόδειξις ἢ πρὸς τὸ συγγενὲς δι’ εὐνοίας ἐκούσιος συνδιάθεσις, ἢ ἔργον ἐστὶν, ὡς θεόν, οἰκειοῦσθαι κατὰ δύναμιν τὸν καθ’ ὅτι σὺν τῆς ἠμῶν ἐπικουρίας δεόμενον ἀνθρωπον, καὶ μὴ ἐὰν ἀτημέλητον καὶ ἀπρονόητον, ἀλλὰ σουδῆ τῇ πρεποῦσῃ κατ’ ἐνέργειαν ἐνδείκνυσθαι ζῶσαν τὴν ἐν ἡμῖν πρὸς τὸν θεόν καὶ τὸν πλησίον διάθεσιν. Ἔργον γὰρ ἀπόδειξις διαθάτησις. Οὐδὲν γὰρ οὔτε πρὸς δικαιοσύνην οὔτως ῥᾳδίων ἐστὶν, οὔτε πρὸς θέωσιν—ἐν’ οὕτως εἰποῦ—τὴν πρὸς θεόν ἐγγύτητα καθέστηκεν ἐπιτήδειον, ὡς ἐλεος ἐκ φυσικῆς εἰς τοὺς δεσμένους μεθ’ ἰδονίης καὶ χαράς προσφερόμενος. Εἰ γὰρ θεόν ὁ λόγος τὸν εὐ παθεῖν δεόμενον ἔδειξεν. “Ἐφ’ ὅσον γὰρ ἐποίησετε, φησίν, ἐν τούτων τῶν ἐλαχίστων, ἐμοὶ ἐποίησετε.” Θεός δὲ ὁ εἰπὼν, πολλῷ μᾶλλον τὸν εὐ ποιεῖν δυνάμενον καὶ ποιοῦτα, δείξει ἀληθῶς κατὰ χάριν καὶ μέθεξιν ὄντα θεόν, ὡς τὴν αὐτὸτὸ τῆς ἐνεργείας εὐμμητὴς ἀνελημμένων ἐνεργειάν τε καὶ ἰδιότητα.

\textsuperscript{882} Maximus counterbalances the active giving of alms with the labor of turning one’s attention to oneself and abstaining from judging one’s neighbor (ibid., 1137–65).
intelligible realities with a pure inner eye. As is evident from the preceding quotation, for Maximus, both necessarily include charity toward one’s neighbor.

Maximus’s borrows his understanding of praktikê (the active life) and theôria (the contemplative life), as he does so much of his spiritual doctrine, largely from Evagrius of Pontus. It is in fact a threefold gradation, more specifically referred to as practical philosophy, natural contemplation, and mystical theology. The contemplation of intelligible realities in the middle step is not an end in itself, but a preparatory stage for the intuitive and suprarational union with God, accomplished when the intellect—man’s highest faculty, distinguished from discursive reason—is swept up above all created things by divine grace, into the divine darkness and union with the Creator. Although grace is fundamentally necessary in all three stages, the first two are the arena of human endeavor, whereas the third is totally beyond the power of man, wholly the gift of God. Maximus adapts and corrects Evagrius’s model based on his anti-Origenist ponderings and with the aid of other spiritual writers, especially through the closely connected threefold model found in Dionysius the Areopagite, of purification, illumination, and deification, itself borrowed from the Neoplatonism of late antiquity.

The foundation of spiritual life for all Christians is baptism, through which the gifts of the Spirit are hidden in them; faith itself comes through the grace of baptism. With respect to the

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883 As is well-known, the Orthodox tradition of the East never developed the system of religious orders found in the West, nor a regular division between active and contemplative communities. It is true, however, that there is a tension (acknowledged elsewhere by Maximus), between the circumstances under which good works can be performed and the ideal conditions for contemplation, a tension which the distinction in the medieval Latin church institutionalized.

884 For Maximus’s predecessors for this doctrine and his use of them, see Viller, “Aux sources de la spiritualité de S. Maxime,” 156–84, 239–68; Thunberg, Microcosm and Mediator, 352–58.

885 Cf. Chap.Char. 4.47, where Christian philosophy is said to consist of commandments, dogmas and faith corresponding to praxis, physikê theôria, and theologia.

886 Amb. 30 (PG 91:1273bd). The same model is broken down further into more detailed stages at Cap.Theol. 2.8.

887 Chap.Char. 4.69–70, 77. The priority of baptism over faith probably reflects, to some degree, the by-now prevalent practice of infant baptism, but also probably Maximus’s belief that true faith could not exist
subsequent living-out of Christian life, Maximus does not clearly separate word from sacrament. Indeed, the scriptures are seen as a kind of sacrament (in tandem with nature, an equally important book of symbols): the believer’s first encounter with the Word of God made flesh is through his incarnation in the scriptural words and narratives. Maximus extends the sense of baptism with metaphors involving water: the divine Word is described as different forms of water according to state of each from vice to various levels of holiness, or irrigating different kinds of plants and animals, that is, appearing differently to people based on their level of virtue and knowledge. He also discusses baptism in the Spirit according to state of each. Eucharistic metaphors are also prominent, concerning the way that the Word of God as manna or as the bread of life or the paschal lamb distributes himself according to the state of those receiving him. Maximus’s intellectualizing tendency in these analogies is not intended to deny the material nature of the sacrament and participation in it, but it does place the emphasis on the recipient’s disposition and preparation as a necessary element of the experience of God’s imparting of himself.

Thunberg has demonstrated that for Maximus the life of practice is never left behind by that of contemplation, but that they are always present together in some degree and mutually support and enrich each other. The Confessor interprets the hastening of Peter and John to the empty tomb in Jn. 20:3–10 as a friendly rivalry between praxis and theôria, with the former not

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888 Chap.Theol. 2.60–61. On reading both Nature and Scripture, see esp. Amb. 10 (1128bff.).
889 Chap.Theol. 2.67, Thal. epist.
890 Chap.Theol. 2.63.
891 Chap.Theol. 1.100 and 2.56; Or.Domin. 298–99; Amb. 48 (PG 91:1364–65).
892 Cf. Lars Thunberg, Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 149–73. Note the discussion of a similar problem in the Eucharistic theology of Anastasius the Sinaite in the following chapter. See also Maximus’s statement of the varied manifestation of Christ at Chap.Theol. 2.13 and at QD 102.
893 Thunberg, Microcosm and Mediator, 357–96, esp. 360–63; cf. Chap.Theol. 2.78 (PG 90:1112c) and Thal. 27 ll. 27–35.
being left behind but developing into ever more perfect forms. Even the simple faith of the novice in Christian life finds its exalted counterpart in the simple reception of the vision of God in the state of mystical theology: “faith alone grasps these things, honouring in silence the Word, to whose [divine] nature no principle from the realm of being corresponds.” And the increase in knowledge acquired through contemplation naturally strengthens one’s understanding of the commandments and thus enables one to practice virtue more effectively.

There remains a definite hierarchy of the two. This is grounded ultimately in the fact that truth conceptually precedes goodness; but then again, these are both characterizations of God himself, so they are inextricably linked, as potential to activity and cause to effect. It is worked out in a comparison that Maximus makes between two ultimate states of prayer in the Centuries on Love. In the first state, the active man is wholly undistracted by extraneous thoughts and wholly attentive to the presence of God; in the second, the contemplative is swept up into divine light, in an ecstasy from his own self-consciousness as well as remembrance of the world. The two are not wholly distinct, though: in the previous chapter he states that “an active way is not enough so perfectly to free the mind from the passions that it can pray undistracted, unless

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894 Amb. 57 (PG 91:1381 ab). Peter’s quick and generous temper as depicted in the Gospels, as well as the down-to-earth moral advice offered in the two canonical epistles attributed to him, easily lent themselves to interpreting him as a symbol of the active life. In Thal. 50, ll. 196–201, the cooperation of Hezekiah and Isaiah to defend Jerusalem against the Assyrians symbolizes the active reason and contemplative intellect combining defeating evil in the soul.

895 Amb. 5, l. 230, quoted from Cooper, Body in St Maximus, 228, who notes that this is an epistemological principle rather than a comment on the Reformation dispute over faith and works. In between these two extremes, faith unfolds itself as the kingdom of heaven actualized through the practice of the commandments (Thal. 33). In the same response he defines faith thus: “faith has been clearly shown to be a relational faculty or an relation that actuates the supernatural direct union of the believer with that in which he believes” (ἡ πίστις ἀπεδείχθη σαφῶς ὑπάρχουσα δύναμις σχετικῆ ή σχέσις δραστικῆ τῆς ὑπὲρ φύσιν ἀμέσου τοῦ πιστεύοντος πρὸς τὸν πιστευόμενον θεὸν τελείας ἐνώσεως). Cf. Thal. 59 ll. 122–159 on the goal of faith.

896 Cf. QD 130.

897 Myst. 5, ll. 437–40.

898 Cap.Char. 2.6; Sherwood, Ascetic Life, 153. Cf. Cap.Char. 3.49, where he discusses the preparation for these states through one’s own efforts to exclude thoughts of a practical or theoretical nature.
various spiritual contemplations succeed one another in it.” Sherwood, in the introduction to his translation of the *Centuries*, makes an important observation about the context in which Maximus worked out these teachings.

There are actually two elements which are here comprehended under the contemplative aspect—‘natural contemplation (or: consideration) of things’ and prayer. The first is a technical procedure for rising from the simplest sense impressions to the λόγοι of things and thence to the supreme Λόγος who in Himself comprehends all others … This procedure supposes no small philosophical culture and, doubtless, a perseverance in following it out, possible only to a few monks. Laymen may have had the culture, but scarcely the necessary leisure and retirement; not all monks had the philosophical training of an Evagrius or a Maximus. Πράξεις should always be joined with some θεωρία, that is, with prayer. ‘Natural contemplation’ of course must always be joined with πράξις; yet it may be omitted. This view suggests itself because in the *Ascetical Life* there is no mention at all of ‘natural contemplation’; but there is of prayer, in which the mind stripped of every image is joined to God and does not fail to ask what is fitting … Now if we look once again at those places where ‘natural contemplation’ and pure prayer are described side by side or as the second and third members of a triad, where therefore their interrelation should be most manifest, we find a distinct break of continuity.

This break of continuity is due to the fact that the grace of God fulfills and outstrips all human efforts. The place of pure prayer (or mystical theology) in relation to contemplation and action corresponds to that of God in relation to intelligibles and sensibles, discussed at the beginning of this chapter. It a sort of non-relation, in fact, that relativizes the superiority of contemplation over

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899 Cap.Char. 2.5.
901 Cap.Theol. 1.31, 67.
action. By completely transcending both intelligibles and sensibles, God renders them equal; likewise, by exalting man utterly beyond his own labors of contemplation as well as action, God unites contemplative and active Christians in their common poverty before the divine magnificence.⁹⁰² And, as the quotation from Sherwood points out, this fact is relevant to the lay-monastic duality with which we are dealing in this study. Contemplation, in its more rarefied form, may have been an occupation attainable to a small number of elite monks, whereas the grace of prayer—building on the virtues cultivated in the soul by hard ascetic labor grounded in a kind of contemplative common sense—could seize anyone, whether cloistered theologian, simple scullery-monk, or busy layman.⁹⁰³

**Hierarchy in the Church**

So far in our discussion of Maximus on the diversity of believers we have not, in fact, had much occasion to touch on monasticism. That is because in the various passages discussed, he does not even mention it. It should be clear from this very fact that he does not see an essential difference between the calling and potential of monastics and that of laypeople. Thunberg encapsulates it thus:

… the majority of the writings of Maximus are addressed to his fellow monks. It becomes clear, at the same time, that he makes no decisive distinction between the two kinds of Christian life. To him, the experiences of monastic exercise serve as a model for the imitation of the divine life, which *all* Christians are called to fulfill. It is, obviously, the

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⁹⁰² In another passage Maximus applies the sabbath rest spiritually to both active and contemplative men (*Cap. Theol.* 2.64).

⁹⁰³ The necessity of a modicum of *theôria* for the successful keeping of the commandments is mentioned in *QD* 130, cited above. Elite contemplation is exemplified in the long allegorical meditation on Scripture found in the *Ambiguities* and especially in the *Responses to Thalassius*. These are definitely products of the leisure, learning, and intimate conversation fostered by a cloister.
deep conviction of Maximus that the monastic tradition of asceticism, contemplation, and insight into the mystery of God exists for the benefit of the whole Church, and thus has to be realized and perfected in the wider context of the life of the Church Universal … For Maximus, monastic life was never an end in itself. It serves charity, i.e. a double charity toward God and toward one’s neighbor. This charity, however, has as a prerequisite an ascetic attitude …

Nevertheless, Maximus has a clear sense of the role of hierarchy in the Church.

To begin with, he takes the angelic and ecclesiastical hierarchies delineated by the Areopagite for granted, but he enlarges and revises them in the course of his writings through his emphasis on the ascetic life for monastics, clergy, and laypeople. He does mention the conveyance of virtue and knowledge to men from the angelic hierarchy in the ascetic context of the *Centuries on Love*, but in the *Mystagogy* his emphasis is rather on the equality with angels symbolized by the singing of the Sanctus in the liturgy, as mentioned above; this equality is something hardly countenanced by Dionysius’s rather more rigid system.

The ecclesiastical hierarchy plays a more important role for Maximus, yet even here he does not dwell on the detailed gradations expounded by the Areopagite; the distinction between bishop, priest, and deacon tends to be glossed over in favor of a generic sacerdotal office. In the *Mystagogy* the bishop is important primarily as a cipher, as the leader of the various movements into and within the church, with their corresponding symbolic meanings. The *Epistles* written to clergy present more a more substantial account of their virtue. To bishop John he writes that, as a

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905 At the beginning of the *Mystagogy* (1, ll. 54–101) he explicitly says that he will not discuss what Dionysius has already covered in his explanation of the liturgy; the same can be implicitly understood with regard to the rest of his thought. See Louth, “St. Denys the Areopagite and St. Maximus the Confessor: a Question of Influence,” *StP* 27 (1993): 166–74.
906 *Cap.Char*. 3.33; *Myst*. 24, ll. 1042–47. The three major angelic orders themselves become symbols of human theological reflection at *Amb*. 20 (PG 91:1237cff.).
ray of light draws to it the healthy gaze and shares its own brightness, so the true priesthood, being the impress of the Godhead on earth, draws every God-loving soul to itself, and shares its own knowledge, peace, and love. By bringing every soul to the limits of its potential, it presents to God completely deified all those it has initiated in the mysteries.\footnote{Ep. 31 (PG 91:625a). Presumably the bishop of Cyzicus who was the recipient of the earlier \textit{Ambiguitie}s, but for the problems of identification see Booth, \textit{Crisis of Empire}, 146–47.} The main emphases apparent here are repeated elsewhere: the priest serves as an image of God and as an instructor of the sacred words, but to do so he must live up to his office (a condition not very prominent in the Dionysian writings).\footnote{The bishop of Cydonia (= modern Iraklion) mingles the loftiness of his dignity with the lowliness of his nature and thus demonstrates how the ordained priesthood continues to manifest God bodily and in mysteries (Ep. 21 [PG 91:604cd]; the bishop Cyrisicus [the name is probably a corruption, perhaps of Cyzikos] has diligently sought to adorn the grace of archpriesthood with the tunic of the virtues (Ep 28 [PG 91:621a]); priesthood is an image and imitation of God, attracting all of the same nature (Ep. 30 [PG 91:624a]).} The bishop mediates the unitive function of God, of which the Church is an image: the character of divine goodness, which he should show as head of the holy Church, is to fit the members thereof to each other through the engineering (\textit{architektonikê}) of the Spirit, to call to himself his flock, as herald of divine teachings, and bind them to himself through love.\footnote{Ep. 28 (PG 91:621a).}

But these functions are not limited to the ordained priesthood. Maximus writes to a bishop that, in their exile his spiritual flock has not only remained untouched by wolves but themselves destroyed wolves by both their words and the example of their life.\footnote{Ep. 29 (PG 91:621df.). The epistle is supposedly written to the same mysterious personage “Cyrisicus” mentioned a few notes previously. The context for the scattering of his flock is probably the disruptive effects of the Persian invasion, to which Maximus himself was subject, and the wolves mentioned are almost certainly heretical theologians, some of whom we know Maximus encountered in his own wanderings.} The monastic master-disciple relationship forms the dialogic setting for the \textit{Ascetical Discourse}, while Maximus refers many of his solutions of difficult theological problems to an old man (\textit{gerôn}), usually a term for a monastic elder.\footnote{Lib.Asc. Some have tried to see in the “old man” a reference to Sophronius, who is mentioned at \textit{Ep.} 13 (PG 91:533a) as master and teacher, but this is impossible to prove for any specific reference; cf. the}
person, but it at least shows the importance of the setting of monastic instruction and counsel for
Maximus and his contemporaries. This is fact evident also from the documents relating to
Maximus’s trial. We know of at least two long-standing monastic disciples, both named
Anastasius, who persevered with him in confessing to the end, and themselves also suffered
mutilation and exile. As we might have come to expect from previous chapters, others were
associated with Maximus more loosely. One of his accusers, a lay official named Sergius,
testified to visiting Maximus in his monastic house in Rome to participate in spiritual discussions
at which he presided (presumably in happier times when he was not a delator).912 The bishop
Theodosius, who was sent by the emperor Constans to try to persuade Maximus to soften his
position, was clearly relieved when they reached a provisional understanding and could spend
the rest of their meeting in edifying spiritual conversation.913 Likewise, the soldiers of an army
unit in Thrace had heard slanderous rumors alleging that Maximus was a blasphemer of the
Virgin Mary, but were quickly reassured by his protestations of innocence. They then enjoyed a
spiritual discourse from him, until the accompanying imperial officials, alarmed at his evident
popularity, forced him to move on to the next stop in his exile.914

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912 Anonymous, Record of the Trial 6, edited by Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil as Relatio motionis, in
Scripta saeculi VII vitam Maximi Confessoris illustrantia, una cum latina interpretatione Anastasii Bibliothecarii
iuxta posita (Turnhout, Brepols, 1999). Booth, Crisis of Empire, 149 n. 43, suggests that this Sergius might
have actually been a member of the monastic circle of John Moschus and Sophronius along with Maximus, due
to his surname Eukratas, which is several times attached to Moschus and Sophronius and also mentioned as
the name of a monastic community (“of the Eukratades”).

913 Disputation at Bizya with Theodosius the Bishop, edited by Allen and Neil as Disputatio Bizyae cum
Theodosio in Scripta saeculi VII vitam Maximi Confessoris illustrantia, ll. 468ff.

914 Disp. Byz. ll. 759ff.
This teaching role is one way in which Maximus expected that contemplatives would embrace their fellow believers, even if it meant disturbing their beloved tranquility.\footnote{\textit{Cap.Theol.} 2.49. Maximus himself asks a certain presbyter Stephen and his monastic community to write to him for his benefit, even it keeps them from more honorable leisure, i.e. contemplation, since helping inferiors also has a place in God’s laws (\textit{Ep.} 23 [PG 91:608cd]).} The divine Word could be expounded variously depending on the audience: morally or cataphatically as flesh and mystically or apophatically as spirit.\footnote{\textit{Cap.Theol.} 2.38–42.} Elsewhere he posits a threefold progression of believer-disciple-apostle, with the first tending to his own spiritual stability, the second nourishing others with the example of his actions informed by spiritual knowledge, and the last healing every spiritual illness in others.\footnote{\textit{Cap.Theol.} 1.33–34.} It is significant that Maximus does not limit this apostolic activity to the formal apostolic succession, the episcopate. His description of the apostles’ healing of spiritual ills actually recalls more closely the activity of the monastic holy man. At the same time, Maximus complains of a lack of such teaching in his time. This is part of his general critique of the laxity of contemporary believers and especially of monastics. It is also related, though in a more complex way than for most contemporaries, to the contemporary military and political calamities.\footnote{He likes to reflect on Old Testament warnings of a spiritual famine, such as Amos’s “famine of hearing the word of God” (\textit{QD} 145); and the famine in Habbakuk 2, which he interprets as a dearth of the food of spiritual teaching due to lack of teachers in the Church (\textit{QD} 177); see also \textit{Thal.} 65, on a famine of spiritual knowledge in the Church and the individual soul. As for general moral decline, among many examples the following will suffice: we (specifically monks here) are worse than Jews and unworthy to be called Christians (\textit{Lib.Asc.} ll. 613–20, 636–8); if we befriend passions we are enemies of God, even if we call ourselves believers (\textit{Ep.} 24 [PG 91:609bc]). As with all such laments, it is difficult to tell how objectively true they are—if there ever can be an exactly objective evaluation of the moral climate of an entire age or civilization. They are of course connected with the time of troubles through which Byzantium was passing. But in Maximus’s case, he penned the last-cited warning after the great victory of Heraclius over the Persians and before the rise of Arab menace; he soberly reminded his correspondent that there would be no benefit from worldly peace if Christians continued to fight against God and allow myriad spiritual enemies to attack the soul. See Booth, \textit{Crisis of Empire}, 155–70.} He also warns against unsuitable teaching, when a mystical discourse that is proclaimed or written down in books scandalizes those immature in mind.\footnote{\textit{QD} 79.
thus extends in a general way the warning for bishops that we considered in the introduction to Ch. 3.

How, then, did Maximus himself advise laypeople? That his advice to them differed in some sense from that he gave to monastics is clear from the *Centuries on Love*, where at several points he distinguishes between the virtues proper to a monk and those proper for a layman. We will begin with these before moving on to the implicit and more subtle differentiation found in those of the *Epistles* written to laymen.

*The ethics of marriage and life in the world*

If we recall the five-level mediation that Christ achieves as microcosm and mediator, and inaugurates as the task of Christians, the first level is that of sexuality, the division between male and female. This can be achieved in the present life not only through renunciation of marriage but also through holy conduct within it. In general, when he comes to scriptural phrases referencing the overcoming of mortal conditions, Maximus interprets them anagogically. Thus the transcendence of female and male from Gal. 3:28, or the impossibility of flesh and blood inheriting the kingdom of God in 1 Cor. 15:50 is equivalent to the overcoming of lust and anger, respectively.\(^{920}\)

This is incumbent on married laypeople as well as monks and nuns. Writing to Thalassius, in an occasional epistle different from the *Responses to Thalassius*, he summarizes the situation thus.

\(^{920}\) Or. Dom. 293–94; *QD* 72. Costache, “Living above Gender,” 282, rightly insists on this ethical interpretation, which Thunberg had noted earlier (*Microcosm and Mediator*, 405). This is true, I think, even if *QD* 1.3, which Cooper thinks an embarrassing lapse into misogyny or at least puritanism on the part of Maximus.
The purpose of him who gave the commandments is to free man from the world and nature. And hence he who does not obey is condemned, and in vain do fathers in the world use the excuse of their offspring, and those who preside use the excuse of the communities of those exercising the solitary life, in order to claim that the commandments should reasonably not apply to them. If we were to accept this as true, the Lord will have been shown not to have written the law of salvation for anyone.⁹²¹

The exhortation to free oneself from world and nature through the commandments does not mean, as we have seen above, the denial of the natural passions, but their wise use in the service of the spiritual life. This points to the requirement to keep the commandments not as external rules, but rather as a method of achieving spiritual freedom, equally incumbent on all Christians. Maximus suggests that one of the pretexts adopted not just by laypeople, but by monastics as well, to avoid the import of this is that of social responsibility. The paterfamilias with his household and the abbot with his monastery might both claim the duties and difficulties of their respective positions to justify cutting corners when it came to evangelical injunctions toward carefreeness, poverty, and meekness. The reference to abbots is not accidental, since Maximus goes on to refer to a report he had received that Thalassius was not dealing well with certain incidents at his monastery. It is clear, then, that for Maximus, proximity to the world and its cares did not create a double standard with regard to the requirements of piety. Despite their common goal, however, laypeople and monastics accomplish it differently.

This is clearest in the Centuries on Love, where Maximus places counsel for monks and laymen side by side and sometimes contrasts them explicitly. In Centuries on Love 2.9 he

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distinguishes between five motives for loving others: for God’s sake, because of nature, or due to vanity, greed, or pleasure. The first is praiseworthy, the second neutral, the latter three blameworthy. For the neutral, natural love he cites the example of parents’ love for their children and vice versa. Given our previous examination of the natural passions in Maximus, we can understand why natural parental or filial love would be neutral, since it can be used either for virtue or for vice. The love between husband and wife would conceivably be of the same type. In 2.17 he turns to the marital act.

Or again badness is the mistaken judgment of conceptions, on which follows the abuse of things. In the case of a woman, for example, the correct judgment regarding intercourse is the end of begetting children. So he who looks to pleasure is mistaken about the judgment, considering what is not good as good. Such a man abuses a woman when he has intercourse with her. And likewise with regard to the other things and conceptions.

This may suggest that any desire for a woman is automatically bad because it inescapably involves pleasure. This impression is implicitly corrected by 2.33–34, where he distinguishes three things that move us to good and three that move to evil. The first category consists of the natural seeds of goodness, the holy angels, and deliberate good choice. The second consists of passions, demons, and evil choice. He uses the example of desiring a woman outside of marriage or the purpose of procreation as an example of the evil movement of the passions (which are sometimes incited by the demons). He does not mention here a corresponding good desire for

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923 Cap.Char. 2.17: Ἡ πάλιν κακία ἐστὶν ἡ ἐσφαλμένη χρήσις τῶν νοημάτων, ἢ ἐπακολουθεῖ ἡ παράχρησις τῶν πραγμάτων. Οἶδ᾽ ὡς ἐπὶ τῆς γυναικὸς ἢ ὀρθὴ χρήσις τῆς συνουσίας ὁ σκοπός ἐστὶ τῆς παιδοποίιας. Ὁ σύν ἐν τῇ ἡδονῇ ἀποβλεπάμενος ἐσφάλη περὶ τὴν χρήσιν, τὸ μὴ καλὸν ὁς καλὸν ἡγησάμενον· ὁ σύν τοιοῦτος παραχρῆται γυναικὶ συνουσιαζόμενος. Καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων δὲ πραγμάτων καὶ νοημάτων ὁμοίως.
924 Cap.Char. 2.33–34. The same triad of influences is taken up again at 3.92–94. The Holy Spirit stirs the seeds of goodness at Thal. 15.
sex; as an example of a good “natural seed” he mentions the pity we naturally feel when we see someone in need. But Cooper reasonably infers from the parallelism between the 2.33 and 34 that there is also a legitimate natural impulse toward sex. However, here as in 2.17, this legitimate impulse is strictly regulated according to the two conditions of marriage and procreation.

In the third and fourth centuries he further addresses the mental aspect of these questions. 3.38–44 consists of a series of meditations on the relation between things, thoughts, and passions.

The God-loving mind does not war against things nor against their representations, but against the passions joined with these representations. Thus he does not war against the woman, nor against him who offends him, nor against their images, but against the passions that are joined with the images.

The following chapters narrow this struggle down to the monk; perhaps this is due to the realistic view that its more amenable to his conditions. They also point to the ultimate transcendence even of the thoughts of things, in the state of pure prayer, which we saw above as the graced transcendence of both action and contemplation. But he brings back lay concerns in the final century:

925 In the same place he also mentions the Golden Rule, in its positive form. However, in another passage he identifies pity as a natural passion of the fallen state; this seems to be because it involves a momentary emotional reaction to a sensible impression rather than a constant disposition of compassion toward one's fellow man (Amb. 10, PG 91:1196c ff.).

926 Cap.Char. 3.40 (Sherwood, Ascetic Life, 186): Οὐ πρός τά πράγματα ὁ νοῦς πολεμεῖ τοῦ θεοφιλοῦς οὔδὲ πρὸς τά τούτων νοήματα, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τά πάθη τά τοὺς νοήμας συνεζευγμένα· οἷν πῶς τὴν γυναῖκα πολεμεῖ οὐδὲ πρὸς τὸν λυπήσαντα οὔδὲ πρὸς τάς τούτων φαντασίας, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τά πάθη τά ἐν ταῖς φαντασίαις συνεζευγμένα.

927 Cf. Cap.Char. 3.38: “It is a great thing not to be affected by things; far greater than this is to remain dispassionate toward their conceptions” (Μέγα μὲν τὸ μὴ πάσχειν πρός τα πράγματα· μεῖζον δὲ τοῦτου πολλῷ τὸ πρὸς τά τούτων νοήματα ἀποθῇ διαμεῖναι), and 3.37: “He that is not affected with regard to the things of the world loves solitude” (Ἀγαπᾷ ἡσυχίαν ὁ μὴ πάσχων πρός τά τοῦ κόσμου).

928 Cap.Char. 3.45.
Scripture takes away nothing that God has given us for use, but chastises immoderation and corrects unreasonableness. Thus it does not forbid one to eat, beget children, to have money and administer it properly; but it does forbid one to be gluttonous, to fornicate, and so on. Nor does it even forbid one to think of these things (they were made to be thought of), but to think of them with passion.929

Having assimilated the monastic and lay lives with respect to the inner struggle they demand, in the next chapter he specifies how they differ formally.

Some of the God-pleasing things we do are done in obedience to commandments, some not by commandment, but as it were, by free-will offering. Such as these are done by commandment, loving God and neighbor, loving enemies, refraining from adultery, murder, and the rest. When we transgress these, we are condemned. By free-will offering, however, there are virginity, celibacy, poverty, solitude, and so on. These are of the nature of gifts, so that, if out of weakness we have been unable to perform some of the commandments, we may propitiate our good Master by gifts.930

This distinction between commandments and gifts recalls Dorotheus of Gaza.931 Maximus adds his own subtle coloring, though, by associating gifts with propitiation. This is in keeping with the late antique tendency for monasticism to develop as the state of penance par excellence, so it corresponds to an actual norm. But in Maximus’s hands it is not merely a nod to contemporary

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929 Cap.Char. 4.66 (Sherwood 202): Οὐδέν τῶν ἐκ θεοῦ εἰς χρήσιν ἤμων δοθέντων ἁναιρεί ή Γραφή, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἀμετρίαν κολάζει καὶ τὴν ἁλλαστιάν διαρθοῦται. Οἶον οὐ κωλύει ἐσθίειν οὐδὲ παιδοποιεῖν οὐδὲ χρήματα ἐχεῖν καὶ ὀρθῶς διοικεῖν, ἀλλὰ κωλύει γαστιμαργεῖν, πορνεύειν καὶ τὰ ἔξης· ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ τὸ ναιν ταῦτα κωλύει· διὰ τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ γεγόνασιν· ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐμπαιθὸς ναιν.

930 Cap.Char. 4.67 (Sherwood 202–3): Τὰ μὲν τῶν υἱ’ ἡμῶν κατὰ θεόν πραττομένων κατ’ ἐντολὴν πράττεται· τὰ δὲ οὐ κατ’ ἐντολὴν, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἄν τις εἴποι, καθ’ ἐκουσίων προσφοράν. Οἶον κατ’ ἐντολὴν μὲν, τὸ ἄγαπᾶν τὸν Θεὸν καὶ τὸν πλησίον, τὸ ἄγαπᾶν τοὺς ἐξῆρυτος, τὸ μὴ μοιχεύειν, μὴ φονεύειν καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ· ἄτινα καὶ παραβαίνοντες κατακρίνομεθα. Οὐ κατ’ ἐντολὴν δὲ, τὸ παρθενεῦν, ἢ ἀγαμία, ἢ ἀκτημοσύνη, ἢ ἀναχώρησις καὶ τὰ ἔξης· ταῦτα δώρων λόγον ἐπέχεουσι, ἵνα ἐὰν τινὰς τῶν ἐντολῶν κατορθώσαι εξ ἁσθενείας μὴ δυνηθῶμεν, διὰ τῶν δωρῶν τὸν ἁγαθὸν ἡμῶν ἐξελεωσώμεθα δεσπότην.

931 Cf. Teachings 1.11–13. In Maximus see also Or.Dom. 290.
practice. A few chapters previously he had noted the priority of inner cultivation and cautioned against excessive asceticism. Hence here the reminder of penance appears as a counsel of humility, to remind the monastic reader of his shortcomings and the need to focus on his internal struggle rather than despising his lay brethren.\footnote{Cf. Cap. Theol. 1.15 on humility as the key to piety and sanctification.}

This does not mean that Maximus abandons the hierarchy between monasticism and lay life. Throughout the \textit{Centuries} he implies the advantages of withdrawal from the world for the one engaged in the struggle against the passions.\footnote{Cf. Cap. Char. 3.37.} He also compares the response to various temptations and opportunities of monks and laypeople. The passion of self-love, for example, suggests to a monk that he spare his body, so that it can draw him little by little into sensuality, whereas to a layman it suggests that he jump right into catering to its lusts.\footnote{Cap. Char. 2.60.} For a layman greed and vanity feed into each other, whereas a monk is tempted to be proud of his poverty. The same contrast applies to other worldly advantages, such as good looks, power, cleverness, sleekness, and children.\footnote{Cap. Char. 3.83–85.}

Wealth is a particular interesting case. The non-possessor (\textit{aktêmon}) has renounced all that belongs to him and possesses nothing apart from his body, and he separates himself even from it by entrusting its provision to God and to pious people.\footnote{Cap. Char. 2.88.} Among possessors, on the other hand, some possess with and some without passion. Their dispositions are tested by how they handle the loss of the possessions, whether they respond with sorrow or with joy respectively.\footnote{Cap. Char. 2.89. In Ep. 1 (PG 91:377b), discussed in more detail below, he exhorts George the prefect of Africa: let us leave everything eagerly, or give it to God through the needy, which will have same result, let us leave intentionally and voluntarily what naturally leaves us involuntarily.} Maximus then considers the general components of worldly good fortune.
Those whose piety Divine Providence exercises in this life are tried by three sorts of temptation: by the gift of pleasant things, as health, beauty, many children, wealth, good repute, and so on; or by the infliction of grievous things, as the loss of children, of wealth, of good repute; or by painful afflictions of the body, as disease, torments and so on. To the first the Lord says: “If any one doth not renounce all that he possesseth, he cannot be my disciple”; to the second and third: “In your patience possess your souls.”938

This teaching clearly concerns laypeople; bios here stands as a synonym for kosmos. The response to loss repeats what was already stated, concerning the test of detached ownership of wealth. The interesting development in this chapter is the response to bounty: it is the same activity of renunciation as that which characterized the non-possessing monk just before.

Renunciation is not a “counsel of perfection” but a requirement for all pious Christians, adapted to the circumstances of their particular way of life.939 Expanding further on the actual use that a possessor will make of his wealth, he is described as a steward: “these latter, of course, alone obtain it in the right fashion: their purpose is that they may never run short in their distribution to each in his need.”940 Those in need may well include monastics, since the non-possessor will, as stated,entrust himself to God alone and to pious possessors of wealth. Thus we see the absolute

938 Cap.Char. 2.91 (Sherwood, 171): Οἱ κατὰ τὸν βίον τούτον ὑπὸ τῆς θείας προνοίας εἰς εὑσέβειαν ἔγγυμναζόμενοι, διὰ τῶν τριῶν τούτων πειρασμῶν δοκιμάζονταί· οὖν ἢ διὰ τῆς τῶν ἡδῶν δόσεως, ὡς ἐπὶ υγείας καὶ κάλλους καὶ εὐτεκνίας καὶ χρημάτων καὶ δόξης καὶ τῶν ὁμοιῶν· ἢ διὰ τῆς τῶν λυπηρῶν ἐπιρροῆς, οὖν στερήσεως τέκνων καὶ χρημάτων καὶ δόξης· ἢ διὰ τῶν ὀδύνης ἐμποιουόντων τῷ σώματι, οὖν νοσημάτων καὶ βασάνων καὶ τῶν ἐξής. Καὶ πρὸς μὲν τούς πρώτους λέγει ὁ Κύριος· Εἴς τις σε αὐτοῦ, οὐ δύναται μου εἶναι μαθητής· πρὸς δὲ τοὺς δευτέρους καὶ τοὺς τρίτους· Ἐν τῇ ύπομονῇ ὑμῶν κτίσασθε τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν.

939 So also Cap.Char. 4.73, which fuses together two Gospel verses to read, “Sell what you possess and give alms; and behold, all things are clean unto you,” is part of an exegesis of selling one’s treasures in order to find the buried treasure in the field of one’s own heart that is as applicable to laypeople as to monastics.

940 Cap.Char. 3.19 (Sherwood, 176): μόνος δὲ οὕτως δηλονότι ὅθεν περιποιεῖται, ἵνα ἐκάστῳ τὴν χρεῖαν παρέχων μὴ διαλειπῇ ποτέ. Εἰς τὸ τῆς φιλαργυρίας πάθος ἐντεῦθεν ἐλέγχεται· ἐν τῷ χαίροντα λαμβάνειν καὶ λυπούμενον μεταδίδει. Οὐ δύναται δὲ ὁ τοιοῦτος οἰκονομικός εἶναι.
interdependence of the monastic and the layperson in the Church. The higher calling of monasticism cannot survive without its humbler counterpart.

This economic form of interdependence could also be subsumed into a more sublime spiritual relation. After the discussion of monasticism as free-will offering, the remainder of the fourth century focuses on love as the most excellent way and particularly on love for one’s fellow-man.\(^{941}\) The last ten chapters distill purified love into its most luminous form, true friendship. Such a relation is grounded in dispassion, so that a true friend will not abandon you even if you offend him or her or suffer times of trial.\(^{942}\) As we come to the final section of this chapter, we will learn from Maximus’ *Epistles* how important such friendships were to him and how closely they were interwoven with the monetary and political support he sought from his correspondents, showing how intimate the unity of monastics and laypeople could become in practice.

*Spiritual exercises for laypeople*

Maximus’s teaching directly to specific laypeople is contained in the *Epistles* and in the *Exposition of the Lord’s Prayer*. The recipient of the latter is unknown—all we can glean from the text itself is that he was a high-level secular official—so we have almost no details with which to contextualize the doctrine contained therein, but it can serve as a useful overview of Maximus’s expectations for laypeople.\(^{943}\) In the prologue he defines the realization of the divine

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\(^{942}\) *Cap.Char.* 4.91–100.

\(^{943}\) The title identifies the recipient as a certain lover of Christ, *philochristos*, the quasi-technical term for a pious layperson that we have already met frequently in this study. Maximus addresses him “my master.” In general this could refer to a lord spiritual, but the tone of the introduction, stiffening Maximus’s expression of spiritual love with an avowal of respectful fear, seems to indicate a highly placed lord temporal. He never uses such deferential language to ecclesiastical superiors, even in his flattering epistle to Pyrrhus (*Ep.* 19, *PG* 91:589–97). In the *Exposition* he also refers to the recipient as *theophylaktos* (guarded by God), an epithet
counsel as “the deification of our nature” through “the mysterious self-abasement of the only-begotten Son.” The ultimate scope of God’s plan for our deification is parsed out into seven mysteries: “theology, adoption in grace, equality of honor with the angels, participation in eternal life, the restoration of nature as it turns toward itself dispassionately, the abolition of the law of sin, and the overthrowing of the tyranny of evil which has dominated us by trickery.” This list follows the course of the petitions of the prayer and is a kind of top-down summary of Maximus’s general scheme of spiritual progress, starting from the most exalted state of union with God (signified by the invocation “Our Father”) and descending to the initial break with the pomp and works of Satan which is the beginning of Christian life (“deliver us from the evil one”). As we already saw in the *Centuries on Love*, Maximus does not tone down the lofty pitch of his theology for a lay audience.

He is, however, realistic about the difficulties they might face. He explains the petition “give us this day our daily bread” as referring primarily to the spiritual bread of the word of God, but realizes that some might not be able to let go of concern for their physical food. So he concedes the concern for necessities as a virtuous disposition, as long as one does not go on to seek superfluities; this prudent attitude makes one a Christian philosopher. This corresponds roughly to the distinction between the non possessor and the godly possessor in the *Centuries on Love*. He then views the next petition, “forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” as an opportunity for the latter to rival the former. Forgiving one’s neighbor whole-heartedly makes one an imitator of God and perfect in dispassion, while he who fails to do so should not expect

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944 Or.Dom. ll 41–43, 50–53 (Berthold 102); repeated near the end, OD 303.
945 Or.Dom. ll. 81–85 (Berthold 102, emended).
946 Or.Dom. ll. 597–600 (Berthold 114): ἀλλὰ τὸν πρὸς ἡμέραν ἀπεμεμρημένως διὰ τῆς προσευχῆς αἰτήσωμεν ἀρτον καὶ δείξωμεν ὅτι φιλοσόφως κατὰ Χριστὸν μελέτην θανάτου τὸν βίον ποιοῦμεθα.
the fulfillment of the final petitions, “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

These refer to the temptations of pleasure and those of pain, respectively. Ultimately, the lay recipient is summoned to the one true pleasure, the mystical marriage of the soul with the Logos.

Moving on to the Epistles, we first note that the lay recipients of the extant ones were all high officials; the other mentions of laypeople, in letters to clerical or monastic correspondents, are also to officials. These seems to have been well-educated people, so that our view of lay piety as taught by Maximus will continue to be rather intellectual. Three particular figures stand out: John the imperial chamberlain (cubicularius; Ep. 2–4, 10, 12, 27, 43–45), George the prefect of Africa (Ep. 1, with 18, and 44–45 written by Maximus on behalf of George), and Peter the general (stratēgos) of Numidia (13–14). Two less prominent lay recipients are a certain Constantine, possibly an imperial treasurer (sacellarius; Ep. 5 and 24), and Julian the scholastic of Alexandria (Ep. 17). When touching on matters of personal piety, the letters to laymen refer to the goal of deification but tend to focus on the active life. They contain reference to the specific temptations facing high officials but also exhorting them to use the opportunities their positions offered for doing good. In this section we will consider the internal struggle of the layman and in the next his work for the broader Church and society.

Maximus’s view on the many paths open to believers is summed up brilliantly in a passage from Ep. 12, to John the Cubicularius. He writes:

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948 This exaltation of the forgiveness of sins and its equation with dispassion is also found in the Discourse on Asceticism (Lib.Asc. II. 1008–27).
949 Or.Dom. II. 800–3; whereas the one true pleasure is the obtaining of the divine, and the one true pain is failure to obtain it (II. 638–41).
950 Or.Dom. II. 503–4: ἡδονήν γὰρ μίαν ἐπίσταται τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς πρὸς τὸν λόγον συμβίωσιν.
951 Constantine, a lay magnate, is the recipient of Ep. 5, and may be identical to a Constantine the Sacellarius attributed as recipient of Ep. 24, but an identical letter listed as Ep. 43 is ascribed to John the Chamberlain (Sherwood, Date-List, 24).
So since we see that many paths of virtue, O blessed lovers of the blissful beauty of Christ, have been granted to mankind by the Lord of all, and that all have one goal and that all arrive at one end of salvation, let us not neglect our own salvation … For since he is good, according to the variety and difference of the conditions of our souls he made it so that there are, fittingly, many paths leading those who journey on them blamelessly toward the eternal abodes. He made it thus in order that each one, choosing the path that is suitable for himself and walking the course of life on it, might lay hold of the utterly glorious place laid up for him in hope.952

With these words Maximus emphasizes the God-given variety in human characters. Let us look at one particular case. He is eager to reassure George of Africa that his position does not prevent him from cultivating virtue. The greatest temptation he faces is the variability of fortune: his high power brings him great power, glory, and riches, but also exposes him to intrigue and slander. In fact, the epistle seems to have been written to George as he was sailing from Africa, with trepidation, to an interview with the emperors in the capital, and may be connected with a complicated series of events, involving his treatment of heretics in Africa, that was caught up in imperial and patriarchal politics around the time of the death of Heraclius and the disputed succession that followed.953 Maximus urges him to stabilize himself in integrity of character by loving the one immutable God instead of the multitude of transitory material things. Practically, this works itself out as faith that leads a man to accomplish the duties that are up to him and to leave to God’s providence what is not in his power, freeing himself from disturbance and care.

952 Πολλάς οὖν ὄργιντες ὁδοὺς ἁρετῶν, εὐλογημένων, καὶ τῆς μακαρίας Χριστοῦ καλλονής ἔρασται, παρὰ τοῦ Κυρίου τῶν ὀλων τοῖς ἀνθρώποις δεδωρημένας, ἕνα τε τὸν σκοπὸν ἐχούσας καὶ πρὸς ἐν τὰς πάσας τέλος καταντώσας εἰς σωτηρίαν, μὴ ἀμελήσθωμεν τῆς ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίας … Πρὸς γὰρ τὸ ποικίλον καὶ διάφορον τῶν καταστάσεων τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν ὡς ἀγαθὸς πολλάς εἰκότως εἶναι καὶ τὰς ὁδοὺς πρὸς τὰς αἰωνίους μονάς ἀγούσας τοὺς δι’ αὐτῶν ὄνευντας ἀμέμπτως πεπόιηκεν, ὅπως τὴν ἑαυτὸ πρόσφορον ἑπελεξάμενος ἔκαστος καὶ τὸν δρόμον τοῦ βίου δι’ αὐτῆς ποιημένου, τὸν ἐν οὐρανοῖς κατ’ ἐλπίδας προκείμενον πανένδοξον καταλήψασθαι γὰρ (PG 91: 504cd).

Here Maximus relies heavily on Stoic ethics, as is clear from the very terms he uses: *ta kathêkonta, ta eph’humin, tarachê, merimna, phrontis.* But he Christianizes them by emphasizing faith in the personal God of the Christians and defining the content of duty as the dual commandment of love for God and for one’s neighbor. At the same time, he should not reject the things which are not in his power: when they are present he should use them as instruments of virtue, and when taken away he should not be sad, philosophizing that thereby he is relieved of a great burden of responsibility. After praising George for the great benefits he has already bestowed on society (discussed in the next section) he goes on to instruct him in ascetical discipline. Instead of abusing rulership as an excuse for ease and luxury, he should subject himself thereby to hardship of the flesh, which is an instrument of divine grace. He should flee attachment to the senses and walk in natural contemplation. It is not enough to avoid the passions; George must even avoid any mixture of his soul with matter! The key is to be free; recalling the phrase from the letter to Thalassius quoted above, Maximus writes: “Let us therefore come to belong to ourselves and to God—or rather to God alone, and not at all to the flesh and the world.” This is accomplished by pairing “habitual practice of moral philosophy through the virtues and unfailing gnostic contemplation in the Spirit.”

As an aid to this and a guard for George’s already abundant virtues, Maximus offers a detailed meditation on the last judgment and the torment of the damned. This is no gleeful depiction of gruesome infernal punishments: it is a sober laying out of the fate of those who have willfully bound their souls with the cords of the passion while in this life, cultivated a disposition

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of hatred toward others, and thus separated themselves from God who is wholly love and judges justly, without passionate retribution. In *Epistle 4* to John the Chamberlain, such meditation on the last things is characterized as a methodical practice of godly sorrow, “nourished by the laborious reading of the book of the failings in the conscience,” and frees one from attachment to corruptible things and stands as the beginning of a ladder leading up to God. The exhortations given here at length, on rejecting the deception of this age and the senses, on practicing what is in one’s power and enduring patiently what is not, and aid to remembrance of death and judgment are repeated in several of the other lay epistles.

Maximus also includes several lists of virtues and of spiritual disciplines (such as reading, vigils, and prayer) arranged as lists, ladders, or Aristotelian means between opposed vices. These, together with the above reflections on the judgment, can be seen as a form of spiritual exercise, in the sense explored by Pierre Hadot. The former could be used as checklists for the practical life, as well as explanations of the relations between the various virtues (and vices) and their progress—summarizing the more extended analyses in the two sets of *Centuries*—while the latter served as memoranda of the true end of human life. The intended use as exercises is reinforced by Maximus’s exhortations at the end of several letters to not only read them but put them into practice.

Such meditative enumerations in Maximus’s teaching to laypeople suggest that we reconsider somewhat the idea, advanced by Sherwood in the quotation in this chapter’s section

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962 *Ep. 4* (PG 91:417d).
963 E.g. *Ep. 5* (PG 91:421bc, 424a), 43 (641ab).
964 *Ep. 4* (PG 91:417ac), 5 (421cd), 12 (508c), 44 (645c–648a), 45 (649a).
966 *Ep. 4* (PG 91:420b), 5 (420cd and 424b).
on practice and contemplation, that natural contemplation was only accessible to a small monastic elite. We have already noted the mention of contemplation in *Epistle* 1 to George. Certainly the spiritual exercises discussed above were intended primarily to support the practice of the virtues. But Maximus clearly envisions spiritual progress through these means, described in a letter to John the Chamberlain.⁹⁶⁷ Generous practice of philanthrophic works would teach him to despise earthly things, train his senses to behold sensible things tranquilly, and through contemplation of their instability and flux, would lead him to conceive a desire for the unchanging intelligible realities. These divine reflections would teach humility through which he would partake of the glory of God by grace.⁹⁶⁸ This would lead further to complete mortification to the senses and the world, beholding of intelligibles with unclouded eye, and openness to being seized by divine love and made a friend of God instead of a servant.⁹⁶⁹ This state of friendship with God would be the ultimate practice and fulfillment of the great commandment to love God with one’s whole being. This does not differ in any essential respects from the kind of spiritual progress that would be expected of a monk.

The observation of Sherwood regarding natural contemplation can still be maintained from a certain point of view: the kind of lengthy and learned contemplations set down in writing in Maximus’s two longest works, the *Ambiguities* and the *Responses to Thalassios*, could only be cultivated in elite monastic circles. Only there could the leisure and exegetical methodology be found to mine biblical and patristic writings for the allegorical readings so beloved of Maximus. I think that here we can actually distinguish between two forms of contemplation: contemplation of nature itself, and contemplation of scripture. Elsewhere, Maximus elaborates on the two books

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⁹⁶⁷ *Ep.* 12 (PG 91:505a–508a).
⁹⁶⁸ Humility is mentioned as making the Christian a temple of God in *Ep.* 13 (PG 91:509d).
⁹⁶⁹ Cf. the use of this distinction of servant and friend in the *Mystagogy*, discussed above.
of Nature and Scripture, their equal importance, and their mutual dependence.\footnote{His fullest exposition occurs at Amb. 10 (PG 91:1128ff.) in the course of an anagological explanation of the Transfiguration of Christ.} Certainly he advocates the reading of the Bible by layfolk, but for a more practical use: after the above sketch of spiritual progress, he cites the famous spiritual panoply from Eph. 6:12–17, and expands on the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, as separating the better from the worse and teaching the elements of proper Christian conduct.\footnote{\textit{Ep.} 12 (PG 91:508bc).} The book of nature may have been more easily accessible to laypeople, and the wheel of political fortune that high officials such as John and George beheld everyday could edify them more efficiently than many an hour of scriptural study. In the end, as with his other dyads, the natural and written laws are both relativized by the overshadowing of the law of grace.\footnote{One can even detect a certain historical and even ontological priority assigned to the natural over the written law; cf. \textit{Thal.} 65, ll. 157–64 and 233–51.}

\textit{Spiritual tasks of laypeople}

We mentioned above that Maximus exhorted lay officials to use their positions to do good, employing the Stoic terminology of “duties.”\footnote{\textit{Ep.} 2 (PG 91:504df): τοιγαροῦν καθώς ἐχομεν δυνάμεως συνεργεῖ καὶ χάριτι Χριστοῦ τῶν καθηκόντων ἀφιώμεθα.} These consist primarily of the works of love. He has a broad conception what this entails and works it all into a unified, if somewhat embryonic, political philosophy to reassure John the Chamberlain that his role as an imperial official is not a lost cause, in \textit{Epistle} 10. This is matched by another longer treatise to the same, \textit{Epistle} 2, which focuses more on the function of love in the individual soul.\footnote{See the brief introduction in Andrew Louth, \textit{Maximus the Confessor} (New York: Routledge, 1996), 81–82, followed by an English translation.} Sherwood seems to vaguely indicate that the latter epistle is earlier than the former, so I will begin with it.
In *Epistle* 2 love is said to encompass all the other virtues, including almsgiving, “by which we willingly make the misfortunes of others our own and do not allow ourselves to ignore him who is of the same family and nature as us.”\(^{975}\) The choice of words echoes the exhortations to mercy found in the discussion of the concluding pages of the *Mystagogy* above. Love makes us according to image of God, subjecting our choice to reason so that it does not rebel against the principle (*logos*) of nature. Thus we have as it were one nature, one choice (*gnômê*), and one will (*thelêma*), having no distance (*diastasis*) from each other and from God. In man’s fall, the devil divided our nature into many opinions and fantasies and turned us to the devising of every evil, founded on our disagreement in will. He perverted our faculties of reason, appetite, and anger to ignorance, self-love, and tyranny. The faculties are purified and reintegrated within a person in the deliberate labors of virtue, rendering the lover of God himself a god by grace. But this work is only enabled and accomplished by the self-emptying of God in the Incarnation, through which he restores nature and renews the power of love, destroying sin. Love renders each person simple and equal by choice, but blessedly unequal through humility toward each other, and free from the individuality that separates each from his neighbor and from God. Abraham is an example of the above, having not seen people as other than him, but all as one. He looked not to his fallen deliberation (*gnômê*), which is divided while it is not yet in accord with nature, but to nature which is stable, and by which God reveals himself. The activity of love is to cause those who are united in it to exchange properties, so that God becomes man and man becomes God through the synergy of their wills.\(^{976}\) There are in fact not two different loves, toward God and toward man,  

\(^{975}\) *Ep.* 2 (PG 91:394a): καθ’ ὄν τὰς τῶν ἄλλων συμφορὰς θέλοντες οἰκειούμεθα· καὶ τὸ συγγενὲς καὶ ὁμόφυλον ἀγνοεῖσθαι μὴ συγχωροῦμεθα.  

\(^{976}\) διὰ τὴν μίαν καὶ ἀπαράλλακτον ἁμφοτέρων κατὰ τὸ θέλημα βούλησίν τε καὶ κίνησιν (PG 91: 401b)—a formulation that would be problematic in Maximus’s later combat against monotheletism; he later explicitly corrected a similar phrase from the *Ambiguities* (Sherwood, *Date-List*, 25). It is an ethical application of the orthodox christological doctrine of the the exchange of properties in the one person of
but a single one. The principle of nature legislates equal honor for all human beings and prunes
away every seeming inequality stemming from prejudice, embracing in itself all according to the
potential (dynamis) of one identity (tautōtēs). In sum: “This is the true and blameless divine
philosophy of the believers.”

Maximus opens *Epistle* 10 by stating that John had asked him why God chose to justify
the rule of men by other men if human nature is equal. This echoes some of the thoughts
contained in *Epistle* 2, implying that John had already read that work. Maximus responds that
after man’s abuse of the dominion over the world granted him by God—by turning his powers
against nature—God allowed him and the whole world to be subject to the corruption that now
holds sway, lest he become immortal in unnatural evil. Now the flux and disturbance of life can
lead man to realize the folly of loving it, and turn him to the love of the stability of intelligibles.
But since even this does not lead us to loose the bond with the world, God’s providence
legislated the institution of kingship and provided it with wisdom and power, so that it would
check the damage of evil and keep the stronger from unjustly attacking the weaker like fish in
the sea devouring one another. Kingship was thus instituted and received wisdom and power
from God, and the human nature of equal honor was divided into rulers and ruled. It has power to
set in order those who obey the ordinances of nature and to punish those who do not, granting
justice to all either by desire of reward or fear of punishment. It levels the irregularity of each
person’s choice (gnōmē) and thus manifests the equality of nature. This would never happen
unless fear chastened the foolish not to do evil and force made them come to the tranquility of
the prudent. Maximus supports this from the scriptural narrative of the institution of kingship in

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977 *Ep.* 2 (PG 91:404d).
978 *Ep.* 10 (PG 91:449ab).
Old Testament Israel, where a king was appointed because the people refused to have God alone as their king; he permitted them to be ruled by each other (i.e. by a king from among themselves) so that there would not be anarchy because of polyarchy. The king who tries to keep this law is a second god upon earth, as a faithful minister of the divine will; he receives rule over men because he is ruled by God. But he who rejects this law and reigns for himself and not for God becomes a tyrant and separates himself from good men and from all counsel and power (dynasteias), keeping company with evil men and making them masters of his own authority. In conclusion, Maximus prays that God grant us to be ruled by him voluntarily through the fulfillment of his commandments and to render honor to those who rule according to him upon earth, as keepers of his divine ordinances.\(^{979}\)

Although the closing note returns to Epistle 2 with its analysis of the voluntary practice of love, the entire letter takes seriously the corrupted condition of fallen man and the need for force and fear to keep him in line. Although this may seem a jarring contrast from the exalted theological reflections we considered earlier in the chapter, it should in fact be seen as the political application of the pleasure-pain antinomy Maximus saw in the individual. Pain, here conceived as the real physical threat of violence wielded by the sovereign, limits the spread of evil. This helps explain Maximus’s patriotic wish to see the Arabs—as well as the Jews, whom he claims were welcoming the invaders—defeated by the imperial arms, although the same logic allows him to see their persecution of the Church as a punishment for the sins of Christians.\(^{980}\)

He also has a nuanced position on how to deal with heretics. Based on his doctrine of the equality of all humans according to nature, he states in no uncertain terms that the love of a

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\(^{979}\) Ep. 10 (PG 91:449b–453a). Cf. Ep. 27 (PG 91:620bd), which teaches John the Chamberlain about the need to extinguish the law of self-love, which spread among mankind through pleasure, leading to polytheism or atheism, and cutting up the one human nature into parts through anger rendered bestial in defense of pleasure.

\(^{980}\) Ep. 14 (PG 91:540aff.); for the date and location of the letter Sherwood, Date-List, 40–41.
Christian should not distinguish between friends and enemies, between believer and unbeliever. He considers heretics to be cut off from the Body of Christ, i.e. the Church, yet he explains how the Holy Spirit is present in all people, even those outside the Church and Empire, drawing them toward God through the natural seeds of truth. He wrote a long letter to John the Chamberlain, dated to November or December of 641, regarding a complicated situation involving heretical nuns and clergy who had fled from the invasion of the eastern provinces to the relative safety of Africa (as Maximus himself had done). There he states his rule of thumb: heretics are not to be dealt with harshly except in regard to their heresy; one should not rejoice in their afflictions, nor use harshness instead of philanthropy, but should deal with them through careful testing (dokēmasia) and be harsh only to what tends to the support of heresy. In that particular case, the problem was that some of the nuns in question who had enjoyed material support from George, the governor of Africa, had started enticing local girls to join their monastery and adhere to their beliefs. The governor then consulted with the capital and received authorization from both the emperor and patriarch for a carrot-and-stick method involving the promise of material support and the threat of coercion—through imprisonment in Orthodox monasteries as well as limited corporal punishment—to bring the problematic monastic communities to heel. The results were largely successful and Maximus praises George as a recipient of apostolic charisms.

This praise shows the extent to which Maximus estimated the ability of secular officials to contribute to the spiritual good of the Church—although, as with most such situations in the Byzantium, the results were not uniform nor uniformly enduring, as described in a later epistle.

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981 Cap.Char. 1.71 and 2.30, Cap.Theol. 1.11–12, Ep. 18 (PG 91:589b), Thal. 15.
982 Ep. 12 (PG 91:460–509). This is the situation in which George, the prefect of Africa, was also caught up, as mentioned above; cf. Sherwood, Date-List, 45–48, Booth, Crisis of Empire, 254–59.
983 Ep. 12 (PG 91:464a and 465c).
on the aftermath of the incident. His preference, though, was for the positive conferral of benefits rather than the imposition of punishments. Thus in several lists of the virtues of George of Africa which he includes in the letters surrounding his recall to Constantinople, he highlights his rare example of virtue in high places, shining through both in his personal integrity and his philanthropic activities. These are summarized in Epistle 1 through a conglomeration of Old Testament moral teaching against oppression of the poor with the judgment parable in Mt. 25 about helping the afflicted. In Epistle 44 he is described as “God-loving, faithful, pious, good, devout, temperate, self-controlled, forbearing, meek, sympathetic, merciful, feeding the poor, feeding the strangers, feeding the orphans, caring for the ill, caring for the old, patron of widows, guardian of monks, non-possessor (aktêmona), lover of the Church, and to summarize, friend of all both living and dead.”

These lists of George’s virtues would seem merely rhetorical, the commendations of a political ally, if we were not conscious of Maximus’s own integrity and his willingness to oppose the political authorities on principle. Furthermore, his description of George as an exemplar of virtue sounds a more idiosyncratic note, setting it apart from panegyrical formulas. He states that for each generation God, providing for human nature and our common salvation, raises up someone virtuous, giving him so much strength as would be necessary for the repentance of the people being led by him, so that like a lamp, the rest of men might attend to him and regulate their life accordingly, with no passion tripping them up through lack of knowledge. George the

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985 Ep. 18 (PG 91:584–89) is ghost-written for George by Maximus; it threatens a community of backsliding nuns with the loss of properties that had been granted to them by George for their support, unless they repent and return to communion; cf. Sherwood, Date-List, 48–49.
986 Ep. 1 is a letter bracing George with spiritual advice in his trying circumstances, while Ep. 44 and 45 are intercessory letters to John the Chamberlaing seeking his assistance for the imperiled governor.
988 Ep. 44 (PG 91:645cd): φιλόθεον, πιστόν, εὐσεβή, ἁγαθόν, εὐλαβή, σῴφρονα, ἐγκρατή, ἀνεκτικόν, πράον, συμπαθή, ἐλεήμονα, πτωχοτρόφον, ἐξοντρόφον, ὄρφανοτρόφον, νοσοκόμον, γηροκόμον, προστάτην χρῶν, μοναχῶν κηδεμόνα, ἀκτήμονα [or: ἀπήμονα], φιλεκκλήσιον- καὶ ἵνα συνελών εἴπω, πάντων καὶ ζῶντων καὶ νεκρῶν φίλον. The phrase “friend of all” is commonly found on ancient tombstones.
philochristos is such a “luminary and criterion of virtue.” This is a remarkable statement regarding a political leader. The exemplar of repentance for a whole generation is identified not as a great bishop or renowned stylite, but as an imperial prefect.

One of the virtues ascribed to George above was being a guardian of monks. Maximus had certainly experienced this himself. He also praised John the Chamberlain for the same. In Epistle 3 he thanks John for sending alms (eulogias) to Maximus and his fellow monks at the Monastery of St. George. He states the rather commonplace morals that by broken the bonds of hunger, John has loosed his own sins and nourished his own soul. But then Maximus moves onto new ground by suggesting that John’s physical act of almsgiving has provided an opportunity to reap the fruit of spiritual contemplation. It has allowed Maximus to understand why God has set the law of mutual almsgiving. Wishing to united us in nature and choice (gnômê) he gave us salvific commandments, but we corrupted these through self-love and a vicious kind of cleverness (synesis) and cut up the one human nature into many parts. Hence everyone who removes this uneveness (anômalia) of nature has had mercy on himself first of all, by reconciling his choice to his nature and both to God. He demonstrates thus the true image of God in himself, full of virtues such as meekness and peace by which we lay hold of each other through compassion (sympathôs) and of God through desire (ephetôs). This short reflection illustrates Maximus’s teaching elsewhere that alms can be twofold, nourishing the body and the soul and allows Maximus to summarize his whole theology regarding the broken ideal unity of man and its restoration through action and contemplation. In so doing, he shows the possibility and the necessity of the union between the monastic and the lay parts of church and society.

989 λαμπτήρ τις και κανόνν ἀρετῆς (Ep. 45, PG 91:648d).
990 Ep. 3 (PG 91:408–412).
991 Thal. 40 ll. 64–70. Another contemplation of alms is found in a thank-you note to a monastic correspondent, an abbot Polychronius, in Ep. 39.
Conclusions

We can conclude, then, with several observations. For Maximus, love for neighbor unites the practical and theoretical paths and, being inseparable from love for God, conducts believers along both to deification. The distinction between action and contemplation mirrors, to a degree, that between lay and monastic piety, so the union of one serves as a kind of foundation for the union of the other. But the active and contemplative are always found within the individual believer together, though in different degrees, so that the union is not only an external one of laboring laymen supporting meditating monk—it is also an internal one that is worked out in the soul of each Christian.

Moreover, the relationship is dynamic, founded on Maximus’s concept of man’s motion toward God. The goal is lofty, but Maximus grounds the ascent in a spiritual method of slow and gradual progress, for both monks and laypeople. This is reflected in his parsing of four different degrees of dispassion.992 He realistically directs his more advanced teaching primarily at a monastic audience, but does not rule out that laymen could reach the stage where they might also be completely freed from the distractions of material life.993 The same is true for his unique explanation of the parable of the workers in the vineyard from Mt. 20:1–16. He interprets the one talent that is given to all the workers, from the first hour to the eleventh, not as the ultimate heavenly reward, but as the gift of chastity. The different hours correspond to different degrees of self-control. This varies from a free use of sexual relations within marriage, through various degrees of restricting them, to the most exalted degree, that of absolute monastic virginity.994

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992 QD 54, 127; Thal. 55, ll. 200–211.
994 In contrast to the insistence on the use of sexual intercourse solely for procreation in the Centuries on Love, here he includes options for intercourse without that intent.
There is a clear hierarchy, as we would expect from Maximus’s overall view of passion and procreation within the fallen world and of the opportunities monasticism offers for spiritual ascent. But as Cooper points out in his analysis of this passage, Maximus specifies that virginity should be chosen “for love of the Lord,” not for any merits in itself. He also notes that the parable ends with the phrase “the last will be first, and the first will be last.” Although Maximus does not comment on it, it hints at the way the grace of mystical theology relativizes the hierarchy of contemplation over action in the spiritual life. The reasonable conclusion is that the same is intended to hold true for monasticism and marriage. As a result, both lay and monastic can hope to experience the promised blessings even from this life.995

His sense of the potential of excellence in laypeople is expressed most profoundly in his teaching on friendship, which we considered in the Centuries on Love but is expressed most poignantly in his epistles. These expressions of sincere love that binds the correspondents despite the obstacles of distance are directed to clerical, monastic, and lay correspondents. Despite drawing on an ancient deposit of rhetorical tradition to formulate these greetings, Maximus is always in earnest and he always manages to add something of his own.

Thus Maximus concludes with a remarkably positive appreciation of lay piety. Virtue consists in willingly assenting to the good things that God has made.996 God has furnished many ways of virtue, leading to the one goal of salvation.997 Human beings were created to be deified and thus radiate God’s grace through all the movements of their soul and body.998 Full union with God will, however, be achieved in conjunction with all creation eschatologically.999 In the meantime, Maximus sought to educate spiritual children, observing cautiously the advance of the

995 Cap.Char. 4.78.
997 Ep. 12 (PG 91:504cd).
998 Ep. 1 (PG 91:376ab).
999 Amb. 15 (PG 91:1220c).
invaders from the desert, seeking to discern when the time for martyrdom might come. He counseled one of his correspondents that only the Word can overcome nature and the senses, which is what martyrdom amounts to, confirming the longing for God through the suffering of death.\footnote{Ep. 14 (PG 91:544ab). The letter is addressed to the \textit{illustris} Peter, who may have been in Alexandria at the time and thus near the front lines of the war with the Arabs. Sherwood, \textit{Date-List}, 40–41, strangely does not discuss this mention of martyrdom at the end.}
8. From the Holy Mountain: John Climacus, Anastasius of Sinai, and lay piety in the post-Byzantine Near East

_Sinai, pilgrimage, monasticism_

Sometime in the seventh century A.D. a group of around eight hundred Armenians came to Mount Sinai on pilgrimage and had a supernatural experience:

They ascended the Holy Summit, and when they finally reached the outermost Holy Rock where Moses received the Law, there occurred in that holy place and among those lay folk a vision of God, an awful work of wonder. Just as formerly at the time of the Law-Giving, so now too the entire Holy Summit and lay folk appeared to be engulfed in fire. But the incredible thing was that no one saw himself being scorched or burned; instead, one person saw another, and each one saw the other ... The throng became terrified and shouted, ‘Lord have mercy’ for about an hour, and the fire receded again. Neither a hair nor a garment among them had been harmed. Instead, only their staffs had caught fire, like candles, amid the vision. After being extinguished they still bore the mark of the conflagration, having been charred at their tips as if by fire. By this form of theirs they testify even in their country, as if speaking aloud, that ‘Today on the Holy Mountain of Sina the Lord was seen again in fire.’

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This vivid anecdote is found in a collection of edifying tales of the Sinai fathers by a monk and presbyter of the same mountain, Anastasius of Sinai. He firmly set the experience of the Armenian pilgrims in the context of the Old Testament vision of God on Mt. Sinai. Yet by the time they visited, the mountain was not just an isolated shrine of the old dispensation, but a locus of pilgrimage and monasticism in the larger matrix of the late antique Christian world, still thriving despite the advent of a new political order under the early Islamic caliphate. In that world the pilgrims’ pious gesture of journeying to the mountain to venerate the place where God’s feet stood was in itself commonplace and unremarkable. The gift of the vision of God, however, was not something associated primarily with laypeople, but with the mystical initiate, the solitary Moses-like figure of the desert anchorite. In this chapter I will investigate how Anastasius adapted ascetical practice and theory to laypeople so that they, too, could hope to share in mystical vision.

The path of ascetic discipline that allowed one to be initiated into these divine mysteries was summarized a generation or so before Anastasius, by the abbot John of Sinai in his famous Ladder of Divine Ascent, also known as Spiritual Tablets.\textsuperscript{1002} both titles draw on Old Testament images of ascent to God—the ladder of Jacob in Genesis and the tables of the Mosaic Law in Exodus, and these metaphors are used by the author to map out the movement of a monk from renunciation of the world to re-creation in God. The physical presence of Sinai looms over the pages of John’s treatise, a constant invitation and challenge to the monk who has left the pleasures and cares of the world to struggle in hunger, thirst, and obedience in the desert.

The Ladder is uncompromisingly ascetical and obviously directed to a monastic audience. Yet because John expresses a clear view of the place of laypeople in relation to monks,

\textsuperscript{1002} For John’s dates, see the discussion of Anastasius’s dates later in the chapter. For the title Spiritual Tablets see the opening at PG 88: 632a. In the following I will cite the Ladder using the chapter number followed by the column number and letter from PG 88: 631–1164.
this work should not be neglected. In the course of his discussions he also lets slip some mention of lay and monastic interactions as he had seen them play out at monasteries. His wealth of keen insights into the faults and foibles of human nature and the long hard struggle necessary to cultivate the virtues was also a ready reserve of sage counsel for any Christian. The popularity of the *Ladder* in later Byzantine spirituality, both for monastics and laypeople, attests to such use.\(^{1003}\)

In his first chapter, “On Renunciation,” John Climacus sketches different states of spiritual life in a spectrum, ranging from the closest friends of God to his bitterest enemies, based on their freedom of choice as rational creatures.\(^{1004}\) This allows for more options than the simple categories of monks and laypeople. He says that one could write a treatise on each of these categories, but specifically limits himself to fulfilling the request of the monks of Sinai for a discourse concerning their way of life.\(^{1005}\) Yet he further delineates these broad categories of existence briefly, in order to situate his treatise on the monastic life. The first and most important principle is God himself.

God belongs to all free beings. He is the life of all, the salvation of all—faithful and unfaithful, just and unjust, pious and impious, passionate and dispassionate, monks and laymen, wise and simple, healthy and sick, young and old—just as the effusion of light,


\(^{1004}\) *Ladder* 1, 632a. The emphasis on choice is noted in the anonymous Byzantine gloss, printed after the text of the chapter at PG 88: 643cd (apparently quoting Gregory of Nyssa).

\(^{1005}\) *Ladder* 1, 632c.
the sight of the sun, and the changes of the seasons are for all alike; ‘for there is no respect of persons with God’ (Rom. 2:11). The pairing of opposites—some of them contradictory, some merely complementary—indicates the availability of God, the providential ground of being, to all. The fact that the duality of monks and laypeople is but one of the oppositions indicates that it is not the only one possible, and along with the others is ultimately subject to the mighty mercy of God. The fact that he is God of all those who choose him opens up the way for John to continue parsing the categories of being. The irreligious man turns from life because he reckons that his own creator does not exist, while the transgressor is stubbornly muddle-headed, refusing to quicken his faith through good deeds.

The next categories do not concern themselves so much with free choice as with potential. This is not due to any kind of determinism, but rather to humanity’s natural healthy inclination toward God. First there is the definition of a Christian:

A Christian is one who imitates Christ in thought, word and deed, as far as is possible for human beings, believing rightly and blamelessly in the Holy Trinity.

After laying down this foundation, John proceeds to divide pious Christians into three basic categories. The first two consist of those living in the world:

One who is pleasing to God is he who partakes of all that is natural and sinless, and as far as he is able neglects nothing good. The continent man is one who lives in the midst of

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1006 Ladder 1, 633a. Translation from The Ladder of Divine Ascent (Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 2001), 4, slightly modified (henceforth cited as HTM).  
1007 Ladder 1, 633ab.  
1008 Ladder 1, 633b (HTM, 4).
temptations, snares and turmoil, and who strives with all his might to imitate those who are free from turmoil.\textsuperscript{1009}

The definition of “one who is pleasing to God” implies that he is married—a natural and sinless states, according to orthodox teaching—earning enough bread with honest labor to provide for his family while also giving to those in need as far as the home budget permits—this is presumably the doing of good “as far as he is able.” The “continent,” on the other hand, looks not to the humble family man for his or her model, but to the monks (“those who are free of turmoil”), struggling to imitate their way of life as much as possible in the midst of worldly cares. The element of ability is again present, but here tautened by a freely-chosen ambition, striving to rise above the natural goodness of the average Christian toward something greater.

This upward strain in turn leads to the monk:

A monk is an angelic order and state achieved in an earthly and soiled body. A monk is one who holds to the rules and words of God in every time and place and matter. A monk is constant forcing of nature and unceasing guarding of the senses. A monk is a chaste body and a purified mouth and an illumined mind. A monk is a deeply afflicted soul that both awake and asleep is continuously occupied with the remembrance of death.\textsuperscript{1010}

The world of possibility, which was the basis for the previous three definitions, has been left behind and the monk is, frankly, struggling to do violence to nature, to continually force his physical nature—not to destroy it, but to transcend it and eventually to draw it up into the spirit’s glory. The filthy flesh, which at the beginning of the paragraph is an obstacle to the goal of attaining an angelic state, is at the end of the paragraph a “chaste body and purified mouth,” associated with an “illumined mind.” The struggle against nature is a kind of death—a soul

\textsuperscript{1009} Ladder 1, 633b (HTM 4).
\textsuperscript{1010} Ladder 1, 633c (HTM 4).
“continuously occupied with the remembrance of death”—which links the monk to the impious man, already defined as “a rational and mortal nature.” The two are further linked by the theme of choice, in order to finish the transition from the nature of the ungodly, through that of the godly, to the monk: “Withdrawal from the world is voluntary hatred of vaunted material things and denial of nature for the attainment of what is above nature.”

The way that John has set up his brief review of the spiritual cosmos, humans have a spectrum of options as to how to relate to God based on their use of nature and choice. The lay life is firmly grounded in a natural human cooperation with God’s abundant goodness, in the natural potential (dynamis) of human beings. Stricter lay continence involves a pushing of the boundaries of potential, while monasticism seeks to overcome them. But all of these are linked to each other and even to the impious and the lawless by their common grounding in God and the ever-present possibility that even the unbelieving, the unjust, the passionate, and the worldly will turn to his ever-present goodness. The section on first glance suggests a steady ascent from the depths of ungodliness to the height of monastic perfection. But if one examines it more closely, as I have done here, one becomes aware that John has not given his readers monastic triumphalism, but a schema that is rooted in the solidarity of humankind as creatures of a providential God. This is not to deny that the monk has chosen a loftier way of life, but rather, to root his ascent in a humble appreciation of his weak and mortal human nature.

After expounding at length on the nature of monastic life, later in the chapter “On Renunciation” John returns to a comparison of lay and monastic life. Whereas before he had simply posited the possibility of a godly lay life, here he deals briefly with the particular challenges and limitations that it involves.

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1011 Ladder 1, 6.33c (HTM, 4).
It is possible to walk, even when tied with the fetters of worldly affairs and iron cares, but only with difficulty. For even those who have iron chains on their feet can often walk; but they are continually stumbling and getting hurt. An unmarried man, who is only tied to the world by business affairs, is like one who has fetters on his hands; and therefore, when he wishes to hasten to the monastic life, he has nothing to hinder him. But the married man is like one who is bound hand and foot.¹⁰¹²

This is admittedly a rather gloomy picture: the layman is likened to a bound prisoner, stumbling and suffering injury on his difficult journey. Whereas earlier John had presented the practice of Christianity as something natural and within the realm of possibility, here he emphasizes the obstacles. These are primarily the affairs and cares of life in the world, which inevitably render spiritual progress slow and laborious, prone to frequent stumbling. The freedom of the unmarried layman is relative, and primarily consists of the ability to escape the fetters of life in the world by turning to monasticism. But the picture is not absolutely negative, since the prisoner is making some kind of progress on his journey, rather than being locked in a jail. It is for this reason that John rejects the fatal apathy that his reflections might provoke in laypeople by telling them what they can accomplish:

Some people living carelessly in the world have asked me: ‘We have wives and are beset with social cares, and how can we lead the solitary life?’ I replied to them: ‘Do all the good you can; do not speak evil of anyone; do not steal from anyone; do not lie to anyone; do not be arrogant towards anyone; do not hate anyone; do not be absent from the divine services; be compassionate to the needy; do not offend anyone; do not wreck

¹⁰¹² Ladder 1, 640b (HTM, 8–9). The reference to marriage as fetters may be a reminiscence of John Chrysostom’s On Virginity 41.1–2 (ed. Herbert Musurillo, pp. 236–39).
another man’s domestic happiness and be content with what your own wives can give you. If you behave in this way, you will not be far from the Kingdom of Heaven.\footnote{Ladder 1, 640df. (HTM, 9).}

The question put to John by his anonymous inquirers implies that godliness requires one to abandon family and society and instead take up monastic life. John’s reply refutes this supposition by listing the common-sense basics of Christian life, which are all commandments involving one’s role in society. The place of the Christian layperson is to fulfill this role by the negative activity of refraining from harm and by the positive activity of doing good, within the limits of one’s ability (again, we encounter a form of the term dynamis). The questioners were suffering from a “careless disposition” and the antidote is to try, according to one’s ability. This accords with John’s definition of “Christians” and especially “god-pleasing” ones earlier in Chapter 1 of the Ladder.

The negative portrayal of lay life is heightened in the next chapter, “On Detachment.” John is very careful in denigrating laypeople and states explicitly that he does this for the purpose of combating the kinds of second thoughts that monks might suffer after leaving the world. In order to steel the resolve of the monks, he begins by reminding them of two key scriptural passages, the saying of Jesus to “let the dead bury their own dead” (Mt. 8:22) and the story of the rich young man (Mt. 19:21ff.). He asserts that this “testimony” of Jesus to the perfection of poverty should suffice as proof of the glory of the monastic profession.\footnote{Ladder 2, 653dff.} Having cited Scripture in his support, John then offers various insights into the difference between lay asceticism and that of monks. Near the end of the chapter he adds one more argument for monasticism:
For who among them has ever worked any miracles? Who has raised the dead? Who has driven out demons? No one. All these are the victorious rewards of monks, rewards which the world cannot receive; and if it could, then what is the need for asceticism and solitude?1015

The emphasis on miracle-working here again seems prone to vainglory. But the idea that monks were the miracle-workers par excellence in the Christian world was deeply ingrained in the late antique mindset. John uses this commonplace to reinforce the resolve of monks in their long hard struggle.

Henceforth the rest of the Ladder is directed solely to monks. The dismissive way in which he depicts lay piety must be understood as part of the rhetorical structure of his treatise, but at the same time we should not underestimate its harshness. John’s rhetoric is not a cynical sophistic device, but a sophisticated means of expressing the profound theological tensions that his subject encompasses.1016 As throughout the Ladder, his language here is a language of paradox. The monastic life is for him an exalted humility, a vocation that transcends the good life of the layperson. This language of paradox is, however, grounded in John’s long experience of trying to actually practice the life-in-death that is monasticism, and teaching others to do the same.1017 He is keenly aware of the weakness of the monk’s moral efforts, burdened as he is by the flesh. One of the Ladder’s most poignant passages is a meditation on the mystery of human embodiment, at the end of Chapter 15, “On Chastity,” or to use the full title, “On incorruptible

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1015 Ladder 2, 657b (HTM, 13).
1017 Meditation on death profoundly shapes John’s thought, as emphasized recently in Zecher, Symbolics of Death.
chastity and temperance, which are achieved in corruptible men by hard labor and sweat.”

The title already expresses the paradox of embodied human existence, a thread that runs through the entire chapter until its virtuosic summation:

With what attitude and manner shall I bind this friend of mine and, in line with the other vices, judge it, I do not know. For before I bind it, it is loosed; and before I judge it, I am reconciled to it; and before I punish it, I give way. How can I hate that which by nature I am made to love? How shall I be freed from that to which I am bound unto the ages? How can I abolish that which will also rise with me? How can I render incorruptible that which has received a corruptible nature? … What is this mystery about me? What is the principle of my mixture? How have been set up as both enemy and friend to myself? Tell me, you tell me, O my own spouse, O my own nature … How can I escape the natural danger, since from now on I have been commanded by Christ to be hostile to you? How shall I overcome your tyranny, since I have chosen to do violence to you? And she responding to her own soul said: “I in myself have love as my father; the external cause of my inflammation is taking care of me and, in general, ease; whereas the internal cause of my inflammation is previous ease and deeds that have been done … If you recognize both your and my obvious and profound weakness, you have my hands; if you torment your gullet, you have bound my feet to prevent them from walk further; if you assume the yoke of obedience, you have been unyoked from me; if you obtain humility, you have cut off my head.”

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1018 Περὶ ἀφθάρτου ἐν φθαρτοῖς ἐκ καμάτων καὶ ἱδρῶτων ἀγαθῶς καὶ σωφροσύνης (880d).
1019 901c–904b, my translation: ποίῳ δὲ ἐγὼ ἦθει καὶ τρόπῳ τὸν ἐμὸν τοῦτον φύλον ἰδὴς κατὰ τὴν ἀκολουθίαν τῶν λοιπῶν δικάσω, οὐκ ἐπίστασαι· πρὶν γάρ ἤθησο, λύεται· καὶ πρὶν δικάσω, διαλλάσσομαι· καὶ πρὶν τιμωρήσω, κατακάμπτωμαι. Πῶς μισήσω ὃν φύσει ἀγαπήν πέρυκα; Πῶς ἔλευθερωθῶ ὃ εἰς αἰῶνας συνδέδεσαι; Πῶς καταργήσω τὸ καὶ τὴν ἐμὸν ἀναστάμενον; Πῶς δεῖξον ἀφθαρτὸν τὸ φθαρτὴν εὐληφός φύσιν; ... Τί τὸ περὶ ἐμὲ μυστήριον; Τίς ὁ λόγος τῆς ἐμῆς συγκράσεως; Πῶς ἔστω ἔχθρος καὶ φίλος καθέστηκα; Λέγε
The passage echoes Gregory of Nazianzus’ lament on the mystery of the mortal body in his oration On Love of the Poor, a passage of which prompted Maximus’ great cosmological and anthropological essay in Ambiguity.\textsuperscript{7} In Gregory, this sudden outburst in the midst of an exhortation to almsgiving was intended to remind his audience of their own mortality so that they would show compassion on the emaciated and mangled bodies of the poor and diseased in their city.\textsuperscript{1021} John turns ito the inward struggle of the monk. But by asserting the orthodox doctrine that the body is a natural component of the human constitution, by emphasizing the natural instinct for its preservation and nourishment, by noting that its cause is the sexual love involved in procreation,\textsuperscript{1022} and by declaring humility to be the ultimate solution, he reminds the monk that he too is a result of sexual procreation, and that he too will always struggle to control the basic instincts for food, drink, and sex that laypeople experience.\textsuperscript{1023} He must not be proud of his renunciation and asceticism because such an attitude would be self-defeating. Monastic elitism is ruled out by the very logic of monastic discipline. So although the immediate use of meditation on the mystery of embodiment differs in Gregory and John—one an exhortation to charity, the other to humility—they both cultivate solidarity between members of the Church across lines of wealth or asceticism.

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Gregory, Or. 14 (De pauperum amore) 7 (PG 35: 865a–d).}
\footnote{Ibid. 8 (868a): Νυνὶ δὲ, ὃ μοι λέγειν ὅ λόγος ἁμρήσε, τῶν ἐμῶν περιαλγούντι σαρκῶν, καὶ τῆς ἐμῆς ἁσθενείας ἐν ἀλλοτρίῳ πάθει, θεραπευτέον, ἀδελφοί, τὸ συγγενὲς καὶ ὁμόδοιον.}
\footnote{This is how I understand the phrase “I in myself have love as my father.” If I am correct in this interpretation, John hints at a doctrine of original sin similar to that of Maximus, where conception through pleasure is each human being’s entrance into the vicious circle of pleasure and pain that dominates fallen human existence, as discussed in the previous chapter.}
\footnote{The monk’s more intense renunciation is, however, hinted at in the phrase “since I have chosen to do violence to you.” As with the opening paragraphs, we see here too John’s emphasis on personal choice in the spiritual struggle.}
\end{footnotes}
The theme of humility in relation to laypeople plays a part elsewhere, in the context of life within the monastery, where, as in the beginning of the first chapter, John shows a predilection for a sketching a spectrum of piety rather than a duality. He confirms the validity of different motives for monastic renunciation, based on his own acquaintance with people who have donned the habit for less noble reasons—“circumstantial renunciations”—but then by divine grace attained to great virtue; these may have been people entering monasteries as political other prisoners, a phenomenon known from the time of Justinian. It is connected with the practice of entering monastic life as a form of penance, as John immediately continues.

Let no one offer the burden or multitude of sins as an excuse for designating himself unworthy of monastic profession, and let him not think to debase himself with a hidden motive of indulgence, making excuses in sins (Ps. 140:4); for wherever the sore is greatly festering, there is great need of medicine, in order to remove the filth.

The lengths to which therapeutic penance might go are starkly presented in John’s notorious account of the “Prison” Monastery outside Alexandria in Step 5. For our purposes, in relation to the transition from lay to monastic life, it is most clearly presented in another anecdote about a bandit who, upon seeking tonsure, was instructed, by his abbot to confess his many heinous crimes in detail publicly before the brethren assembled in the monastery church. This he did with zeal, out of his trust in the efficacy of monastic repentance. The Ladder, then, mirrors in somewhat smaller compass the variety of monastic vocations that we have already observed in the Spiritual Meadow.

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1024 Ladder 1, 637d.
1025 Ladder 1, 640a: Μηδεὶς βάρος καὶ πλῆθος ἁμαρτιῶν προφασιζόμενος ἀνάξιοι ἔκαστον τοῦ μοναχικοῦ ἐπαγγέλματος ἀποκαλοῖτο· καὶ διὰ ἡδυπάθειαν ἑαυτῶν ἐυτελίζειν νομιζότω, προφασιζόμενος προφάσεις ἐν ἁμαρτίαις. Ὅπου γὰρ πολλὴ ἡ σηπεδῶν, ἐκεῖ καὶ μεγάλης ἱερείας χρέεια, ἵνα τὸν ῥύπον ἀπόθηται.
1026 For discussion see Alexis Torrance, Repentance in Late Antiquity: Eastern Asceticism and the Framing of the Christian Life c. 400–650 CE (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 169–70.
1027 Ladder 4, 681c.f.
As John later learned, the abbot’s purpose in the above episode was not only to complete the reformed bandit’s repentance, it was also, through such a spectacle, to move some of the already-tonsured monks to repentance for secret sins they were harboring.\(^{1028}\) The uneven progress of monastics is acknowledged as a given by John.\(^ {1029}\) He castigates incidents of brethren actually coming to blows as totally unworthy of the monastic life, which is supposed to cleanse anger even from the tongue and the heart; the fact that he had to mention it implies that it did happen.\(^ {1030}\) He also reuses the metaphor of having one’s feet bound—introduced in the first chapter, as we have seen, as an analogy for life in the world—in a more specific, intra-monastic context, with regard to hoarding of treasures on earth and as a metaphor for the mental cares that disturb the solitary prayer of the hesychast.\(^ {1031}\) This prayer is described as the culmination of the monastic life.\(^ {1032}\)

At the same time, it is sometimes the least among the community, those closest to laypeople in status, who achieve the most progress. At the aforementioned monastery John encountered a man with the very Alexandrian name Abbacyrus (indicating the popularity of the shrine of that saint which we discussed in an earlier chapter) who had been, it seems, a novice for fifteen years. He recognized that his lowly status, along with the additional insults and abuse heaped on him by the abbot and monks, was imposed on him purposefully for the good of his

\(^{1028}\) Ibid. 684c; cf. Torrance, *Repentance in Late Antiquity*, 161.
\(^{1031}\) *Ladder* 26b, 1089a and 27, 1112a.
\(^{1032}\) *Ladder* 27, 1100df.
soul; he died two years later in the odor of sanctity, apparently without having officially been clothed with the habit but deemed by the abbot a confessor for his patient endurance.\textsuperscript{1033}

The variability in spiritual progress is occasionally extended to cover laypeople, implicitly or explicitly. All people can obtain forgiveness and salvation, but not all will be able to achieve dispassion, which comes through time, desire, and grace.\textsuperscript{1034} Echoing the opening description of the spectrum from mortal enemies to intimate friends of God, John teaches that one’s experience of God’s grace becomes more intense as one draws near to him, from a general providence exercised over all creation, through occasional experience of the help of God deduced by immature believers through the conjunction of events, to the inward consolation and spiritual charisms enjoyed by those who love him.\textsuperscript{1035} The monk’s vocal prayer to God is likened to standing before the emperor in the presence of the whole senate, whereas he who has truly learned to pray with the mind—here meaning the advanced hesychast monk—speaks in the emperor’s ear. Those in the world, on the other hand, are like those trying to petition the emperor amidst the tumult of the crowd.\textsuperscript{1036} Monks are expected to attain to the latter: “Let monasticism be lived in feeling of the heart, in deeds and words and thoughts and movements; if not, it is not monastic, not to say angelic.”\textsuperscript{1037} One particularly important feeling is the assurance (\textit{plêrophoria}) of having obtained forgiveness of sins. All monks are supposed to experience this

\textsuperscript{1033} Ladder 4, 693cffe. It is not quite clear what his exact status was. He is called a “brother” but he himself explains his rough treatment thus: ὅτι δοκιμάζουσι με οἱ πατέρες μου, ἡν ποιῶ μοναχόν ... ὅτι ἀχρι τῆς τριακονταετίας δοκιμάζουσι τοὺς ἁποτασσομένους. As a general rule for novices, in the Discourse to the Shepherd, John recommends that postulants not be tonsured before reaching the legal age of competence (70, 1193a). In the Ladder he introduces an interpretation of the \textit{schêma} of the courageous spiritual warriors known as monks—but then goes on to offer a variation of the Pauline spiritual panoply of Eph. 6:12–17 rather than an actual explanation of the elements of the monastic habit such as is found in earlier works by Evagrius and Dorotheus and John's approximate contemporary Maximus, in Quaestiones et dubia 1,68.

\textsuperscript{1034} Ladder 26, 1029 d and 26b, 1089c; cf. 26, 1029a, on how this plays out with regard to humility and forbearance. He also suggests that some—implicitly monks—go above and beyond the evangelical commandments (26, 1016a), a parallel with the discussion of Maximus Confessor, and before him Dorotheus of Gaza, on the distinction between the lay and monastic ways.

\textsuperscript{1035} Ladder 26, 1020b and 1033df.

\textsuperscript{1036} Ladder 27, 1100b.

\textsuperscript{1037} Ibid.
before death, while laypeople do not, unless they are particularly assiduous in almsgiving.\textsuperscript{1038}

This concern with penance and \textit{plêrophoria} is characteristic of Late Antiquity, especially in the tradition of ascetic writings going back from John Climacus through Barsanuphius and John of Gaza in the sixth century to Diadochus of Photike in the fifth and Ps.-Macarius in the fourth. Barsanuphius and John rendered it accessible to laypeople to a certain degree; John retains the possibility, but sharply delimits it through his clear sense of monastic boundaries.

Hence despite his awareness of temptations within the monastery or desert, John does not relax his ruthless vigilance with regard to relations with laypeople. The monk is fought by the demon of fornication in whatever place he is, whether as a hesychast in the desert or a brother or as an agent sent on monastery business out to the world. In the latter case, he is protected sometimes by the prayer of his spiritual father, sometimes by being jaded, or surfeited, by previous worldly experience, or even occasionally by a ruse of the demons, who withdraw in order to get him to tarry among laypeople—thus, presumably, opening himself to sudden attack—or, even worse, rendering him a prey to the worst sin of all, pride.\textsuperscript{1039} Another method of demonic cunning is to withdraw the temptation for a while, allowing the monk to cultivate an appearance of piety and compunction, especially when women are present; he then takes to conversing with them on edifying subjects, so that “the wretched women run to the wolf as to a shepherd, and once habit and familiarity have been established, then the utterly wretched monk suffers the fall.”\textsuperscript{1040} The scene is familiar to us already from the sketch by Antiochus of Mar Saba. It shows that neither monk nor monastery were hermetically sealed from the outside world.

A less dire, even rather humorous, take on this necessary danger is John’s account of the stratagem of the same abbot mentioned above for killing two birds with one stone: whenever he

\textsuperscript{1038} \textit{Ladder} 5, 780ab.  
\textsuperscript{1039} \textit{Ladder} 15, 893ab.  
\textsuperscript{1040} Ibid. 893c.
saw a monk eager to meet visiting laypeople in order to show off his virtue, he would make a special point of insulting and shaming him in front of visitors, so that the monk would escape the temptations both of vainglory and of over-familiarity with people from the world. Nevertheless, John is ruthlessly clear on the dangers involved: “If one has visited or received laypeople and, because of their departure after an hour or a day, he is struck with the arrow of sorrow and not rather of joy as being released from a hindrance and trap, he is being mocked either by vainglory or by fornication.”

Ultimately, John Climacus offers a very strong form of the dual ethic which we are examining in this study. His view of the relation of monks to laypeople is a kind of generalization of Peter Brown’s model of “Holy Man as exemplar”:

Angels are a light to monks, and the monastic way of life is a light for all people.

Therefore let them struggle to be a good exemplar in everything, giving no cause of scandal to anyone (2 Cor. 6:3) in whatever they do or say. For if the light becomes darkness, then how dark will the darkness—that is, those in the world—become?

This exemplarity is demonstrated spectacularly in the miracles that are considered the domain of monks, mentioned before as a reason for embracing renunciation. He exhorts his audience not to disbelieve when hearing of the miracles wrought by monks—nor to despair that they will never

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1041 Ibid. 4, 697b.
1042 Ibid. 26b, 1072d: Εἴ τις πρὸς κοσμικοὺς ἢ παρεγένετο, ἢ ἐδέξατο, καὶ ἐπὶ τῶ οὗτῶν μετὰ τὴν ὥραν ἢ ἡμέραν χωρισμῷ λύπης βέλος ἐδέξατο, καὶ μὴ μᾶλλον χαρᾶς ὡς ἔμποδίου παγίδος ἀπαλλαγεῖς, οὕτως ἢ ὑπὸ κενοδοξίας ἢ ὑπὸ πορνείας ἐμπαίζετα. This wariness of lay interaction probably reflects, in addition to John’s own experience, his reading of Basil’s Rules. Further on in the same chapter he writes: “As those who are asleep are easily plundered, so are those who practice virtue near the world,” 1088c: Ἡ ὁπερ οἱ ὑπνώττοντες εὐχερῶς συλλόνται· οὕτως καὶ οἱ πλησίων κόσμου τὴν ἀρετὴν μετερχόμενοι.
1043 Ibid. 26, 1020d: φῶς μὲν μοναχοῦς ἄγγελοι· φῶς δὲ πάντων ἀνθρώπων μοναδική πολιτεία. Οὐκοῦν ἐν πάσι τούτος ἀγάθος γίνεσθαι ἄγωνιξέσθωσαν, μηδὲνι πρόσκομμα ἐν μηδὲνι διδόντες, ἐν οἷς ἄν ἐργάζονται, ἢ ἀποφθέγγονται. Εἰ γὰρ τὸ φῶς σκότος γίνεται, τὸ σκότος, ἡγουν οἱ κατὰ κόσμον, πόσον σκοτισθῆσονται;
attain such holiness.\textsuperscript{1044} This miraculous sanctity spills over into another model of the Holy Man, that of intercession, which leads John to call the perfect monk “ambassador for the world, compeller of God, concelebrator with the angels … savior of men, God over demons …”\textsuperscript{1045} But he also warns against trying to imitate the saints in concrete detail: “It is good to admire the labors of the saints; to emulate them effects salvation; but to wish to imitate every single element of their way of life is unreasonable and impossible.”\textsuperscript{1046} Though this counsel was directed toward monks themselves, it could also serve as an interpretive key for laypeople reading the \textit{Ladder} or any other monastic writing. Thus John left a rather complex legacy to Byzantine piety, monastic and lay. On the one hand, he decisively exalted monasticism as such over and above lay life, more strongly than most of the sources we have considered thus far. On the other hand, he humbled actual monks by emphasizing, again and again, their weakness and mortality. Monks were called to become angels, but angels who always had to be watchful over the liability of both soul and body to “theft” of their virtues by demonic insinuation.\textsuperscript{1047} One can be saved without miracles, but not without humility.\textsuperscript{1048}

Before concluding this overview of the teaching on laypeople in John Climacus, I wish to note two things. Firstly, the \textit{Discourse to the Shepherd}, which forms a kind of appendix to the \textit{Ladder}, is hardly more outward-looking, but it does sometimes hint at the role that a holy man

\textsuperscript{1044} \textit{Ladder} 26, 1013b and 26b, 1060d. \\
\textsuperscript{1045} \textit{Ladder} 26, 1017c. Note the sacerdotal, as well as divine, qualities suggested by this list, corresponding to Baynes’ notion that it was to the monk rather than the priest that the ordinary Byzantine turned for efficacious intercession with God (see \textit{Thought-World of East Rome}, 27, as discussed in the introductory chapter). \\
\textsuperscript{1046} \textit{Ladder} 4, 704c: τὸ μὲν θαυμάξειν τούς ἄγιων πόνους καλόν· τὸ δὲ ἔριεν σωτηρίας πρόξενον· τὸ δὲ ύψος ἐν τὴν ἐκείνου μιμεῖσθαι θέλει πολιτείαν, ἔλογον καὶ ἀμήχανον. \\
\textsuperscript{1047} John’s careful reinterpretation and synthesis of previous monastic thought on the “angelic life” of monks, tempering the exalted state with his sense of human fragility, is presented in Jonathan L. Zechar, “The Angelic Life in Desert and Ladder: John Climacus’s Re-Formulation of Ascetic Spirituality,” \textit{JECS} 21, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 111–36. \\
\textsuperscript{1048} \textit{Ladder} 25, 1000b.
tried and tested in the furnace of monastic training might play in the world as a pastor. Such a spiritual steward should, ideally, no longer need fountains of tears and labors for his own cleansing, but be able to offer them on behalf of others. John’s reference to an anonymous example may allude to Symeon of Emesa or another holy fool as the extreme case of such dispassion. In any case, he does suggest that such a one might offer such spiritual medicine “in incongruous places, that is to say more urban and pleasure-loving ones.” He is presented, as in the Ladder, in sacerdotal terms, purifying souls and offering them to God in a common liturgy with the angelic hosts, leading his charges into the Holy of Holies, where Christ lies as the sacrifice on the mystical altar. This work of the pastor is greater than any activity or contemplation of men or of angels. The language here harks back to the allegorical interpretation of the Eucharist by such authors as Evagrius, but it is probably meant to harmonize with the concrete liturgical celebration, since both the author John Climacus and the recipient John of Rhaithou were abbots, and hence most likely ordained priests.

Another clerical function over which the pastor is supposed to preside is the preservation of orthodoxy, which will then become an inheritance to his spiritual children and his children’s children. It is also something that can be offered to others, with proper discretion. The weak should not be allowed to dine with heretics, but the strong may go if invited, with faith to the

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1049 It has often been assumed that the Ladder uses the Regula pastoralis of Gregory the Great, which is said to have been translated into Greek during Gregory’s lifetime. The late dating of John now confirmed by Anastasius’ Tales strengthens the possibility of such a connection, although it has yet to be proven or even studied in great detail. Gregory is also known to have maintained close connections with the main monastery, that of the Burning Bush. If John was indeed influenced by the Regula, this might explain some of the elements that offer themselves to lay application.
1050 Shepherd 71, 1193a–c.
1051 Shepherd 87, 1196c: Ἑστιν ὅτε ὁ προεστὼς ἀκινδύνως τὴν ἁρετὴν κατεργάζεται ἐν ἄνοικείοις τόποις, ἣγουν πολιτικωτέροις καὶ φιληδόνοις.
1052 Shepherd 78, 1193cd; 90–93, 1197cd.
1053 Shepherd 77, 1193c.
1054 Note the explicit reference to the Eucharist, in a passage reflecting on fiery prayer, in Ladder 28, 1137c: Εἰ σῶμα σώματος προσφίσανθαν ἀλλοιοῦται τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ, πῶς δὴ ἀν καὶ οὐκ ἀλλοιωθῆσθαι ὁ θεοῦ σώματος ἀθώοις χερσὶ προσφυών; Shepherd 97, 1201a.
glory of God.\textsuperscript{1056} The proper context is defined in the \textit{Ladder}: those unbelievers or heretics with bad attitudes should only be afforded one or two conversations before rejecting them, but those who show good will and a desire to learn the truth should be afforded all solicitude.\textsuperscript{1057} Elsewhere John shows a capacity for applying the dogmatic definitions of Chalcedonian orthodoxy in practical and original ways. Thus he emphasizes Christ’s two wills and natures as an ascetic foundation for ascetic practice of the monk: “Some say that prayer is better than memory of one’s departure; but I hymn two essences in one hypostasis.”\textsuperscript{1058} This interest in promoting orthodoxy indicates yet again that for John Climacus monasticism, and by implication the Sinaïte community in particular, was potentially open to the lay world. We will now turn to Anastasius of Sinai, who demonstrates in great detail how this was actually achieved.

\textit{John Climacus and Anastasius}

Apart from an entry for his commemoration on April 21\textsuperscript{st} in the eleventh-century \textit{Synaxarion of Constantinople}, Anastasius’ biography is known only from his own works, and particularly from his two books of \textit{Tales} (\textit{Tales of Sinai} and \textit{Tales beneficial to the soul}), which since their critical edition by André Binggeli, can be used with confidence as authentic works of Anastasius.\textsuperscript{1059} A few later anecdotes from a \textit{paterikon} of Sinai also refer to our Anastasius,

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\textsuperscript{1056} \textit{Shepherd} 65, 1192a.
\textsuperscript{1057} \textit{Ladder} 26b, 1060d.
\textsuperscript{1058} \textit{Ladder} 28, 1137a; cf. 989df. on a trinity of repentance, mourning, and humility, distinct in their individual characteristics yet acting with one energy.
\textsuperscript{1059} Cited in the first note of this chapter. Apart from the text itself and translation, I have only been able to access Ch. 1 of vol. 2, “Anastase le Sinaïte: portrait d’un voyageur,” 330–62, where Binggeli summarizes the results of his work for the identity and biography of Anastasius. For a more accessible summary of arguments for Anastasius’ authorship and a summary of his biography, see the article by Binggeli’s doctoral advisor, Bernard Flusin, “Démons et sarrasins: L’auteur et le propos des Diégémata stèriktika d’Anastase le Sinaïte,” \textit{TM} 11 (1991): 381–409. The synaxarion entry can be found in \textit{Synaxarium CP}, April 21, no. 1. For a useful recent overview and bibliography of the course of scholarship on the corpus and identity of Anastasius, see the introduction to Anastasius of Sinai, \textit{Hexaemeron}, edited by John Baggarly and Clement Kuehn (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2007), XIII–LXXII.
\end{flushright}
providing some idea of local memory of him.\textsuperscript{1060} From Anastasius’ self-references we can gather that he was born around 630 in the town of Amathous on the south coast of Cyprus, where he became a monk and cleric in the retinue of the saintly local bishop John, his first spiritual father. He left the island with an ascetic companion named Stephen at some point after 653 (the date of the second Arab raid on Cyprus, which he mentions) and made his way to Jerusalem, where he was staying at a monastery on the Mount of Olives about the year 660.\textsuperscript{1061} By about 670 he had moved to Sinai, which remained his monastic home for the rest of his life. According to the later Sinai \emph{paterikon} he actually resided at the monastery of Rhaïthou on the southwestern coast of Sinai, the community to which John Climacus had directed his \emph{Ladder}.\textsuperscript{1062} In practice he was often absent, apparently using Sinai as a homebase for tours of teaching, preaching, and polemical debate throughout the formerly Roman Near East. In his writings he recalls visits to Alexandria, Babylon in Egypt (i.e. Old Cairo), the important port of Clysma on the Red Sea, the city of Laodicea toward Lebanon (near modern Homs in Syria), and Damascus; his geographical thought-world extended even farther, to Rome in the west and Constantinople in the north. His last dated work is from ca. 700, so he probably died soon after.\textsuperscript{1063}

His writings are voluminous and consist of three main categories of works: pastoral, polemical, and exegetical/speculative, although there is some overlap between these. Among the pastoral works are the \emph{Questions and Answers}, the \emph{Tales}, and various homilies, including ones

\textsuperscript{1060} Δηγήματα περὶ τῶν ἐν Σινᾶ πατέρων ("Appendice 1: La collection en chapitres") in Binggeli, "Anastase le Sinaïte," 265, edited from a manuscript in the Escorial.

\textsuperscript{1061} Binggeli, "Anastase le Sinaïte," 349 mentions the years 649 and 650 for the raids, but a more recent summary of this period in Cypriot history by Luca Zavagno, "At the Edge of Two Empires: The Economy of Cyprus between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (650s-800s CE)," \emph{DOP} 65/66 (2011–2012): 122–151, at 123, provides the dates I have given above.

\textsuperscript{1062} Binggeli, "Anastase le Sinaïte," 265.

\textsuperscript{1063} Two Homilies on the Creation of Man and Works against the Monotheletes 3.1 ll. 105–112; ed. Karl-Heinz Uthemann, \emph{Sermones duo hominis secundum imaginem Dei necnon opuscula adversus monothelitas} (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985), 61, where he refers to the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680–81) as having brought peace for twenty years, providing a \emph{terminus post quem} for this text.
On the Divine Liturgy, On the Sixth Psalm, and On the Departed.\textsuperscript{1064} The manuscript tradition of these writings, and especially of the first two, is very confused. This is due to the same problem we encountered in Ch. 5 with regard to the Spiritual Meadow: collections of edifying tales were considered fair game for division, excerpting, and interpolation by medieval scribes. The genre of questions and answers offered similar opportunities. Fortunately for the purposes of this study, a century and more of editorial work has produced reliable critical editions of both the \textit{Questions and Answers} and, as already mentioned, the \textit{Tales}. The former has been whittled down to the number of one hundred and three whereas the latter consists of two books, the first containing thirty-nine stories about Mt Sinai and its monks (more like the traditional \textit{Apophthegmata Patrum}) and the second giving twenty-eight stories of holiness outside Sinai, including some monks but focusing more on laypeople.\textsuperscript{1065} These are the main sources for lay piety in this chapter, so the lack of critical editions for the shorter and less informative sermons is not a great problem. The sermon \textit{On the Divine Liturgy}, however, possesses a detailed and unintentionally amusing description of the misbehavior of laypeople in attendance—or lack thereof—at the central sacramental act of the Church. The information from all these pastoral works combined presents us with a detailed and quite sympathetic picture of lay life in the time of Anastasius. There is certainly a rhetorical intention in all this. The \textit{Tales} has a strong apologetic emphasis, seeking to protect Christians against the inroads of Islam by confirming their faith in the miraculous power of Christianity; mention of the construction of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem as a contemporary project allows us to securely date the second book, at least, to 691–


\textsuperscript{1065} Binggeli retains some doubts about the attribution of \textit{Tales} 2.24–28 ("Anastase le Sinaïte," vol. 1, 570–77).
The Questions and Answers is less overtly polemical, but there are questions dealing specifically with Muslim doctrinal and political challenges. The genre of “questions and answers” has a long history in Christian literature. Many of its instances are highly stylized, scholastic textbooks, since it was considered a good form for pedagogy, as an extension of the dialogue form. Yet Anastasius’ work is one of the least stylized in this tradition. Doubtless the finished work reflects his selection and redaction of various questions he encountered in the course of his pastoral travels, but the nature of the questions as well as the answers tends to be very close to the concerns of daily life, so that the work has been studied by scholars as a unique window into lay piety in the period.\footnote{1066} The other pastoral works are marked by a similar practical concern.

The polemical and speculative/exegetical works have less direct relevance to the piety of layfolk, but nevertheless help fill out the picture of the religious world in which Anastasius moved. The main polemical work is the Guide (Hodēgos), a compilation of arguments against various heterodox parties, many of them taken from live debates Anastasius held with opponents in Alexandria and elsewhere. The materials contained therein probably date from a broad stretch of his career, but the first compilation took place in the early 680s, followed by revision and glossing by Anastasius himself in the early 690s.\footnote{1067} This text, like the Questions and Answers and Tales, also had a large and confused manuscript tradition; the excellent 1981 edition by Uthemann began the stream of modern critical editions that we can thankfully now rely on.


\footnote{1067} Edition: Karl-Heinz Uthemann, Viae dux (Turnhout: Brepols, 1981). He dates it to the late 680s (pp. ccxvii–ccxviii) but Binggeli has spotted some clues that it is actually to be dated a few years later (“Anastase le Sinaïte,” vol. 2, 341–44).
Three Homilies on the Creation of Man along with Six Chapters against the Monotheletes and a treatise Against the monophysites, edited in a single volume by Uthemann with a number of smaller pamphlets, are important doctrinal statements which also provide some unexpected gleanings for lay piety and expand theologically on certain themes that are also present in the pastoral works. Last among the polemical works is a Disputation against the Jews, from the period 661–680 based on its mention of the first Arabic attempts to mint coins. But the text as available in the old edition reprinted in the Patrologia Graeca is probably not genuine in its entirety.

Last but not least are the more speculative and exegetical works of Anastasius, namely the Hexaemeron and the sermon On the Transfiguration. The Hexaemeron is a long treatise attempting to salvage the insights of pre-Nicene exegetes, including the controversial Origen, in the context of a systematically allegorical or typological explanation of the first three chapters of the Book of Genesis. It bears some marks of oral delivery or the fiction thereof. Anastasius takes as his key the penultimate verse of the Pauline admonition concerning marriage, Ephesians 5:32: “And this is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” This unlocks to Anastasius a means of envisioning the nature and history of the Church in the world, as the bride of Christ the New Adam. Anastasius tries to squeeze metaphorical meaning out of every verse, even resorting to Origen’s Hexapla to support his interpretations with variant readings.

The attribution of the work to Anastasius was long doubted, but the new Greek edition—the first

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1068 Disputatio adversus Iudaeos PG 89: 1203–82; minting mentioned at 1224b.
1070 With respect to this work, Hans Urs von Balthasar calls Anastasius “the last of the great Alexandrians”: The Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor, translated by Brian Daley (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 357.
ever, since most of Migne’s text drew on the published Latin translation—all but confirms his authorship. Certain theological themes and turns of phrase therein closely match passages in the genuine works of Anastasius, and the text refers to other works on the creation of man, most likely the Two Sermons on the Constitution of Man.\(^{1072}\) The character of On the Transfiguration is much more spontaneous and exuberant. Unlike the workmanlike prose of the Hexaemeron, the sermon sparkles with a mystical intensity that links the monastic ideal of the vision of God with biblical and liturgical life through a meditation on the two holy mountains of Sinai and Tabor.\(^{1073}\) These two works, concerned with the ultimate end of both the Church as a transcendent community and the individual person as a participator in the divine effulgence, help to shed light back on the views of lay piety set down in Anastasius’ pastoral works.

This mystical dimension of Anastasius’ writings seems to bear the mark of his own experience; On the Transfiguration, in particular, exudes the enthusiasm of a visionary more than the cunning of a rhetor.\(^{1074}\) In his polemical writings Anastasius remarks several times on the need of personal experience of the Spirit’s grace in order to be able to properly theologize, and accuses his heretical opponents of lacking such credentials; and in general he emphasizes the

\(^{1072}\) One reason for doubt was the lack of a manuscript of the text before the fifteenth century. Baggarly and Kuehn argued that this may have been due to censorship, since some of the bolder ideas expressed by Anastasius, especially on the Eucharist, may err on the side of heterodoxy: Kuehn, “Anastasius of Sinai: Biblical Scholar,” 57–58. The exegetical key of Eph. 5:32 is also mentioned in a gloss to the first of the Two Sermons on the Constitution of Man (1.1 ll. 82–91); cf. also the long gloss at the end of that sermon where he says that he had a sudden intuition that all of the scriptural account of Creation mystically refers forward to the Incarnation.

\(^{1073}\) As recent work has noted, the sermon was clearly delivered on Tabor—perhaps during the time of Anastasius’ residence in Jerusalem, but also possibly on a later visit to Palestine—pace its first editor, André Guillou.

need for personal experience of the indwelling of Christ, as will be shown below.\textsuperscript{1075} He does not
go so far as to claim them for himself in those passages, but other ones imply them. One of his
*Tales* describes a visitation of the grace of God to a certain person spoken of in the third person,
in vivid language.\textsuperscript{1076} Flusin has argued very plausibly that Anastasius is echoing the apostle
Paul’s oblique description of his ecstatic visions in 2 Corinthians 12: “I know a man who was
taken up into the third heaven …” and that these stories in fact refer to Anastasius’ own
experience.\textsuperscript{1077} In the *Tales* he mentions that he had at least one monastic disciple, who at the
time of writing had moved on to become a stylite in Palestine; this shows that he was far enough
advanced in the monastic life that in the demanding atmosphere of Sinai he was considered fit to
be entrusted with the training of a younger monk.\textsuperscript{1078} The later tradition reflected in the
anonymous Sinai tales—probably written down relatively soon after his death—as well as the
eleventh-century *Synaxarion* remember him as a monk who excelled in virtues as well as in
knowledge.

Anastasius’ *Tales* are a key source for monastic life in the Sinai peninsula during the
seventh century. In fact he provides us with the only chronological point for the life of John
Climacus, his death ca. 669, although questions remain.\textsuperscript{1079} In the same lines he reveals that he
learned from John in person. His *Questions and Answers* also contain quotations and allusions to
the *Ladder*. Munitiz has noted several of these in his edition, including the discussion of tears at

\textsuperscript{1075} On the need for holiness and inspiration to theologize, see e.g. *Guide* 3.1 ll. 21–92 and 24 ll. 93–98; *Six Chapters against the Monotheletes* 6[10].5 ll. 90–102.
\textsuperscript{1076} *Tales* 2.19.
\textsuperscript{1077} Flusin, “Démons et Sarrasins,” 397–400.
\textsuperscript{1078} *Tales* 2.5.
\textsuperscript{1079} *Tales* 1.16, which begins “Last year when our new second Moses, the most saintly Abba John the
hēgoumen, was about to go to the Lord ...” (Caner, *History and Hagiography*, 183). This new dating takes
advantage of Binggeli’s critical work on the *Tales* (Caner, 183 n. 65). This story had been used before by
François Nau, “Note sur la date de la mort de S. Jean Climaque,” *BZ* 11, no. 1 (Jan. 1902): 35–37, to date the
death of John to 649 (based on his estimate of their composition) but had not found universal acceptance
because of the questions still surrounding the individual stories and their attribution to Anastasius of Sinai.
One of the clearest, however, escaped the editor’s notice: Anastasius exhorts his readers to love God at least as much as men love courtesans, and to fear him at least as much as men fear beasts. This is a composite of two passages in the Ladder, a loose paraphrase rather than exact quotation, suggesting that Anastasius was quoting from memory a text he had thoroughly absorbed—especially if, as a monk of Rhaïthou, he was actually one of its first readers or auditors. It is also possible that some or all of the parallels with the Ladder come directly from the oral teaching of John or other monks who had heard it, such as his namesake abbot John of Rhaïthou. Anastasius thus offers us a tantalizing glimpse into such a setting where the spoken word was actually in the process of being written down. Such echoes of Climacus in Anastasius are one way in which the forbiddingly monastic Ladder could be made accessible to laypeople.

Bringing such spiritual wisdom to bear was always necessary, but especially so in the historical circumstances in which Anastasius and his audience found themselves. This was the world of the early Islamic caliphate, when the entire Roman Near East had been overrun by Arab warriors bearing a new religion, changing drastically both the political and religious power structure. The extent to which Islam was coherent or threatening to Christianity as a religious system at this time continues to be debated by contemporary scholars, and in any case, the vast majority of the inhabitants of the Near East were still Christian during Anastasius’ lifetime. Anastasius’ works are, in fact, a witness to several characteristic Muslim doctrines at an early stage, as well as of attempts to lure or pressure Christians into conversion, though these seem

\[\text{QA 91.3–4; cf. Ladder 1 (637b) and 26 (1024b).}\]

somewhat rare and take place in a context of patronage. What is more prominent and more pressing in these writings is the social and spiritual dislocation that the Arab conquests entailed. Christians were enslaved by the thousands. Apart from the possibility of brutal and debilitating conditions—including sexual slavery and forced labor in mines and harbors—in general, such believers found it difficult to practice the common rituals that, for them, largely constituted Christian identity. Either because of the hostility of their masters, limited resources, or isolation from Christian communities, slaves worried about their inability to fast, attend the church offices, and receive the Eucharist.

In addition to such day-to-day challenges, the entire socio-political status of the Chalcedonian orthodox Church, changed at the coming of Islam. Although it may not have been as much of a target of Arab suspicion as is often suggested, the simple fact that the orthodox emperor of Constantinople no longer reigned over the oriental provinces meant that his co-religionists no longer stood dominant over monophysites and other doctrinal adversaries. They could no longer count on imperial support to fund them, protect them, or suppress their competitors. The removal of these secular advantages had potentially dangerous consequences for the spiritual state of Chalcedonians, as suddenly their faith had to stand on its own theological merits. Thus the main polemical challenge Anastasius faced was not Islam, but the familiar specter of Monophysitism, in its various branches. The doctrines of monoenergism and monotheletism espoused by emperor Heraclius and his successors until 680 meant that not even Constantinople could always be regarded as orthodox by Anastasius and other dyotheletes under

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1082 A major exception is the forced conversion of the Arabs of Sinai, described by Anastasius in Tales 2.8. This may be part of a tendency among Muslims to see their religion as the faith of the Arabs, but there is no evidence for such an ideology in Anastasius’ record of the event. For Anastasius’s views of Islam, see Sidney H. Griffith, “Anastasios of Sinai, the Hodegos, and the Muslims,” GOTR 32, no. 4 (1987): 341–58 and Robert G. Hoyland, Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997), 92–103.
Arab rule. Even after the Sixth Ecumenical Council had ended the official endorsement of monotheletism by the emperor and patriarch of Constantinople, the heresy had become strongly established in large areas of the Near East, and it would be many decades before the full reconciliation of most Chalcedonians to the teaching of Maximus and the Sixth Council. Thus Anastasius’ polemics against monotheletism were not a scholastic exercise in response to a distant court that would never read them, rather they addressed a pressing need in his own back yard. Yet another formidable foe was Judaism, many of whose adherents had tried to use the military and political vicissitudes of the seventh century to shake off the Roman yoke and improve their lot. As we will see from Anastasius’ writings below, the Muslim authorities sometimes allowed Jewish officials to lord it over Christians; perhaps this was an indication of a sense of common interest in a monolithic monotheism as against the Trinitarian beliefs of Christians. Likewise, anti-Jewish arguments honed over the course of the seventh century could readily be converted, implicitly or explicitly, into arguments against the newest Abrahamic faith.

In the midst of these challenges, two places stood as continuing beacons of orthodoxy: Jerusalem and Sinai. The main shrines of both continued in orthodox hands—Anastasius emphasizes this as a proof of the truth of the Chalcedonian faith—and they both continued to attract pilgrims. In such places one could see the orthodox faith vindicated by miraculous signs and consult venerable holy men, who would dispense both doctrinal and practical counsel. Their libraries also served as reservoirs of orthodox proof-texts. Anastasius drew on these resources but also spread them abroad. From his writings we can tell that he did not remain isolated in his cell either at Jerusalem or Sinai, but that he ranged far and wide refuting heretics and exhorting the faithful. In both his written and oral pastoral labors, then, he bears a striking resemblance to his illustrious predecessors, Sophronius and Moschus. Other pastoral elements in his writings

1083 And in the case of the Maronites, several centuries.
echo the concerns of Antiochus of Mar Saba and Anthony of Choziba, while his recounting of the persecution of Christians by their new lords, up to and including martyrdom, continues the revival of martyric piety found in the corpus of Anastasius the Persian. We can thus use his writings to trace the development of elements of lay piety from Chapter Four.

*Anastasius’ motivation: pastoral ecclesiology*

Anastasius saw himself first and foremost as a dedicated servant of the Church. For him, she is not a mere institution, but the Bride of Christ and all-embracing mother of the faithful whose praises he sings in the last few paragraphs of the *Hexaemeron*.

You are blessed, then, among women. You are the only life and bearer of life, you are the mother of the faithful and the brightly shining mother of Christ. You are the Church, the wife of the spiritual Adam, of God. And blessed is the fruit of your womb: the people of the living beings, the nations … All the other faiths are strangers to him, since they belong to another and are alien. He built you up as his home and wife. All the other women, the other churches in the world, were not of such quality and were left behind; they remained in error. You alone are bone from the bones of his hard divinity, and flesh from the flesh of his humanity, in which he concealed his uncrushable godhead.¹⁰⁸⁴ … What a wonder! You alone have become a helper to man and to God, your helper and protector. You labor, teach, preach, illuminate, bring back, and call to him, as if to the light, those who sit in the

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¹⁰⁸⁴ *Hex. XII.v.1: Εὐλογημένη λοιπόν σύ ἐν γυναιξί, μόνη ζωῆ καὶ ζωτόκος μήτηρ τῶν πιστῶν, παλύφωτε μήτηρ Χριστοῦ ἐκκλησία, ἡ σούχυς τοῦ πνευματικοῦ Λαός τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ εὐλογημένος ὁ καρπὸς τῆς κοιλίας σου, ὁ λαὸς τῶν ζώων Θεοῦ … [Σύ πλευρά καὶ μέρος καὶ μέλος τοῦ Λαός Θεοῦ] τῶν λοιπῶν παισών πίστεων ξένων αὐτοῦ καὶ ἄλλοτριών καὶ ἄλλοφύλων οὐσῶν. Σὲ ἑκδόθησαι εἰς ἐαυτοῦ ὅικον καὶ γυναῖκα τῶν λοιπῶν γυναικῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν τῶν ἐν κόσμῳ, τῶν μὴ τοιούτων καταλελειμμένων, μενασάων τῇ πλάνῃ. Σὺ καὶ μόνη ὡστοῦ ἐκ τῶν ὡστῶν τῆς στερρᾶς θεότητος αὐτοῦ καὶ σάρξ ἐκ τῆς σαρκός τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος αὐτοῦ, ἐν ἡ ἕκρυψε τὴν θεότητα αὐτοῦ ἀσύντριπτον, τὸ ὡστὸν γὰρ αὐτοῦ οὐ συντριβήσεται. Translations of the *Hexaemeron* here and elsewhere are taken from Baggary and Kuehn, occasionally with slight emendations by me.
darkness and shadow of death. You give birth and rebirth, and you give nourishment with the Bread and give drink with the Cup. You cause increase and fruitfulness, and plant and graft each day your orchards and gardens and herds, who are your children.  

These words indicate the exalted role and status of the Church; she herself is divine by virtue of her generation from the “bones of his firm divinity” and she is the helpmate of God in her motherly care for her faithful children. Thus she is the source of the pastoral labors of men such as Anastasius, and accordingly he prays to her for the resources to complete his task:

You have been my nourishing mother ever since my childhood and from my ancestors. Do not cease from giving me abundantly your breast of clean and guileless milk, the Word, so that from you I might suckle you and your lambs, the teachers. Do not cease, Church of God, pure dove of the Holy Spirit, your inhabitation and stirring in my heart and giving birth to many fledglings through me. The turtledove of Christ, you who have and love but one husband, do not refuse to give me food, the seed from your mouth to mine, so that I in turn might feed you and your nestlings. Do not grow quiet, O heavenly singer, always chanting and resounding in my ears with divine melodies, so that they may echo forever in your nest and enchant your fledglings that are there. Do not pause, O eternally youthful spring of life, from bubbling up for us from your contemplation of Eden, the living, clear, and untroubled streams of Paradise. Fill your rational and animate flocks of sheep, which will receive your living water. [...] Finally after and before all these things, since through God you became a helper to man and are thus known to him, do not cease governing and helping your ambassadors in every season, place, and deed. They willingly offer their life

\[1085\] Hex. XII.v.5: Ό τοῦ θαύματος, Σύ μόνη γέγονας βοηθός τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, τῷ βοηθῷ καὶ σκεπαστῇ σου Θεῷ, κοπιῶσα, διδάσκουσα, κηρύττουσα, φωτίζουσα, ἐπιστρέφουσα, καλοῦσα πρὸς αὐτὸν ὡς πρὸς φῶς τοὺς ἐν σκότει καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου καθημένους, ἀναγεννώσα καὶ γεννώσα καὶ τρέφουσα τῷ ἄρτῳ καὶ ποτίζουσα τῷ ποτηρίῳ καὶ αὔξουσα καὶ καρποφοροῦσα καὶ ἐγκεντρίζουσα καὶ φυτεύουσα καὶ ὕσσωμαι τοὺς σοὺς κήπους καὶ παραδείσους καὶ σὰς ἀγέλας τέκνα.
and limb for you. And with so much power as they have, they help their helper without
delay. Every day they die for you. They stretch out their neck to the sword and joyfully
pour out their blood for you. And so they complete this whole race of the competition and
finish the labor in your defense against your enemies. They do this to exalt your horn, and
to gore and destroy your adversaries with the two horns of your Lamb and God—his two
natures or energies or wills. He alone, through you, is our God.\footnote{Hex. XII.v.6: ... δέομαι σου και ἀντιβολῶ ὡς ἐμής εξ ἀπαλῶν ὄνυχων και ἐκ προγόνων ὑπαρχούσης μητρὸς και τροφοῦ, μη παύσῃ τὸν σὸν μοι τοῦ καθαροῦ και ἀδόλου τοῦ λόγου γάλακτος ἐπιδιδούσα πλούσιως μαζὸν, ὅπως ἐκ σοῦ σὲ καὶ τοὺς σοὺς καλῶς θηλάσσῃ διὰ σιδερόσκαλος. Μη παύσῃ, ἡ τοῦ ἄγιου Πνεύματος ἄσπιλος περιστερὰ ἐκθλησία θεοῦ, ἐν τῇ ἐμή καρδίᾳ ἐνοικούσα και ἐμπεριπατοῦσα και πολλῶς νεοσσός δι' ἐμὸν γεννώσα. Μη ἀπαξιώσῃς, ἡ φιλάνδρε καὶ μόνανδρε τοῦ Χριστοῦ τρυγών, ἐκ τοῦ σοῦ στόματος ἐν τῷ στόματι μου χορηγεῖν τὴν βρόώσιν τοῦ σπόρου, ὅπως ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἀντιθρέψῃ σὲ καὶ τοὺς σοὺς ἐν τῇ σῇ καλλίᾳ νεοτοῦς. Μὴ σιγήσῃς, ἡ ὀφραντὰ ἀριδῶν, αἰεῖ ἄδουσα καὶ ἐνηχώουσα μοι τοὺς ὡς τὰ θεία λυγύρισματα εἰς τὸ αἰεὶ περιπτάσθαι τῇ σῇ νοσίοι καὶ καταβῆλεν τὰ στροφεῖα σοῦ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ. Μη ἀναβάλῃς ὁ ἄνεναις πηγή τῆς ζωῆς, ἢντα τοῦ παραδέουσα ἀναβάλιουσα ἡμῖν ἐκ τῆς Ἑδὲμ θεωρίας τὰ διειθνὲς σοῦ καὶ ἀθάνατα νάματα εἰς τὸ πληρῶν ὡς τὸν τοῦ ἀντιθρέψῃς τῶν προβάτων ἄγελας δειμένας, [...]Μετά δὴ ταῦτα πάντα καὶ πρὸ τοῦτων, ὡς βοηθὸς τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ γενωμένῳ ὑπὸ θεῶν καὶ γνωριζομένῃ, μη παύσῃ προϊσταμένῃ καὶ βοηθοῦσα ἐν παντὶ καρῷ καὶ τόπῳ καὶ πράγματι τοῖς ὑπὲρ σοῦ πρεβείοναι, καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ σάρκα τὴν ἐποίησαν διὰ σοῦ ἐτοίμως τιθείσαι, καὶ ὡς δύναμις ἡ τῇ βοηθὸ πάνως βοηθοῦσα, καὶ καθ’ ἑμεῖς ὑπὲρ σοῦ ἀπόπνησικαί, καὶ τὸν ἄλλον τράχηλον ἔφεβε, καὶ τὸ αίμα ὑπὲρ σοῦ εὐφύσχος κενοῦσαι, καὶ τόνδε ἡ ἀπάνοι τοῦ τοῦ ἔγινες δρόμῳ καὶ πῶς κατὰ τῶν σών ἐγραφῶν ὑπὲρ τῆς σῆς ἀπολογίας ἀνύσασιν εἰς τὸ τὸ σῶν κέρας ἀνυψώσαις, τοὺς δὲ σοὺς ἀντιδίκους τοῖς δυσὶ κέρασι τοῦ σοῦ ἀμνοῦ καὶ θεοῦ, ταῖς φύσεσιν ἡ ἐνεργειαὶ ἡ θελήσεις, κερατίσαι καὶ ἀπολέσας, ὅτι αὐτὸς διὰ σοῦ μονὸς θεὸς ἡμῶν ...}
tragedies, and triumphs. His concern is not so much to narrate it in detail, with specific episodes (as does with his historical review of heresies in the *Hodegos* and the *Sermones duo*) as to set up general categories. Thus in Book III, he interprets the division into various bodies of water on the third day as the degeneration of the primordial unity of humanity in the one catholic faith, caused by the devil and by the corrupt hearts of men.\(^{1087}\) In the next book, the periodic waning of moon is seen to symbolize the waning of Church through afflictions, such as heresies and persecutions, and its waxing as renewal; furthermore, the four quarters of the moon are types of the four phases of church history, namely birth, persecution, heresy, and end times.\(^{1088}\) In keeping with this, the stars in their varying intensities and groupings and in their temporal movements are taken as signs of the varied categories of saints—apostles, martyrs, wonder-workers, teachers—and their temporal succession in response to the changing circumstances of ecclesiastical history.\(^{1089}\) In Book V the role of baptism is found in the differentiation between sea creatures (baptized and hence reborn) and land creatures (unbaptized and hence unregenerate),\(^{1090}\) while the creation of birds further subdivides the destinies of the baptized believers into those who soar with heavenly virtue and those who remain in the waters without making much of the gift of baptism.\(^{1091}\)

The Church alone fulfills the function of Eve as a helper for Adam.\(^{1092}\) Anastasius implies that she existed in some sense even before the coming of Christ, the New Adam who

\(^{1087}\) *Hex.* III.v.3 and x.2.

\(^{1088}\) *Hex.* IV.vii.4 and 7.

\(^{1089}\) *Hex.* IV.ix.5-6, x.1. He mentions wonder-working saints before martyrs, but I think they are probably supposed to correspond to the great monastic wonder-workers, who came after the age of martyrs (approximately).

\(^{1090}\) *Hex.* V.iii.1–3.

\(^{1091}\) *Hex.* V.v.3–4. In vi.3–4 he reads God's special command to birds to increase and multiply as a sign of God's special care that the spiritually advanced believers, who are few, continue to be recruited.

\(^{1092}\) *Hex.* X.i.1. This is due to Anastasius' observation that actual physical women have only brought trouble to the world; on his views regarding women and sexuality, see further below.
recalled her from her adultery and apostasy and made her the Mother of Life. In this Anastasius follows the Old Testament presentation of Israel as the unfaithful wife of God, but he also seems to consider the type as a more general symbol of all of humanity. She alone is hostile to the Serpent of old, whereas all other women—i.e. all other religions—are his lovers and auxiliaries. Even if they perform religious rites, they are pleasing to the Serpent and not to Christ. By contrast, the weapons of the Church against the Serpent are her various rites: the Cross, the Eucharist, prayers, supplications, vigils, and more. Witnesses to this struggle are the various categories of the faithful: Anastasius’ audience who listen to the word of God and are in danger daily for the faith of this Church, the ascetics who fight the contest in deserts and caves, the pastors who instruct those being catechized and baptized to renounce the allegiance of the Serpent. In the end, only she is the mother of the living, so that with the approaching last days, as the fourth beast of Daniel (the Christian Roman Empire) declines, only her children will be found in the Book of Life.

Thus in this brief overview of the historical, sociological, and sectarian character of the Church as presented in Anastasius’ exegesis, we see the themes that are recapitulated in the eloquent concluding section already quoted. The pastoral import of these themes is reinforced in the second book of the Tales, drawing on imagery from earlier classical and Christian authors.

1093 Hex. Xxi.2.
1094 idem. and more clearly at Xli.15: ἡ δὲ παρουσία αὐτοῦ ἡ ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ πρὸς τοὺς ἀμαρτήσαντες γενομένη τύπος ἢν ἀφευδής τῆς ἐπιδημίας αὐτοῦ, ἢν ἐπουήσατο πρὸς τὴν πλανηθείσαν γυναῖκα Ἐδαν ἐκκλησίαν φύσιν ἄνθρωπίνην ...
1095 Hex. Xli.11.
1096 Hex. Xli.13.
1097 Hex. Xli.8. Compare this brief list to the emphases on pious rituals in the Tales.
1098 Hex. Xli.9. The mention of his audience in danger suggests some kind of persecution, possibly at the hands of Muslims or adherents of one of these other religions.
1099 Hex. Xlii.1-3.
Moved with zealous emulation of the eloquence of the sweet swallows and looking to the love of chastity and tenderness toward their offspring of the turtledoves, and setting aside all sloth I have assiduously set out on this road with a honey-producing yearning …

Yearning for the Church has goaded me, as has the affection of a good shepherd, who sings with flute and reed and makes the pasture delicious for the flock. For man shall not live on bread alone, as the heavenly bread says, he who became man, but on every word and good tale spoken by the mouth of God. For where the flock suffers a famine of hearing the word of God, there in very truth the sheep have failed for lack of food. Indeed, good tales brighten the Church of God with joy, they strengthen in godly knowledge, they rouse souls toward God, they turn them back from deception, they wake up the indifferent, they firm up the shaken, they soothe the scandalized, they pierce the hard-hearted with compunction, they illumine the foolish. And every God-inspired and beneficial scripture testifies to this; among which are to be found the present tales, of which the hearing is verily life eternal in Christ Jesus our Lord …

The mention of “honey-producing yearning” alludes to the image of a bee culling nectar from different flowers, a metaphor beloved of the Church Fathers and especially prominent in the *Spiritual Meadow*, the closest antecedent to Anastasius’ *Tales*. Both texts share the goal of imparting instruction to believers, lay and monastic, through entertaining and edifying stories collected from the lore of the Christian world. Anastasius is clearly concerned that believers face a dearth of such instruction, but is optimistic about the beneficial effects it has when properly furnished. Most striking of all is his claim that his own collection is a form of Scripture. This broad notion of the category of sacred writings is characteristic of many writers in the Byzantine

\[1100\] *Tales* 2.Prol.
tradition, who were keen to draw from the continually accumulating store of authoritative patristic texts as well as the canonical Old and New Testaments. For such authors, the primary criterion of inspired scripture was that it be inspiring, i.e. that it produce the effects listed by Anastasius in this passage. We have seen how John the Almsgiver, as presented in the Life by Leontius of Neapolis, based his personal and pastoral piety on the precepts of the Gospel as enriched by striking anecdotes from various paterika. Anastasius, however, does recognize a distinct hierarchy among the sacred texts: “Firstly, because the Scripture is the ruler and mistress of all the other ecclesiastical writings and fathers; secondly, because every sound of the Law and the Apostles is uncorrupted and irrefutable …”\textsuperscript{1101}

The practical result of Anastasius’s pastoral devotion to the Church was concern for the salvation of his audience. This required both right belief and right practice. He had a “high spirituality” which emphasized the inner life of the believer without disregarding the importance of creeds and material, sacramental rituals of the Church. Faith, for him, was an inward disposition toward the truth, and could advance from faith based on hearing the proclamation of truth to that based on experiencing its reality.\textsuperscript{1102}

True faith entailed orthodoxy, “an unerring notion of God and creation; or a true conception of everything; or an opinion of things as they [really] are.”\textsuperscript{1103} The latter definition is a tall order, even for an erudite theologian. Anastasius’ own thought strictly followed Chalcedonian orthodoxy on the central dogmas of the Trinity and Christology and in the central rituals of liturgical participation in psalmody, prayer, preaching, and the Eucharist. He demanded a certain unhesitating faith in the revealed truth of Christianity, without prying into the words

\textsuperscript{1101} Hod. 6.2.54–63. Cf. Antiochus’ introduction to his Pandect discussed in Ch. 4.
\textsuperscript{1102} Hod. 2.6.
\textsuperscript{1103} Ibid.
and deeds of God in Scripture. Yet farther on in the very same passage, he displays his marked speculative tendency, especially on questions of creation and anthropology, drawing on both scientific theories about the material world and allegorical exegesis of the Bible. His practical concerns, polemic and pastoral, often drove his speculative forays, as he searched for more convincing and more applicable answers to these pressing questions.

Guarding the limits of the Church

Having seen in brief how Anastasius’ mystical vision of the Church informed his pastoral self-consciousness, let us consider how he demarcated and defended the borders of the true Church. Anastasius had a clear sense of the strict visible and notional boundaries of this Church. His polemical works show that, doctrinally, he would brook no compromise. In response to the question whether an unbeliever, Jew, or Samaritan who does much good might enter the kingdom of heaven, Anastasius replies with a flat denial. Although not mentioned in that categorical response, the various Christian heresies, especially the branches of Monophysitism and Monotheletism, come in for the most vituperative and detailed refutation. In the Hodegos he deploys the arsenal of scriptural, patristic, and philosophical arguments that had developed up

1104 QA 22.1.
1105 QA 7. “Unbeliever” here probably refers to both pagans and Muslims lumped together. In the following question Anastasius rebuts a possible objection to his view (QA 8), but in the one after that he allows the possibility that innocent children of non-believers, who have no opportunity to choose the true faith, might escape eternal damnation, but he consigns them to a Limbo-like place (QA 9). For this middle space between heaven and hell, see the discussion of the fate of the soul of the wealthy Cypriot Philentolos who gave alms generously but was also addicted to fornication, in Tales 2.25 (Binggeli ), examined in François Halkin, “La vision de Kaïoumos et le sort éterel de Philentolos Olympiou,” AB 63 (1945): 56–65 and idem, “Entre ciel et enfer. Philentolus,” AB 90 (1972): 323–27. For a contrasting viewpoint on unbelievers see the opinion of George of Chozeba, mentioned in Ch. 5.

1106 In QA 13 and 14, Anastasius discusses the reasons for receiving converts from heresy through laying-on of hands rather than baptism. He even acknowledges that heresy stems from ignorance (QA 13) but does not seem to extrapolate from that to a more general leniency toward those outside the pale of the Church. Incidentally, QA 13 provides a more confident answer to the problem of the respective gravity of the sins of heresy and fornication that was mentioned by John Climacus as a mystery in Ladder 15 (PG 88: 889b). Cf. Tales 1.9, which shows concern for heresy as an unforgivable sin.
to his time. Indeed, it serves as a kind of reference work for such arguments, and was thus employed by later generations. The *Sermons on the Creation of Man* form another line of polemical attack, using a more creative method of sustained scriptural exegesis to present a cogent case for the orthodox dyothelete position. The *Hexaemeron* follows a similar method but its polemics are more diffuse, directed both against Jewish and literalist Christian interpretations of Genesis. The tone of the *Sermons* and the *Hexaemeron* suggests that they may have been directed at educated laypeople as well as monks and clergy.¹¹⁰⁷

The *Hodegos*, with its extremely detailed exploration of technical terms and long patristic florilegia, seems to have been primarily intended for elite theologians like himself, who would in turn draw on it in their own defenses of orthodoxy. Yet this does not mean that it was irrelevant to laypeople. The public debates that are described therein would probably have had more than a few lay spectators, so it was important that, even if they did not fully understand the arguments, they be sufficiently impressed by his point-scoring to come away with an impression of the correctness of the orthodox position; later orthodox debaters reading the *Hodegos* would then be encouraged to try to replicate such performances using Anastasius as a template.¹¹⁰⁸ One particular debate in Alexandria vividly illustrates such a scenario. It was the sequel to a previous debate where he had worsted the local monophysite clergy, leading them to accuse him of “disturbing the city and its populace and their church” by staging a scene.¹¹⁰⁹ His opponents attempted to recoup their defeat by bringing in a more skilled debater from Egypt, for a sequel

¹¹⁰⁷ Cf. the detailed dogmatic epistles of Maximus the Confessor to lay imperial officials.
¹¹⁰⁸ Cf. Gregory of Nyssa’s famous characterization of theological interest among the lower classes of Constantinople (*De deitate Filii et Spiritus sancti et in Abraham*, PG 46: 557b); although about three hundred years later, we should not assume that this inquisitive and argumentative spirit had disappeared from the denizens of the post-Roman Near East. For a roughly contemporary Jewish-Christian public debate, see *The Trophies of Damascus*, edited by Gustave Bardy, *Les Trophées de Damas*, in PO 15 (1927), 169–292.
¹¹⁰⁹ *Hod*. 10.3: ἐκ τῆς γεγενημένης αὐτοῦ υἱ’ ἡμῶν δραματουργίας ... ὡς δήθεν παραζαντος τὴν πόλιν καὶ τὸν λαόν καὶ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν αὐτῶν.
“in the presence of the prefect and in the public hearing of the city.”1110 In the brief encounter that ensued in the praetorium, Anastasius used astute (not to say sophistical) argumentation to trick his opponents into signing a seemingly monophysite confession of faith, using pen and paper borrowed from the official notaries of the prefect. He promised to join them in Eucharistic communion based on the confession, since it was a Sunday morning. He then grasped the beard of their leader gently and revealed that the wording of the confession could be read in an orthodox Chalcedonian light. Anastasius emphasizes that he did this gently: it was not a physical assault, but rather an ironic use of the ancient Greek gesture of supplication.1111 Anastasius placed his opponent in a physically awkward position, and by surprising and as it were disarming him, sought to force him to make some kind of decisive reply. The monophysites tried to retrieve the paper in vain, but Anastasius boasted that he would only surrender it to Christ to their condemnation on the Day of Judgment.

The participation of the laity in this theatrical disputation, as both actors and spectators, is essential. The prefect presides, his notaries supply the necessary paperwork, the audience witnesses the beard-grabbing climax; this all takes place on a Sunday soon before the divine liturgy, the central gathering of the ecclesiastical community.1112 Thus Anastasius impresses orthodoxy on them all in a very public, and even entertaining, way. It is also notable that this scene, with its elaborate theater of late Roman bureaucratic pomp and circumstance, took place under Arab rule. As is known from other sources, the title of augustal prefect of Alexandria

1110 Ibid. κατὰ παρουσίαν τοῦ αὐγουσταλίου ἐπὶ δημοσίας ἀκοῆς καὶ τῆς πόλεως. For the augustalis see the comment below.

1111 "gently" = ἠρέμα τῇ χειρὶ ἀφάμενος τοῦ πόσωνος αὐτοῦ (ibid.). Supposedly, “to seize an Arab by his beard is not merely a rude assault, but an unpardonable insult,” from Campbell Bonner, “A Tarsian Peculiarity (Dio Prus. Or. 33),” Harvard Theological Review 35 (1942): 4. Perhaps this modern Arabic etiquette was already in effect, but I think the ancient Greek meaning more likely, for the reasons given above. My thanks to Alexander Petkas for his helpful suggestions on this point.

1112 On the notaries: Καὶ λαβὼν χάρτην καὶ καλαμάριν παρὰ τῶν παρεστώτων νοταρίων τῷ αὐγουσταλίῳ ἔγραψα σύτως (Hod. 10.3).
continued to be used, and the office filled by Christians, until the early eight century, while the administrative machinery inherited from the Byzantines was maintained by the Arabs with little change in the first century of their rule.¹¹¹³

The Questions and Answers and the Tales include polemical points geared for a less-educated lay audience. In general Anastasius dissuaded laypeople themselves from engaging in polemical debate. If questioned by a heretic, he instructs them to respond “I am an unlearned person, but if you really and truly seek to know the truth, go to the Church and there you will learn what is the right-minded religion.”¹¹¹⁴ In the follow-up question, when pressed to supply some kind of rebuttal to such challenges, he recommends the following argument: if one likens the holy sites of Old and New Testament to the treasures of a king, one notes that they have been entrusted by the heavenly King only to the catholic (Chalcedonian) church, and have always been possessed by it, even under unbelieving rulers such as the Arabs.¹¹¹⁵ The proof is rather simplistic but has the advantage of dealing in striking metaphors and concrete facts.

Yet Anastasius realized that believers could not completely avoid religious discussions and he responds to several questions relaying challenges posed by heterodox. We should note, however, that these are questions with more or less direct implications for moral practice. One question witnesses to early Muslim belief in predestination: “Some people, turning away from God and the holy Church along with this race affirm, ‘Whom God wishes to save, he is saved,


¹¹¹⁵ See discussion of Anastasius’ reaction to the construction of the Dome of the Rock below.
and whom God destroys, is destroyed,’ and they quote to support them the saying of the Apostle [followed by Rom. 9:15]…”1116 Such a belief clearly had practical implications, since it might justify complete moral irresponsibility—including willingness to apostasize from Christianity, if such a move were predetermined by God.1117 This seems to be the situation of the people who originally raised the point, who had “turned away.” Anastasius, in a characteristically caustic aside, remarks that not even Satan would dare to claim such a thing about God, but that the Arabs are more impious than demons.1118

Two other questions in the collection address polygamy, an issue in which Muslim influence could tempt Christians to blur the lines of moral conduct even without actual conversion to Islam. I will quote here only the second question:

Q. Very many people, not only among the non-believers but even among believers, because of their leaning toward the polygamy permitted in the Law, quote at us the saying of the Lord which states, “I have not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfil it (Mt 5:17). What reply ought we to make about this?1119

Anastasius’s answers here and in response to the other question on the same topic rely on supersessionism. Whereas the carnal people of the Old Testament were only expected to practice piety and justice in judgment, “we who have been purchased with the blood of Christ ought to show all chastity and self-control”; hence, he concludes, “desiring different women happens

1116 QA 99.1. Τινὲς ἀποστάντες ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τῆς ἁγίας ἐκκλησίας μετὰ τοῦ ἑθνος τοῦτον λέγουσιν, ὅτι ὁ θεὸς σωθῆται σώζεται καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἀπόλλει, ἀπόλλεται, φέροντες καὶ τὸ ῥήτον τοῦ Ἀπόστολου εἰς μαρτυρίαν ...
1117 QA 93 addresses another belief with moral repercussions, this time the old question of whether hell was a permanent state or would have an end. Apparently the official condemnation of Origenist/Evagrian beliefs in the sixth century had completely excised the problem.
1119 Anastasius of Sinai, qu. resp. 100: Πολλοὶ τῶν ἀπίστων, οὐ μόνον δὲ ἄλλα καὶ τῶν πιστῶν, προσκείμενοι τῇ πολυγαμίᾳ τῇ νομικῇ, προφέρουσιν ἡμῖν τὸν τοῦ Κυρίου λόγον τὸν φάσκοντα, ὅτι Οὐκ ἠλθον καταλύσαι τὸν Νόμον, άλλα πληρώσαι. Τί οὖν χρή ἡμᾶς περὶ τοῦτον ἀποκρίνεσθαι;
among us due to wantonness and lack of fear of God.”

This emphasis on sexual restraint is of a piece with Anastasius’s general ascetical vision, and would also have an important continuing role in Christian polemics against Islam.

The relation of marriage to confessional divisions was a particularly pressing issue for laypeople. In the local context of tight-knit communities, social and economic pressures—and probably often romance between potential spouses—made it difficult to resist mixed marriages. Though forbidden by canonical legislation, they were probably a common occurrence, especially between Christians of different confessions, since around the same time Anastasius was writing, the Council in Trullo held in Constantinople felt the need to reconfirm older canons prohibiting it. They might even be justified by resort to a scriptural proof, as in this question in Anastasius’ collection: “Since the Apostle says, ‘For the unbelieving husband is sanctified’ if his wife is believing, and likewise ‘the unbelieving wife’ (1 Cor 7.14) if the husband is believing, is it then permitted for a Christian to take to wife an unbeliever or heathen?”

His response restates the canonical prohibition, explaining how it does not contradict the apostolic teaching, since the latter refers only to marriages contracted before coming to the faith. Anastasius’ concern for the purity of the Church is demonstrated by his concluding remark: “Since after

1120 ἡμεῖς δὲ οἱ τῷ αἵματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἁγιασθέντες, χρεωστοῦμεν πᾶσαν ἐνδείξασθαι σωφροσύνην καὶ φιλοσοφίαν … τὸ δὲ ἐπιθυμεῖν διαφόρων γυναικῶν ἀπὸ στρήνους καὶ ἀφοβίας Θεοὶ παρ’ ἡμῖν γίνεται (ibid., 37.2).

1121 In QA 49, Anastasius claims that Jews and Arabs (i.e. Muslims) do not weep during prayer—a proof of the falseness of their faith and practice. This seems to contradict early Islamic traditions about pious figures known for their weeping (cf. Fritz Meier, “Bakkāʾ,” EI² <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/bakka-SIM_1104>, accessed 24 March 2014). Whether this disproves Anastasius or the early Islamic traditions is impossible to tell without extensive study. For the Christian polemical point that Islam was a worldly religion, see Hoyland, Seeing Islam, 541–44 and also, more generally, Khalil Samir, “Liberté religieuse et propagation de la foi chez les théologiens arabes chrétiens du Ixe siècle et en Islam,” in Witness of Faith in Life and Worship, 93–164 (Jerusalem: Tantur, 1981). For Muslims and monasticism, see Elizabeth Key Fowden, “Monks, Monasteries and Early Islam,” in Studies on Hellenism, Christianity and the Umayyads, edited by Garth Fowden and Elizabeth Key Fowden, 149–74 (Athens: Diffusion de Boccard, 2004).


1123 QA 74.
baptism ‘he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body’ (1 Cor 6.16), likewise also is he who joins himself to an unbeliever.” 1124 The use of the metaphor of true marriage versus prostitution in ecclesiology here is an application of the doctrine that we have already seen expounded in the Hexaemeron.

A more passionate and sustained polemic in the Narrations focuses on difference in practices that are primarily related to ritual and worship. Specific stories serve to demonstrate the contempt of the Arabs for such venerable Christian symbols as icons, crosses, the Eucharist, church buildings, and the relics of the saints. The moral usually drawn from these accounts is that the Arabs are worse than demons: the latter fear these holy objects and are regularly exorcized through them, whereas the former trample them underfoot sacrilegiously. 1125 We will consider those stories in greater detail at the end of the chapter when examining the difficulties of lay piety under Islamic rule. Here though we should observe that this line of argumentation based on ritual would have probably been more effective for the vast majority of Anastasius’s flock than detailed doctrinal discussions, as being more immediate and more understandable to the average believer.

The issue of sacred space was particularly salient. We have seen that it was raised in Anastasius’s recommended proof against heretics, in arguing from orthodox ownership of the holy sites. With regard to the Muslims, it is the theme of a story in the second book of the Narrations. Anastasius describes his own perception, confirmed by that of other monks, of demonic activity during the preparatory work for Islamic building on the Temple Mount. The conclusion of the account is particularly revealing about the problems that Anastasius faced in trying to hold his people to strict orthodoxy: “I considered it necessary to include this on account

1124 Ibid.
1125 See especially Tales 2.2,14.20. On Saracens in league with demons, and being even worse than demons, see Flusin, “Démons et Sarraisons,” 404–9.
of those who think and say that the temple being built right now in Jerusalem is a temple of God." As with the issue of polygamy discussed above, this seems to indicate that there were Christians of a syncretistic bent who were willing to consider Islam as a legitimate religion, and its great mosque in Jerusalem a restoration of the Old Testament Temple. Anastasius is opposed to any such syncretism. On the one hand, the idea of a holy site belonging to a heterodox religious authority would ruin his tidy theological argument based on retention of the loca sancta by the orthodox, already mentioned as the first line of defense for an unlettered layman against the insinuations of heretics. On the other hand, Anastasius’ political views call for a minimum of civil obedience and cooperation with the dominant Islamic power, while resolutely resisting the theological tenets of the opposing faith.

This is consistent with his overall theological vision, which is concerned with Christian heresy as well as with the religion of the conquerors. It is important that we remember this when trying to understand Anastasius and his Chalcedonian flock in context. He hoped for a relatively swift abolition of Arab overlordship. Thus, although his polemic against Islam was strong and articulate, it was not at first his primary concern. The longer-term and more intractable challenge, at least in his eyes, was the various Monophysite Christian sects that claimed the allegiance of much of the population in Egypt and Syria. Yet the vehement attacks

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1126 Tales 2.7. Anastasius connects the work being done thirty years before with contemporary work on the Dome of the Rock, built under 'Abd al-Malik largely as a claim of Islamic domination over the Holy City. See Binggeli, “Récits,” 538, n. 54. Cf. Anastasius' comment at Tales II.3: in light of their profanation of the sacred objects of Christianity, “how is it possible to call them ‘pious’ (θεοσεβεῖς)?”


1128 Though he may have considered Islam an outlandish Christian heresy, as did many other Christian apologists.

1129 QA 101.

1130 Nevertheless, the second book of the Tales seems more concerned with the Islamic menace, and internal evidence reflects a late date in Anastasius’s career, when he may have realized that the Muslims were there to stay.
on Muslims as savage and demonic, found at the end of the *Questions and Answers* and in the second book of *Tales*, may suggest that by the date of composition of the latter (contemporary with the construction of the Dome of the Rock, i.e. 690–91) he was starting to worry more about Islam as a theological menace.

Anastasius dedicates most of the *Hodegos* to disputation with Monophysite theologians of various stripes, and some of the pages of the *Questions and Answers* also deal with this threat. The *Tales*, however, have nothing to say about monophysites. This may be due to the difficulties involved in differentiating them from the orthodox on the level of tangible practices, which as discussed, are the primary focus of that text. Such silence stands in marked contrast to the work’s most recent predecessor in the genre of “edifying tales,” the *Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschus. The latter work is full of anecdotes of miraculous proof of orthodoxy against the heretics. The reason for Anastasius’s reticence in this regard can be surmised from the *Questions and Answers*. In response to a request for exegesis of Mt 7:22–23, Anastasius replies:

> Signs and miracles and foretelling often happen even through unworthy people because of some need or dispensation, as in the case of Balaam and of the ventriloquist bringing up Samuel from the earth (Nm 22–23, 1 Kg 28:11–12) … It is necessary to know these things so that when you see some sign done even through heretics or even through unbelievers, according to some judgment of God, you be not shaken from the orthodox faith due to signs and prodigies; for perhaps God is even testing you by working the sign and the prodigy.\(^\text{1131}\)

In another passage he conjectures that heretics may receive such miraculous powers: “very often God provides charismata of healing, and even some of the teachings from the divinely inspired Scriptures, to those unworthy of them, or even to those of another faith, in order that they may

\(^{1131}\) QA 62.
come to virtue, out of respect for the one who gave the gift.”1132 Anastasius was probably aware that the monophysites themselves had books full of their own miracles disproving the Chalcedonian faith.1133 Hence his preference for laypeople to leave the intricacies of the debate to qualified theologians such as himself, as already shown above.

But, as with Islam, the temptation to syncretism was an ever-present reality. In the case of Monophysitism, we can see this clearly in a question concerning the practice of Communion:

Q. Is it good to carry Holy Communion in a vessel when traveling abroad, or to commune wherever we may find a church?

A. Firstly, the all-holy body of Christ is not insulted by being carried and borne about. For Christ himself was in the habit of traveling about to visit everyone, and, as I have said, he is not insulted by a place, unless it be a polluted heart. Secondly, that nobody has any authority to commune outside of the holy catholic Church, the Apostle teaches us saying: “One Lord (that is, the true one), one faith” (Eph. 4:5)—that is, the pious right-believing one; the rest are not faiths, but deaths. So then, as when we travel from our own wife, if we come together with another, it is not marriage but fornication, much more should we guard the chastity also of our holy Church, the spotless spouse of Christ.1134

The questioner demonstrates a very strong, even superstitious, reverence for the Eucharist paired with an assumption that any Christian church offers a valid Eucharist. Anastasius deals with the first by instructing his audience in a more spiritual interpretation of communion, and with the

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1132 QA 82.2. ὁτι καὶ ἁναξιοῖς ἢ καὶ ἄλλοπίστοις πολλάκις παρέχει ὁ Θεός χαρίσματα ἱσαμάτων ἢ καὶ διδασκαλίας τινάς ἐκ τῶν θεοπνευστῶν Γραφῶν, ὅπως αἰδεσθέντες τὸν δεδωκότα πρὸς ἀρετὴν ἐλθώσιν.
1134 QA 64.
second by a powerful metaphor for fidelity to the orthodox Church.\textsuperscript{1135} Anastasius’ use of the metaphor probably stems from its use by the Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria, John the Almsgiver, in a portion of a festal letter incorporated into his \textit{Vita} by Leontius of Neapolis. As we saw in Ch. 3, John also preferred to use such concrete arguments, especially since in his case he was not particularly skilled in the finer points of dialectic. In line with Anastasius’s preference for simple rebuttals of heresy, this argument is more memorable than any intricate explanation of proper apostolic succession, Eucharistic ecclesiology, or the like. In any case, the question gives a strong hint of the kind of situation in which his flock found itself. Once separated by distance from their familiar local church they could not be certain of the orthodoxy of just any place of worship and any liturgy. This would be particularly relevant in areas where Chalcedonian congregations were few and far between. It should also be remembered that at this time, reception of monophysites into the orthodox Church was a simple affair, usually achieved simply by the choice to receive communion from an orthodox priest. The simplicity was designed to make it easier for conciliation and conversion of repentant heretics, but it could also lend itself to ambiguity and equivocation, with someone receiving either Eucharist as was convenient.\textsuperscript{1136} Such flip-flopping could actually be a sign of piety, not indifference, since it indicates a strongly felt need for communion on the part of the laity. Anastasius’s response thus seeks to minister to that need in a practical way, promoting properly spiritual participation in the Eucharist, while still maintaining strict boundaries of orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{1137}


\textsuperscript{1136} Cf. Anastasius, \textit{QA} 13, as well as the discussion of cross-confessional communion or lack thereof in Ch. 4 with regard to Sophronius of Jerusalem and Ch. 5 with regard to John Moschus.

\textsuperscript{1137} His own theology sometimes borders on the allegorical when it comes to the Eucharist and church community (as in \textit{Hex. XII.iv.2–6}), or to the superstitious (as in \textit{Tales} 2.4), but in general he is a staunch promoter of Eucharistic piety.
All of this polemical work could go to waste, however, if the pastor was not careful. Polemics could drive people away rather than attract them to the faith. One questioner expresses the confusion and anxiety for ordinary believers that must have often arisen from cross-confessional disagreement: “Why has Satan not made so many heresies and schisms in any other faith, but only in that of the Christians?” This question was particularly poignant in the face of triumphant Islam, which, even with the advent of various outbreaks of *fitna*, might still seem much more tightly-knit than the constantly bickering Christians. We might even detect behind the question an actual Muslim talking-point against Christianity. Anastasius’ defiant reply echoes the language of his *Hexaemeron*: “Because all of the rest of the faiths of the unbelievers are beloved of the devil, and he has no reason to wage war against them, but only against the faith of Christ, since it often wages war on him and defeats him.” The answer cleverly becomes an exhortation and alarum to do battle against Satan on behalf of the true faith. Such a struggle involved deeds as well as words, leading us to Anastasius’ teaching on how pious faith becomes pious practice. Eventually this will lead us back to the battle for the faith, as we see how Anastasius adapted his demanding spiritual regimen to the exigencies of life under Islamic rule.

*True Christianity: Anastasius’ teaching on the inner life*

We have already seen how Anastasius defined a deeper kind of faith that went beyond mere words, one that gave a taste of “the reality of the hoped-for” good things. A few lines after that characterization in the *Hodegos*, he defines a Christian as “a true rational house of Christ

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1138 QA 70: Τίνος χάριν ού πεποίηκεν ὁ Σατανᾶς τοσαύτας αἱρέσεις καὶ σχίσματα ἐν ἔτερῳ πίστει, εἰ μὴ ἐν τῇ τῶν Χριστιανῶν;  
1139 Ibid. Ὄτι πᾶσαι αἱ λοιπαὶ τῶν ἀπιστῶν πίστεως ἀγαπηταὶ τῷ διαβόλῳ εἰσί, καὶ οὐδεὶς αὐτῷ λόγος πολεμῆσαι αὐτὸς, εἰ μὴ τὴν πίστιν τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὥς ἀντικειμένην καὶ πολεμοῦσαν πολλὰκις καὶ καταργοῦσαν αὐτὸν. Note the similarity of language to the *Hexaemeron*. 

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This terse definition is expanded upon in the first of the Questions and Answers:

Q. What is the indication of a true and perfect Christian?

A. 1. Some say that it is correct faith and works of piety, but Christ for his part does not define the really true Christian by these things; for one can have both faith and good works and be proud about them and not be a perfect Christian. So the Lord says that, “He who loves me will keep my commandments, and I will love him and reveal myself to him, and I and my Father will come to him and make our dwelling with him” (Jn. 14:21-23).

2. Therefore through these things we learn that it is through faith and good works that the house of our soul is built by our mind; but if Christ, the master of the house does not come and dwell in us, it is obvious that the house that we made for him did not please him.

He goes on to add the experiential criterion of this state of being Christian, in keeping with his distinction above between faith based on hearing and the more certain faith that already knows the reality of promised blessings.

Q. And how does someone know whether Christ has come to dwell in him?

A. 1. This question is like asking a pregnant woman, “How do you know that you have conceived?” So, as she does not need anyone else to tell her this, but instead she knows from herself and in herself, from the stopping of the flow of blood and from the stirrings of the baby inside, and from the lack of appetite for many foods, that she has conceived; so the soul too does not need to learn from someone else when Christ comes to dwell in it.

1140 Ibid. The Greek has a less unwieldy, even elegant ring to it: Χριστιανός ἐστιν ἀληθινὸς οἶκος Χριστοῦ λογικὸς διὰ ἑργῶν ἁγαθῶν καὶ δογμάτων εὐσεβῶν συνιστάμενος.
through the Holy Spirit. For it also immediately sees that the impure blood of her habitual passions stops flowing and that the appetite for the many foods of sin ceases, and especially that the sweetness of sensual pleasure is most of all abhorred. For the sweetness of honey is abhorrent to every pregnant woman.

In the first answer, we can see how Anastasius offers a solution to the theological dilemma of faith and works. This is no accident, as the related questions of determinism and free will in human life are an important concern in his thought and in that of many contemporaries. The quoted passage from the Gospel of John is a locus classicus in eastern patristic theology, especially in ascetical writings. The emphasis on the indwelling of God serves to shift the focus of the questioner away from self-centered concern about what he must do toward the love of God. It is suggested that the main obstacle preventing the believer from enjoying this love is pride, and that therefore the third term that mediates between faith and works is humility. The second answer continues this line of thought with its remarks about the experiential aspects of the divine visitation, likened to the strong effects of child-bearring on a woman. In the answer to the third question, commenting on the ability of Christians to participate in the things “which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man,” Anastasius challenges the audience: “Therefore struggle to learn these things by deed and experience, and not in mere word to no profit.” These introductory questions and answers already mark out two distinctive traits

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1142 Anastasius quotes the passage again in QA 3.

1143 In QA 92, Anastasius addresses puzzlement over 1 Cor. 13:3: how can one sacrifice everything for the poor, even one's own body, and not have love? He points to the continued existence of passions other than avarice that darken the soul.

1144 QA 3.4: Διὰ ἀγώνισαι ἔργῳ καὶ πείρα ταῦτα μαθεῖν, καὶ μὴ ψιλὸς λόγῳ ἀνωφελῶς.
of Anastasius’ theological and spiritual instruction: expectation and exhortation toward the living experience of Christian truth, along with the propensity for concrete and vivid examples that we have seen above in polemical contexts.

**Lay and monastic life**

The possibility for man to actually attain to this indwelling by God is grounded firmly in Anastasius’ theological anthropology, which in turn depends on his Christology. The former may be seen as the positive corollary to the rather negative tone of his polemical writings. Humans are able to attain this because of Christ’s assumption of human nature, his intimate union with mankind and transfiguration thereof in the economy of the flesh. The fact that Christ took on a human rather than an angelic created nature even means that human beings have the potential to be more exalted than angels.\(^\text{1145}\) His development of orthodox Chalcedonian theology of the two natures of Christ (with the concomitant two operations and two wills that were declared dogma by the Sixth Ecumenical Council) can be at time quite creative, especially when it comes to its implications for our topic of lay piety. In the course of showing that the two wills in Christ are distinguished but not divided into opposing principles, he implicitly offers a validation for the harmonious coexistence of the monastic and lay ways of life.

For this reason alone were the preceding discourses on the “According to the image” labored over, to show that in the human being, as a kind of type and image, are foreshadowed not only the two essences of Christ, but that also his two energies and blameless wills are sketched out beforehand as in a kind of type. For to honor father and mother and to love one’s siblings and relatives is a natural and essential willing of the soul in the nature of man; but to abandon and deny father and mother and siblings for

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\(^{1145}\) QA 4–5, *Tales* 1.1, *Sermones duo* 1.6 ll. 42–53, *Hex.* VIIb.i.2
God’s sake is a truly divine and praiseworthy and supernatural willing. So when you see Jesus subject to and serving Joseph and His mother, as Luke says, and as a child running to her and wrapped up in her embrace and her holy bosom, do not hesitate to say that he does and shows these things by the willing and affection of a nature like ours, and that he manifests himself as perfect and consubstantial to us according to humanity, in every way, as Paul says, sin alone excepted. But then again, when he says to his mother, “Woman, what have I to do with you?” and “Who is my father or mother but he who does the will of the one who sent me?” here he educates us as to the divine and supernatural will.1146

Later he presents a more abstract categorization of wills:

The natural will according to nature is marriage; the carnal will against nature is fornication; the divine will above nature is virginity. And for this reason did Christ institute the nature anew. [...] And again it is natural to wish for present goods, for they were made for man; but a carnal will is to use the gifts of God badly; and a divine will is to despise all present goods for the sake of God.1147

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1146 Sermones duo III.3. Διὰ γὰρ τοῦτο καὶ μόνον ἡμῖν πεπόνησαι οἱ προκείμενοι εἰς τὸ κατ᾽ εἰκόνα λόγοι, εἰς τὸ δεῖξαι ὡς ἐν τῷ τινὶ καὶ εἰκόνι τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ οὐκ ἄλλο τὸν δυὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὑστερὸν τὴν προδιαμόρφωσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ δύο ἐνεργεῖαν καὶ θελήματαν ἀδιάβλητων ὡς ἐν τῷ τινὶ ἀμυδρῷ προδιαγραφῆς. Καὶ γὰρ τὸ τιμᾶν πατέρα καὶ μητέρα καὶ ἀδελφοὺς ἄγαπάν καὶ συγγενεῖς, φύσεως ἀνθρωπίνης φύσικόν ἐστιν ὑστερῶδες θέλημα ψυχῆς ἀδιάβλητον, τὸ δὲ καταλείπῃ καὶ ἀρνήσασθαι διὰ τὸν θεὸν πατέρα καὶ μητέρα καὶ ἀδελφοὺς ὡς ἐν τῷ θεῷ καὶ ὑπὲρ φύσιν θέλημα ἀξέπανον. Ίδοι δύο θελήματα ἀδιάβλητα, τὸ μὲν φύσει ἀνθρώπων, τὸ δὲ ὑπὲρ φύσιν καὶ θεοῦ. Λοιπὸν ὑπὲρ θρόνον ὑποτασσόμενον καὶ δουλεύοντα, ὡς φησὶν ὁ Δωκίμι, τῷ ἱουσην καὶ τῇ μητρί αὐτοῦ, καὶ προστέρχωντα καὶ πρεπελευμένων ὡς παιδιών ταῖς ἁγκαλίαις καὶ ταῖς ἁγίωσ κόλποις αὐτῆς, μὴ διστάσης εἰπέν τινας θελήματι καὶ στοργῇ τῇ καθ’ ἡμᾶς φύσεως ποιοῦντα καὶ δεικνύουσαν αὐτὸν ταύτα, καὶ τέλειον καὶ όμοούσιον ἡμῖν κατὰ τὴν ἀνθρωπόστητα ἐαυτὸν ἐμφανίζοντα κατὰ πάντα τρόπον, ὡς φησὶν ὁ Παύλος, δίκα μόνης ἀμαρτίας. Ὅταν δὲ πάλιν πρὸς τὴν μητέρα λέγει Τί ἐμοι καὶ σοι, γύναις καὶ Τίς ἐστι μου πατήρ ἢ μήτηρ εἰ μή ὁ παῖς τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πέμπαντος με; ἐνταῦθα παιδεύει ἡμᾶς τὸν θεόν καὶ ὑπὲρ φύσιν θέλημα (my translation).

1147 Sermones duo V. Κατά φύσιν φυσικόν θέλημα, ἢ γάμος- παρὰ φύσιν δὲ σαρκικόν θέλημα, ἢ πορνεία- υπὲρ φύσιν δὲ θεικόν θέλημα, ἢ παρθενεία. Καὶ διατυπῶ ἐκανονίσασθαι τὴν φύσιν ὁ Χριστὸς ἀνέυ γάμου καὶ σπορᾶς σαρκωθεὶς ἐκ παρθενοῦ. + ... Πάλιν τε κατά φύσιν ἐστὶ τὸ θέλημα τῶν παρόντων- διὰ τὸν ἀνθρωπόν γὰρ γέγονε- σαρκικόν δὲ θεικόν ἐστί τὸ κακὸς κεχρήσθη ταῖς τοῦ θεοῦ δωρεαῖς- θεικόν δὲ θέλημα τὸ καταφρονεῖν διὰ τὸν πάντων τῶν παρόντων ἀγαθῶν.
In these passages Anastasius shows an appreciation of the earthly life, and especially the childhood and family experience of Jesus, that is often lost in the high theology of his time.\footnote{An even more extended and quite beautiful description of the childhood of Christ can be found in \textit{Hod.} 13.5–7. Daniel Larison, “Return to Authority: The Monothelete Controversy and the Role of Text, Emperor, and Council in the Sixth Ecumenical Council,” (PhD Diss. University of Chicago, 2009), 131–36, argues convincingly that Anastasius develops these positions expressly in order to combat the ascetical principles of monotheletism, which coordinated a monastic asceticism that sought to completely suppress human desire with a Christology that denied human will to Christ because it was thought to be inherently sinful and fallen. Larison links this ascetical origin of monotheletism to the monenergism of Theodore bishop of Pharan early in the seventh century and thus posits a strand of monastic doctrine in the Sinai competing with the dyothelete doctrine of John Climacus and Anastasius of Sinai (implicitly dyothelete in John and explicitly so in Anastasius).} He organizes a hierarchy, with natural human activity inferior and supernatural divine activity higher. This is not remarkable; what is, however, is that he shows how Christ himself participated in both levels. It is comparable to the doctrine of Christ’s mediation of opposites according to Maximus the Confessor, discussed in the previous chapter, but this particular expression of the problem with relation to Christ’s energies and wills is original. At the same time, in keeping with long-held tradition, the state of marriage is seen as temporary, with Christ already inaugurating a new mode of virginity for human nature, as Maximus the Confessor had also argued.

Anastasius’ urge to relate Christology to anthropology is an integral part of his theology. As we have seen, it is most lavishly applied in the \textit{Hexaemeron}, where the very creation of the world, including man, is seen as a type of Christ and the Church. A passage in that work can also help clarify Anastasius’ thought on monasticism and lay life via his thought on virginity and marriage.

And he directs that the earth observe the Sabbath rest and not work. That is, the men and women that are able to practice corporal virginity should not receive seeds or sow seeds. He who sows seeds into the earth of the flesh will reap the corruption of the flesh. Most important of all, we are ordered to give rest to our male servant and female servant on the
day of the Sabbath. That is, our body and soul should not serve the Prince of this Age, but should exist in freedom and dispassion.\textsuperscript{1149}

This confirms the sense that for Anastasius, as for all of the early Fathers, virginity was the greater good and marriage was inextricably bound to the fallen world with its inherent corruption.\textsuperscript{1150} But we should notice that he speaks here of those “who are \emph{able} to exercise the virginity of the flesh.” Carefully following the scriptural and patristic tradition he acknowledges that this asceticism is not possible for everyone.\textsuperscript{1151}

Recalling Anastasius’ insights on the union of both ways of life in Christ himself, however, we should note their close and frequent interaction in the Church. Much of this will come out in the course of the rest of the chapter, but I wish to mention a few elements of it here. Firstly, in the \textit{Tales} we catch a glimpse of the lay origins of monks and of their continued ties to the world. Two monks were twin brothers and formerly elite imperial guards (excubitors), another had been the chief imperial physician, a third secretary to the general Maurianus (an unsuccessful \textit{magister militum per Armeniam}); another was rumored to have been Theodosius, the surviving son of the emperor Maurice.\textsuperscript{1152} These of course are mentioned because they are remarkable; most monks would have come from humdrum backgrounds. One hermit had a cell-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1149} \textit{Hex. VII.A.vii.2. Ἀλλὰ καὶ γῆς σαββατισμὸν καὶ ἀργίαν προστάσει καὶ μὴ σπείρεθαι μήτε σπείρειν τοῖς τὴν παρθενίαν αὐτῆς τῆς σαρκὸς ἀσκεῖν δυναμένοις ἢ δυναμέναις, οτι ὁ εἰς τὴν γῆν τῆς σαρκός σπέρων ἢ τῆς σαρκός θερίσας φθοράν. Πολλῶν πάντων ἡμῶν διακελεύεται διαναπάθειν τὴν παρθενίκην ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν παῖδα τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου, τούτεστι τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ τὸ σῶμα μὴ δουλεύειν τῷ ἀρχοντὶ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, ἀλλ’ ἐν ἐλευθερίᾳ καὶ ἀπαθείᾳ υπάρχει.}
\item \textsuperscript{1150} E.g. Mt. 19:12. Cf. \textit{Hex. VI.viii.2} : Citing Clement of Alexandria, Anastasius presents sexual division, the blessing (to procreate), humanity’s kinship with animals, and its consumption of food as evidence of corruption. But these factors were all present before the Fall. It is likely that Anastasius was following a patristic line of thought that saw them as providentially instilled by God with a view to the Fall, even before it took place.
\item \textsuperscript{1151} \textit{Sermones duo} 10.3 discusses how the blameless passions were the consequences of sin (a topic addressed also by Maximus). The complicated knot of mankind’s mortality, corruptibility, and sin in relation to Christ’s economy was a difficult and disputed problem among all the confessions of late antiquity; the dispute over Julian of Halicarnassus and his apthartodocetism (even the name is complicated!) shows its salience both in Chalcedonian and Monophysite circles.
\item \textsuperscript{1152} \textit{Tales} 1.9,22,28,39. For Maurianus, see Binggeli, “Anastase le Sinaïte,” vol. 1, 512 n. 131.
\end{itemize}
attendant and disciple named Zacharias who, at the time of Anastasius’ writing, was a layman working as a goldsmith in Babylon (Old Cairo). It is unclear whether he had ever been a monk, but in any case his lay occupation suggests the kind of socio-economic status from which an average Sinaite monk might have come, and shows that monks on Sinai ould have lay disciples.\footnote{\textit{Tales} 1.29. Anastasius expresses no disappointment in the fact that he was now a layman, so it is likely that he had simply been a pious layman or, at most, a novice who decided not to take vows. In this case Anastasius does not mention his occupation as something conspicuous, as in the previous examples, but simply as a living witness to the edifying anecdotes he has just related.} They might also carry some elements of their previous social situation with them into the monastic life: the two excubitor brothers lived as hermits together, and after their death miraculously refused to be parted: “But how did you not show discernment, so that having been born together and served in the army of the earthly king together and having made our renunciation together and been buried and appeared before Christ together, you separated us and have placed someone else in between us?”\footnote{\textit{Tales} 1.9.} As we have seen elsewhere in this study, renunciation often did not entail the utter rejection of family ties, but rather their revision in an ascetical context.

Their continued interaction with the world is evident in terms of provision and pilgrimage. The monks relied on the world for their basic survival. Palestine was the major source of olive oil, necessary both for food and for lighting the lamps of the churches.\footnote{\textit{Tales} 1.17.} Monks would go to Babylon in Egypt (Old Cairo) for medical treatment.\footnote{\textit{Tales} 1.15.} The local Bedouin play an important part in these mundane tasks, in the course of which they sometimes witness more supernal happenings.\footnote{\textit{Tales} 1.20 and 1.35.} Many of them were Christians, at least in the stories that refer to earlier times, since the Arabs of Sinai were forcibly converted to Islam at some point in the second half of the seventh century, an event recorded in the second book of Anastasius’s \textit{Tales}. Farther
afield, the epistles of Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, provide precious evidence for long-distance support of Sinai by eminent personages. He himself corresponded with the monastery and sent funds for construction work, and advised a wealthy Roman aristocratic woman on matters of pilgrimage and patronage.\footnote{See the translation of the Gregory the Great’s Ep. IV.44 and XI.2 in Caner, History and Hagiography, 263–65.} This activity preceded the lifetime of Anastasius by several decades, but such relations endured. Even if disrupted by war, pilgrimage tended to resume quickly once things settled down.\footnote{This is evident in the resumption of Armenian pilgrimage to both Jerusalem and Sinai relatively soon after the conquest of the Holy Land by the Persians. The same would apply in the case of the Arab conquest, as we can see from the journey of the Frankish bishop Arculf to Jerusalem in the late seventh century, as transmitte by the Irish monk Adomnán in De locis sanctis.} Papyri from the town of Nessana in the Negev, an important staging-point for the journey to Sinai, show the continued flow of people and goods to the monastery in the late seventh century. One fragmentary papyrus records the logistical calculations of a caravan preparing to set out for Sinai, bearing supplies for themselves and for the monastery. Two other papyri preserve correspondence from the Arab governor of the region, Abu Rashîd, to a Christian subordinate named George, ordering him to provide assistance to various members of his household as they journeyed to Sinai on pilgrimage; these pilgrims may have been Muslims.\footnote{The papyri, P.Colt 72, 73, and 89, are presented in English translation in Caner, History and Hagiography, 266–70; the book’s frontispiece shows a photograph of P.Colt. 72.}

Another story in the Tales mentions six hundred guests being seated and fed at the main monastery; given the large number, we can presume that most of them would have been layfolk.\footnote{Tales 1.12. The monks were aided in serving such a large crowd by a mysterious Jew who then disappeared; the abbot (John Climacus) explained: “The lord Moses has done nothing strange by serving in his own place.”} Such large numbers of visitors could pose problems both of management and of monastic solitude. One monk was advised by a supernatural hint to make his own personal pilgrimage to the summit of the mount the night before a large group of pilgrims arrived; he was
thus able to obtain some unnamed spiritual benefit from this chance at solitary prayer at the holy site. Yet laypeople in larger or smaller groups also enjoyed the holiness of the monks as well as the locale. A patrician woman obtained the exorcism of her possessed daughter through a blessing from a certain hermit Orentios, while a group of starving Arabs obtained food in the desert through the advice of another hermit George.

From this overview we get a sense, as we have in previous chapters, of the concentric circles radiating from a monastery and returning to it. In this case, however, the center is not one holy man in particular but a holy site, one of the holiest in Christendom. The holy men who dwell there draw their sanctity, in part, from the place itself and its history. The monastery built by Justinian serves as the epicenter of a whole group of monastic settlements on the Sinai peninsula and beyond. Certain laypeople are closer spiritually or socio-economically to the monks, such as the cell-attendant Zacharias or the various Arabs who serve the monastery and monks, as their descendants still do today. Others are bound by looser ties of pilgrimage, correspondence, and patronage, of whom the most conspicuous example is the Pope of Rome. Last but not least, we must recall the activity of Anastasius himself, who came to Sinai from elsewhere and was often to be found outside it, shoring up Chalcedonian communities throughout the Levant. His travels led him to record lay-monastic interactions in other locales, as we will see later in the chapter.

“Ordinary” lay piety

As we have already noted, Anastasius set a high bar for the spiritual life. His teachings on the indwelling of God do not specifically address a monastic audience. We shall now turn to

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1162 *Tales* 1.7. The unnamed monk may be Anastasius himself, as Flusin surmised.
1163 *Tales* 1.18. He directed them to a flock of wild goats on the far side of the mountain where he was living. The story implies that he located them miraculously rather than from knowledge of the area.
several of the Questions and Answers that specifically address lay concerns. For example, he is not afraid to teach his audience about the practice of unceasing prayer.\textsuperscript{1164}

Q. What does “Pray unceasingly” (1 Th 5:17) mean? For it is not possible for a man who is taking care of house and children and living in the world to pray unceasingly.

A. The Apostle did not at all say this about prayer which is through the tongue, as Christ also said that, “Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but rather he who does the will of him who sent me” (Mt 7:21). Hence he who constantly works good, whether in alms, or in other ministries in accordance with God, he prays unceasingly; for even in bed, too, and on the road and at table and in the marketplace and in every place he is able to pray in the heart.\textsuperscript{1165}

The questioner expresses an explicitly lay perspective on this question, mentioning particularly the obligations of home and family, and Anastasius obliges with a suitable answer, even emphasizing the lay aspect by mentioning the road and marketplace, locations more customary for the layperson than the monk. Another passage expresses the same kind of concern.

How can a person who is in a position of authority and has many blessings from God, who administers affairs and cannot be outside worldly life, who enjoys a rich table and varied foods and baths: how can he remain uncondemned in the midst of these, and obtain remission of sins?\textsuperscript{1166}

Anastasius’s response is multi-faceted. He begins by reminding the inquirer that most of the saints were wealthy.\textsuperscript{1167} He continues by mentioning that the devil tricks people into thinking

\textsuperscript{1164} QA 49 and 24. With reference to tears, he shows parallels with Climacus, esp. Ladder 8 (PG 88: 804a).

\textsuperscript{1165} QA 24. My translation.

\textsuperscript{1166} QA 88. My translation.

\textsuperscript{1167} Note, however, that he only mentions Old Testament saints here. John Climacus explicitly argues that they should not be used to justify hesitation to embrace the monastic vocation.
that they need to be monks in order to be saved; they put off the time of renunciation, sin without restraint in the meantime and, eventually being unable to renounce the world, they go to eternal fire in their sins. Even the unrighteous rulers of the Old Testament had a chance, for the wicked king Manasses was saved by confession while Nebuchadnezzar was counseled by Daniel to give alms. The mention of alms leads Anastasius to draw attention to the spectacle of Christians suffering under the present regime. He describes their plight as worse than that of the Jewish exiles of old, since today’s Christian captives dwell in the desert instead of Mesopotamia. Anastasius continues: if you do not have money, at least make it a habit that, whenever you enjoy earthly goods, you mentally condemn yourself before God and ask him to free you from condemnation in their enjoyment. Finally, he has no time for those who would selfishly keep their material blessings to themselves by arguing that God only wanted to bestow wealth on them and not on the poor.

We will consider the implications of this passage for life under Islamic rule later on. For now I would like to draw attention to the urgent question: “How can he remain uncondemned in the midst of these, and obtain remission of sins.” Such an emphasis on forgiveness is found in many of the questions, approached from different angles. Many of these questions express a rather legalistic attitude toward sin and repentance; in his answers Anastasius tries to balance between the demand for clear guidelines, the recognition of mitigating factors taken into account

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1168 They can be divided into the following rough categories. What is sufficient for forgiveness: QA 10 (one good deed?), 36 (ceasing from sin and practicing virtue), 42 (value of services for the dead), 47 (how to be saved without becoming a monk), 48 (three ways to obtain forgiveness), 50 (stages of spiritual progress), 86 (repentant criminals in monasteries). Repetition and frequency of sin and/or repentance: 11 (repetition and alms), 33 (decent Christian troubled by venial sins). Basis of judgment: 12 (age), 13 (heresy vs. fornication), 34 (devil cannot compel), 35 (frequency and climatic and ethnic/racial factors), 43 (multiple murderer absolved if executed?), 77 (different kinds of adultery), 84 (sins of ignorance or knowledge; heterodoxy), 103 (loosing a vow). Confession of sins: 18 (examining oneself), 32 (to offended party, mention of spiritual father), 52-53 (to whom one should confess), 54 (enumeration of sins), 59 (reconciliation, even if only in word).
by the divine judgment, and his characteristic emphasis on the need for true repentance in the heart. A few characteristic responses will suffice to present his thought on these themes.

When asked “How many ways are there for people to be saved and received forgiveness of sins?”, he enumerates three: “The first is to never commit sin, the second is by a proper repentance, and there is a third way of being saved for those who have sinned, through trials and tribulations and patience.”¹¹⁶⁹ The first way, cessation of sin, seems to be only a necessary and not a sufficient condition, since elsewhere he states that it is only the beginning of repentance and must be followed up by the fruits thereof.¹¹⁷⁰ These fruits may consist of good works, especially almsgiving, and mortifications of various kinds.¹¹⁷¹ But such works are neither necessary nor sufficient. The lack of works or asceticism can be made up for by humility of heart born of suffering.¹¹⁷² These are the ultimate fruits of repentance that God desires. Likewise in the Homily on the Divine Liturgy, he affirms that someone who cannot bear ascetical hardship may be saved through forgiving and not judging others.¹¹⁷³

This emphasis on inward attitude is connected to questions of God’s judgment. One question involves the problem of repeated involuntary sin born of habit and the efficacy of repeated repentance. Anastasius responds that someone who is basically a good Christian, namely that he commits venial sins but gives alms, does not bear grudges, and does not judge others, will surely be saved; whereas someone involved in grave sin will be judged according to

¹¹⁶⁹ QA 48: Q. Πόσοι τρόποι εἶσι τῶν σωζομένων καὶ συγχώρησιν ἁμαρτιῶν ἐκ Θεοῦ κομιζομένων. Α. ὁ πρῶτος τοῦ μηκέτι ἁμαρτήσαι, ο δεύτερος τοῦ ἄξιως μετανοῆσαι, ἔτσι καὶ τρίτος τοῖς ἁμαρτήσαιι σωτηρίας τρόπος, διὰ πειρασμῶν καὶ θλίψεων καὶ ὑπομονῆς
¹¹⁷⁰ QA 36.
¹¹⁷¹ That these works were usually expected is clear from QA 11, 33, 41 and Tales 2.25 (alms); QA 47, 51, 88; Hom.sext.psalm. PG 89: 1116 (on the Lenten fast).
¹¹⁷² QA 48, mentioning the Publican and the Good Thief as examples.
¹¹⁷³ Hom.sacr.synax. PG 89:845a and 849. Cf. QA 10: confirming that it is possible to be saved by one good work alone, Anastasius mentions the Good Thief again, and two prostitutes, Rahab of the Book of Joshua and the sinful woman who washed Jesus’ feet in the Gospels. In both cases the main element of the “good work” is the devotion and faith that it showed, rather than any tangible benefit.
his state when he dies, whether in the sin or in repentance for it. But he warns his audience against getting into the habit of sin, and he even discusses the habit of sexual sin as becoming a physical trait, relying on the authority of physicians whom he had consulted on this issue.\textsuperscript{1174} In another question dealing with sexual sin, he claims that climatic and racial factors make different nations more prone to it, a mitigating factor that will be taken into account by the just Judge. In the same he enumerates other factors: Christian vs. non-Christian, youth vs. old man, celibate vs. married, married to a good wife vs. married to a bad one, sinning with one woman vs. sinning with many, teacher vs. private person, priest vs. subject, heterosexual vs. homosexual.\textsuperscript{1175} From these questions and others, it seems that sexual transgressions were common and that the penances involved might vary considerably based on their gravity.\textsuperscript{1176} Yet each person was ultimately responsible for his moral choices. In response to a question regarding the devil’s power to make man sin—revealingly, fornication is mentioned again as the chief sin—Anastasius replies in no uncertain terms: “The devil does not force anyone, but only suggests; but bad habit can force someone, so that this is something more wicked and stronger than the devil himself; consequently it is ourselves that we should blame.”\textsuperscript{1177} The way that Anastasius combines scientific thought on the various factors that affect moral choice together with this

\textsuperscript{1174} QA 33.
\textsuperscript{1175} QA 35.
\textsuperscript{1176} Cf. the Penitential attributed to John the Faster, Patriarch of Constantinople, with its detailed casuistry of sins, especially sexual ones. According to modern scholarship, however, the text is spurious and should be dated to the ninth century rather than the late sixth: Emil Herman, “Il piú antico penitenziale greco,” \textit{OCP} 19 (1953): 70–127. In that case, Anastasius may have served as a source for such later penitential thought. Cf. also QA 77, with its parsing of the different kinds and degrees of adultery/fornication, and QA 43 on whether a murderer’s execution is a sufficient punishment for his absolution. QA 43 discusses the minimum age of moral responsibility, mentions that some say twelve, but concludes indefinitely, observing that people develop mentally and morally at different speeds.

\textsuperscript{1177} QA 34. Ὁ μὲν διάβολός τινα οὐ βιάζεται, ἀλλὰ μόνον ὑποστείρει· ἢ δὲ κακὴ συνήθεια βιάζεται τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ὡστε καὶ τοῦ διαβόλου πονηρότερα καὶ ἰσχυρότερα υπάρχει· διὸ χρῆ ἕαυτος μέμφεσθαι.
orthodox insistence on free will is characteristic of his moderate position in contemporary debates over causation.\footnote{1178 Gilbert Dagron, “Le saint, le savant, et l’astroloque. Études de thèmes hagiographiques à travers quelques recueils de ‘Questions et réponses’ des Ve-VIe siècles,” in Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés (IVe-VIIe s.) (Paris : Études Augustiniennes, 1981), 143–55. Reprinted in Dagron, La Romanité chrétienne en Orient, IV. \footnote{1179 QA 86.}}

As we have already seen in previous chapters and earlier in this chapter with John Climacus, there was a tendency in Late Antiquity to see monasticism as the proper penitential state for those who had committed grave sins. Anastasius hints at this practice but also limits it. When asked whether obeying the scriptural injunction to “Deliver those taken away to their death” (Prov. 24:11) entailed ransoming gross criminals such as brigands and murderers, Anastasius prefers that it be applied to the of those condemned for faith, or debts, or the arbitrary wrath of the ruler; yet he acknowledges that even some criminals have been ransomed and been placed in monasteries for repentance, to a salutary end.\footnote{1179} In another place, however, he explicitly debunks the idea that repentance equals monasticism.

Q. If someone has built up a habit of carnal sin and has grown old in it, and he realizes that he is now incapable of fasting, or of undertaking penance or sleeping on the floor, or of giving up everything and entering a monastery, how can such a person reach salvation when he is now old, and how can he win forgiveness for his sins?

A. […] indeed He did not stipulate virginity for us, nor withdrawal from all the things of the world, and not even abstinence from meat and wine, but to love God, to love one’s neighbour, not to be spiteful, nor to judge others, to be humble and as compassionate as possible, to pray within our hearts, to support misfortunes, to be mild and peace-loving.

Now all these are things that a sickly man and an old man, somebody confined to his bed or married to a wife in the world, is able to do. If he does these things, he will certainly be
saved, no matter if he have committed all the sins of that notorious Manasses, the king.\textsuperscript{1180}

The list of virtues recalls that given earlier in \textit{QA} 88 and 48, and John Climacus in Step 1 of the \textit{Ladder} in his advice to laymen. A monastic element may, however, be present in Anastasius’ teaching on confession of sins. He urges self-examination to understand what may have caused a particular punishment by God (here described as consisting of abandonment to evil passions, i.e. spiritual rather than temporal punishment) and correct this hidden sin.\textsuperscript{1181} But in addition this internal confession, Anastasius expects that the penitent will seek absolution from someone approved for his virtue.

Q. Is it a good thing to confess one’s own sins or the evil thoughts in the soul?

A. It is good and very helpful, but not to be done to just anyone, since you yourself will get no help at all, and you will defile and scandalize those who listen to you. So if you find a spiritual man, who is able to cure you and pray on your behalf, make your confession only to that person.\textsuperscript{1182}

Resort to such spiritual men is very important in Anastasius’ eyes. Even when seeking forgiveness from a person one has offended cannot completely absolve one unless the offended

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\textsuperscript{1180} QA 47. Εὰν τις συνηθίσας ἐν τῇ σωματικῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ καταγράψῃ, καὶ θεωρήῃ ἐν ἐαυτῷ, ὅτι τοῦ λοιποῦ οὔτε νηστεύῃ, οὔτε ἀσκήσῃ ἢ χαμενύθησα, οὐδὲ ἀποτάξασθαι καὶ μονάσαι δύναται, πῶς λοιπὸν οὕτως δύναται σωθῆναι ἐν γόρει λοιπὸν ὑπάρχων, ἢ λαβεῖν ἁμαρτίαν ἀμαρτίων; Α. οὔτε γὰρ παρθενίαν ἤμιθα ὄρισεν, οὔτε πάντων τῶν ἐν κόσμῳ ἀναχώρησιν, ἀλλ’ οὔτε ἀποκήρυξεν κρεόν καὶ ὅνον, ἀλλ’ ἀγαπάν τὸν θεόν, ἀγαπάν τὸν πλησίον, μὴ μηνικακεῖν, μὴ κρίνειν, ταπεινοφρονεῖν, συμμπαθεῖν τὸ κατὰ δύναμιν, προσεύχεσθαι ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὑπομενέν τὰς θλίψεις, πραδὴν εἶναι καὶ εἰρηνικῶν. Πάντα οὕν ταῦτα καὶ ὁ ἀσθενής καὶ ὁ γέρων καὶ ὁ ἐν τῇ κλίσῃ ἀνακείμενος καὶ ὁ ἐν κόσμῳ γυναῖκας συνεξεσυγμενος δύναται ποιήσαι, καὶ ποιῆσαι αὕτα πάντως σωθῆσαι, ἐὰν ἐποίησε τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ Μανασσῆ ἑκείνου τοῦ βασιλέως. Cf. the similar pretext for not undertaking penance at Sext. PG 89: 1100c.

\textsuperscript{1181} QA 18.
\textsuperscript{1182} QA 52. Καλὸν ἄρα τὸ ἐξομολογεῖσθαι τὰ ἴδια ἁμαρτήματα ἢ τοὺς πονηροὺς λογισμοὺς τῆς ψυχῆς; ΑΙΟΚΡΙΣΣΙΝ Καλὸν καὶ πάνω ὄψείμον, ἀλλὰ μὴ τοὺς πᾶσαν, ἐπεὶ οὔτε σὺ τί ποτε ὄψείλεσται, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ἀκούντας μολύνεις καὶ σκανδαλίζεις. Εάν οὖν εὐρὺς ἀνδρὰ πνευματικὸν δυνάμενον σε ἱατρεύσαι καὶ εὐξάσθαι ὑπὲρ σοῦ, ἐκεῖνῳ καὶ μόνῳ ἐξομολογήσαι.
Only when one cannot find a man worthy of confident trust (πληροφορία) does Anastasius think it permissible to beg absolution from God directly. We can glean from these passages that Anastasius does not have in mind any kind of sacramental absolution in the modern sense, except only incidentally: one can confess to a spiritual man or a priest. The important factor is the prayer of a righteous man on the sinner’s behalf. This accords with the practice of penance in the milieu of Barsanuphius and John more than a century before in Gaza, which was briefly discussed in the introductory chapter, and would continue after Anastasius. This evidence for Gaza, of laypeople participating in this penitential practice of confiding one’s thoughts to a spiritual man and relying on his prayers for forgiveness and salvation, helps us to avoid the temptation of seeing Anastasius’ responses here as the laicization of a practice heretofore exclusively monastic. Alexis Torrance has argued recently that the more informal practice of confession always existed in the Church (cf. James 5:14-20), distinct from the canonical forms of penance, and that it was further refined by the monastic movement rather than being created by it wholesale. Thus, although I have framed Anastasius as a popularizer of the ascetical theology of John Climacus and other monastic writers, we must remember that these monastic traditions were always in inseparable dialogue with the continuing lay life of the Church.

Anastasius’ monastic insight did, however, lead him to constantly remind laypeople that they were to seek not only forgiveness and acquittal at the Last Judgment, but the glory of

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1183 QA 32.  
1184 QA 53.  
1185 πληροφορία is a common concern in Barsanuphius and John. The most famous exponent of this form of penance, arguing against a more rigid system of formal priestly absolution, was Symeon the New Theologian; cf. Karl Holl, Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt beim griechischen Mönchtum: Eine Studie zu Symeon den Neuen Theologen (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’sche, 1898).  
1186 Torrance, Repentance in Late Antiquity, 181–85.
adoption as sons of God. Thus in response to a question asking for just that kind of formal
assurance, Anastasius turns the attention of the questioner toward more exalted conceptions.

Q. How does one know that God has forgiven his sins, and that he will find complete
mercy on the day of judgment?
A. From one’s own conscience, and from the confidence that the soul feels in prayer to
God. 2. When a person deserves punishment, that person is like a condemned criminal
standing before a governor and having no confidence at all; that is how the soul presents
herself before God in prayer, with her conscience belabouring her, for she knows that she
is worthy of punishment. 3. But when someone begins to repent before God, then there is
a feeling of some slight relief, and that person can be present before God in prayer no
longer as a condemned criminal, but more like someone who is a debtor and asking to be
let off; then again leaving this level, if one takes thought for oneself, one can present
oneself as a master’s loving slave; and then going even further from there one can
converse with God as if one were a paid servant who has no debts outstanding. 4.
Gradually then as the soul advances, becoming lightened of all her burdens, she can
converse with God and stand in His presence like one friend with another, and like a
bride with her bridegroom, and like a true son with his own father. Then there are no
fears, no obligation, no sentiment of any sort of punishment, but only full love and
continuous joy and unfailing confidence, a happiness for the soul, with transports and an
endless exultation—as those recount to us who, by the grace of Christ, have reached such
stages.

\[1187\] QA 50: Q. Πόθεν γινώσκει ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ὅτι συνεχώρησεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεός τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτοῦ, καὶ
ὅτι εὑρίσκει ἔλεος πάντως ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς κρίσεως; Λ. (1.) Ἐκ τῆς ἱδίας συνειδήσεως, καὶ ἐκ τῆς παρρησίας
ἡς ἔχει ἡ ψυχὴ ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν. (2.) Ὄταν γὰρ ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὑπεύθυνός ἐστι κολάσεως, δίκην
καταδίκου τινὸς παρισταμένου τῷ ἀρχοντὶ μὴ ἐχοντος παντοῦ παρρησίαν· οὕτω καὶ ἡ ψυχῆ παρίσταται τῷ

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The old patristic schema of slave-servant-son has already been considered in the previous chapter in the context of Maximus’ Mystagogy. As Anastasius is quick to acknowledge elsewhere, the progression from condemned criminal to royal son is a difficult one. The chief aid and sign of true repentance is the gift of tears. Laypeople were aware of this, since in the question immediately preceding the foregoing, someone complains: “What are we to do, for often while we are in church we want to shed tears for our sins and we are unable to do so?”

Anastasius’ response here encapsulates his more detailed argument in the Homily on the Sixth Psalm, delivered at the start of Lent, the penitential season par excellence. There he gives voice to the frustrated believer dogged by his sins and passions: “Often I fall down before you in church, and immediately I go out and fall into iniquities. […] I am tyrannized by my adversary, I am tyrannized by my thought, I am tyrannized by nature, I am tyrannized by the evil choice; even more, I am tyrannized by the evil habit.” His response is to confirm, even augment, the need for tears:

Tears because of God are a gift of God given to one by the Holy Spirit, a second baptism which I may dare to describe as more necessary than the baptism at the font. The reason is that we nearly all defile our first baptism as we grow up, but through tears, as if by water and the Spirit (Jn 3:5), we are purified once more.
Yet by recognizing that tears were a gift of God rather than a state attained solely by human effort, he allowed room for the kind of discernment that we have remarked in him already. He writes that some people are naturally more prone to weeping, whereas others have a more brusque temperament and do not even weep at the funerals of their loved ones. He advises such to practice certain outward exercises of contrition that will prepare them to shed tears: “He will beat his breast, curtail laughter, lower his eyes; and thus God grants him also tears.”

The cultivation of private prayer is also preferred as a means of attaining this, as more effective than public prayer in the church in front of others.

The doctrine of tears as a second baptism echoes John Climacus. In this brief treatment in the Questions and Answers, Anastasius offers a simplified method, eschewing technicalities and focusing on the basic significance and modus operandi of the gifts of tears. Yet in the Homily on the Sixth Psalm he gives a longer summary of John’s extended analysis of different kinds and stages of weeping, in a spectrum including natural, diabolical, drunken tears as well as spiritual tears arising from fear of God and, finally, those stemming from love of God when servile fear has been surpassed. Thus, although somewhat simplified in comparison to John’s exposition of spiritual tears for monks, Anastasius essentially expects that laypeople partake of the same experience, and consequently explains to them its nature and methods. His expectations are eloquently expressed immediately following in the Homily.

Perhaps what we are saying is unknown to the many. But that is no excuse; for we do not discourse to you of things in the abyss, or of some kind of thing found rarely in the

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πρότερον γὰρ βάπτισμα σχεδὸν πάντες αὐξάνοντες μολύνομεν, διὰ δὲ τοῦ δακρύου πάλιν, ἧςπερ ἔξ ὁδατός καὶ πνεύματος καθαρόμεθα.

1191 Ibid. 2: τὸ στῆθος τύψει, τὸν γέλωτα περικόψει, τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ταπεινώσει, καὶ οὕτως χαρίζεται αὐτῷ ὃ θεὸς καὶ τὸ δάκρυον. My translation. In QA 91 he also offers suggestions for the cultivation of humility—defined as doing good and yet thinking oneself unworthy of God.

1192 Ibid. 3.

1193 Hom. sext. psalm. PG 89:1101b.
deserts among the barbarians, but we speak to you about something given to us inwardly in the heart by Christ who said: “The kingdom of heaven is within you” (Lk. 17:21). In other words, the Holy Spirit, who gives birth in us to compunction and tears, unto remission and rebirth and ransom from sins.\(^{1194}\)

Sacramental lay piety

These spiritual struggles and experiences did not take place in isolation. Anastasius, as we have seen, was a thoroughly ecclesiastical writer. All of the aforementioned practices were set in a context of liturgy and the various communal rites that surrounded it. Perhaps the most vivid glimpse of this whole complex of sacramental Christian life is found in the first story of the second book of the Tales. Anastasius describes a monastery close to Damascus in which a stylite resides. A memorial service is held and crowds of Damascenes are in attendance, “both priests and monks, clergy and laity, city folk and country folk.”\(^{1195}\) The stylite himself is a priest, although he remains on his column and lowers a chalice down in a basket to receive his portion of the Eucharist. But he has secret doubts about the virtue of the senior priest of the metropolis and whether this renders his consecration of the Eucharistic gifts ineffectual. These are banished when a portion of the consecrated gifts slips off the paten onto the altar and is miraculously transformed before the congregation’s very eyes into bleeding flesh. Anastasius records that more than five hundred men witnessed the miracle and that he himself was granted a fragment of the miraculous Eucharist, keeping it with him as a sort of relic, which he contributed to the exorcism of a demoniac in Jerusalem.

\(^{1195}\) Tales 2.1.
The story reveals several important points about lay piety in this period. Firstly, the monastery is closely integrated into the liturgical life of the local diocese: clergy and laity from the area both attend, and the presence of the senior priest of the church in Damascus serves to represent the metropolitan bishop. Secondly, the stylite himself is thus integrated: he is ordained and, though he does not perform the liturgy himself, his participation is taken for granted—the lowering of the chalice from his column is described as a normal occurrence. Thirdly, the liturgy is celebrated on the occasion of a memorial. This probably refers to a normal memorial service for the non-canonized dead rather than the festival of a martyr or other saint; yet with such a crowd it probably had a rather festive air, as graveside commemorations often did in Christian history. Anastasius was asked in the Questions and Answers about the efficacy of memorial services for the dead; this was part of the larger debate over the nature of the soul and its state after death that has left its mark in sixth and seventh century Christian writing. His response cites Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, explaining that venial sins can be absolved through the intercessions of the living on behalf of the dead, but not major sins. Fourthly, the reality of the Eucharist is startlingly demonstrated by the miracle. Anastasius’ purpose in recording this seems at first to be solely in order to reassure believers of the reality of the Eucharist as Christ’s

1196 ἐξάλασεν ὁ στυλίτης εἰς μαλάκιον τὸ ἁγιόν αὐτοῦ ποτήριον ὅπερ ἄνω ἐκέκτητο, καὶ ἀπέστειλαν ἀυτῷ εἰς αὐτό ἁγίαν μερίδα μετὰ καὶ τοῦ τιμίου ἅματος. Note the use of the preposition εἰς + dative, a colloquial Greek usage; Anastasius lets a few such glimpses of the spoken Greek of his time, especially when recording conversations with an unlettered Cypriot boy who converted from Judaism to Christianity, in Tales 2.17. The low level of writing would have made the text more understandable for the lay audience to which it was directed.


1198 The debate called into question the status of saints and their intercession as well; see Nicholas Constas, “An Apology for the Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity: Eustatius Presbyter of Constantinople, On the State of Souls after Death (CPG 7522),” JECS 10, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 267–85. Anastasius took a kind of middle position between the two extremes—denying the consciousness of souls after death altogether, and assigning to them an active, quasi-physical presence—by arguing that souls are active after death to the extent of their holiness. Thus saints are very aware and quick to help believers after death, whereas the souls of sinners are turned inward in a kind of painful recollection of their sins and the corresponding punishment; see Sermones duo III.3, QA 19.

1199 QA 42; cf. Ps.-Dionysius, Ecclesiastical Hierarchy 7.7 (ed. Heil and Ritter, 128).
Body and Blood regardless of the worthiness of the priest. But by the end of the story this appears almost as an afterthought: it is never even revealed if the priest was actually guilty of adultery, as the stylite had been led to believe, and the true target is revealed to be the Muslims.

So let no believer be scandalized, let no one that there is any other faith than that of us Christians, let no one be shaken because of the prosperity of the enemies. Watch, children, and sleep not; stand, and be shaken not; be sober and be not led astray. There is no other saving faith except for that of the holy Church of the Christians.1200

Although not named here, the next story tells of Saracens profaning the shrine of St Epiphanios at Constantia in Cyprus and St Tychikos at Neapolis on the same island; they are derided as “unbelieving new Jews.”1201 Here they disregarded the myrrh streaming from the tombs of the saints, or rather they used it as perfume without being impressed by the miracle. In the same chapter Anastasius recounts the heaven-sent punishment of a group of Arabs who moved into a church of the martyr Theodore near Damascus and insulted the saint’s icon.

That Anastasius sees the Eucharist and the relics of saints in a kind of spectrum of sacred objects is suggested by his own memento from the Damascus miracle and another tale where a woman takes an extra portion of the Eucharist at the liturgy and then uses it to ward off a demon who attacks her as she passes through a dark and noisome spot on her way back from church.1202 This “commodification” of the Eucharist was happening elsewhere at this time.1203 It probably offended the sensibilities even of some Christians, and indeed may have been, in addition to icons, relics, and the cult of saints, part of the complex of material objects and rites that

1200 Tales 2.1.
1201 Tales 2.2.
1202 Tales 2.4. The Eucharist is also described as a protection against malignant sorcerers at Tales 2.4 and 6, but in this case as ingested normally at Communion.
1203 Cf. Gregory the Great, Dialogues II, written a few generations earlier, where a portion of the Eucharist is buried with a dead monk as a phylactery.
iconoclasts later sought to reform or purge.\textsuperscript{1204} Although the process had not begun with him, in the context of his time and place, Anastasius could hardly avoid externalizing and objectifying the Eucharist as one of the prime symbols of Christianity that distinguished it from both Judaism and Islam. In one particularly sensational story, he recounts the story of a group of Christians who, while staying in Mecca, spent the night near the Ka’ba. They claimed to have witnessed the ghostly figure of an ugly and shabby old woman arising out of the ground and taking the heads and hooves of the countless sheep and camels sacrificed there by the Muslims.\textsuperscript{1205} As improbable as this nighttime vision may be, the blood sacrifices of the Muslims cannot but have seemed to Christians a gross anachronism, harking back to the ancient rites of paganism that had all but disappeared from the Roman Christian world for at least a century.\textsuperscript{1206} To such practices the unbloody sacrifice of the Eucharist would have presented a marked contrast.

Yet in his case he still maintained a strong emphasis on the spiritual aspect of Eucharistic communion—indeed, he may have even overemphasized it. As we have already observed with regard to his warnings against receiving heretical communion when traveling, it seems that laypeople already had a great devotion to the sacrament, even the expression of this piety may have been sometimes questionable from a normative theological standpoint. In the Tales Anastasius was intent on demonstrating the reality and power of the Eucharist against evil demons and unbelievers. In the \textit{Questions and Answers} and the \textit{Homily on the Divine Liturgy} he addressed more technical questions about proper behavior, both outwardly and inwardly, when approaching the Eucharist. There are three questions and answers dealing with whether or not to

\textsuperscript{1204} The doctrine of the Eucharist was a key point of contention discussed by iconoclasts and iconophiles, respectively, at the Council of Hiereia (754) and Constantinople (787).
\textsuperscript{1205} \textit{Tales} 2.11.
approach the Eucharist after sexual activity the night before (either with one’s wife or through a nocturnal emission).\textsuperscript{1207} Anastasius grudgingly permits it for laypeople. The first time he addresses it in response to the question whether washing with water was a sufficient purification. He prefers washing oneself with one’s tears, which are offered as a sacrifice to God from one’s own body just as sperm often is as a sacrifice to the devil through unlawful intercourse.\textsuperscript{1208} For lack of such spiritual tears, external washing is conceded as a dispensation, to at least keep laypeople aware of the solemnity of the Eucharist.\textsuperscript{1209} In the last of the three he mentions one of the extenuating circumstances leading him to allow for this economy: if a man comes home from a long journey, he may sleep with his wife and then receive Communion the next day.\textsuperscript{1210} This answer, implying as it does that the layman was eager to receive Communion right after he returned, provides further evidence that orthodox churches were often few and far between, as posited based on the question about carrying a reserve Eucharist for private communion while traveling. Anastasius specifies that this permission to fulfill both conjugal and ecclesiastical duties in short succession is grounded in the assumption that the man is otherwise clean from sins. One way to be in such a state is described in response to another Eucharistic question: How often should one receive Communion? Anastasius leaves it up to one’s conscience, but cautions against staying away from the sacrament for too long, “as does the race of the Armenians,” and thus giving room to sin.\textsuperscript{1211} He suggests almsgiving as a particularly good way to cleanse one’s

\textsuperscript{1207} QA 38, 39, 67.

\textsuperscript{1208} QA 38. This qualification is important, referring to unlawful uses of intercourse without denigrating marriage itself.

\textsuperscript{1209} This is my interpretation of the unclear phrase at the end of QA 38.2: οἱ γυναῖκες τοῦ πνευματικοῦ λοιποῦ τῆς ψυχῆς καθαρίζοντος, ἀποπλῦσον καὶ τὴν σάρκα τοῖς ὀψίσι, καὶ Εἰ μὲν οὕτως μᾶλλον μεταλαμβάνοις, ἵνα μὴ εἰς παντελῆ καταφρόνησιν ἔλθωσιν.

\textsuperscript{1210} QA 67.

\textsuperscript{1211} QA 41. This is an interesting observation on contemporary customs stemming from one particular region, with which Anastasius would have been vicariously familiar through the large number of Armenian pilgrims to Sinai and Jerusalem. They seem to have been ahead of their time, since the infrequent reception of communion became widespread in medieval Christendom.
sins in order to commune. Above we noted the use of alms as a form of penance, and its appearance here in the context of the Eucharist suggests the close relationship of the Eucharist to confession of sins and absolution.

In the *Homily on the Divine Liturgy* Anastasius moves from private to public, from the home to the actual church, rebuking common misbehavior at the liturgy among his audience while instructing them in proper and heartfelt liturgical piety. He begins with the divine office in general: the Psalms sung in church provide training in piety toward God (*theosebeia*), and attendance with an unoccupied mind (*prosedria kai scholê*) listening carefully to the prayers and Scriptures is the mother of all virtues. This attitude of making time (*scholê*) for the things of God is contrasted with the common habit of tardiness in arriving at church and eagerness to leave it. And even while physically present at church, people’s minds are absorbed in concern (*merimna*) for worldly things, in judging others, in chatting with their neighbor, gossiping or negotiating business; men ogle women while women preen themselves on their looks. People complain if the Gospel reading or Eucharistic canon is a slightly longer than usual. Many loiter outside until the distribution of the Communion, then rush in and snatch it up. But they do not stay long, rushing from the church as if from a fire or a courthouse. Many of these go right off to give themselves up to worldly pleasures. When approaching the Eucharist, people take care to wear clean clothes and wash their hands, but neglect repentance and the purification of the heart. It is not entering the church and saluting the icons and crosses that is pleasing to God, but cleansing of sins through confession and tears and a humbled heart. Anastasius expands on snatches of the Eucharistic prayers to instruct his audience in proper reverence: “Let us stand well, let us stand with fear, let us attend to the holy oblation … Let us lift up our hearts and our minds … Let us attend, the Holy Gifts for the holy.” One can approach the Holy Gifts by forgiving one’s

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1212 *Hom.sacr.synax.* PG 89: 825–49.
neighbor; mnēsikakia (Munitiz offers several alternative translations to capture the whole range of meaning: ‘vindictiveness,’ ‘harbouring grudges,’ ‘lack of forgiveness’¹²¹³) is the worst of sins because it is persistent and renders other virtues useless—including virginity. Echoing Question and Answers 47, regarding one’s inability to bear ascetical penance, Anastasius offers forgiving one’s neighbor and abstaining from judgment. Instead the laypeople gossip about their clergy and condemn them. Anastasius reassures his audience that the grace of the Spirit will descend on the gifts regardless of the celebrant’s virtue or lack thereof; apparently the stylite described at the beginning of the second book of Tales was not the only person to worry about this. Anastasius admits an objection—is not even the bishop subject to canonical penalties if he sins?—but rebuts it immediately—yes, he is so subject, but will be judged by God or by his own episcopal superior (meizonos archiereôs), therefore do not seize sacred dignity (hieron axiôma) which has not been entrusted to you. Instead, approach the divine mysteries with faith and practical repentance and a pure conscience. Typically for Anastasius, he rounds off this admonition with an old monastic tale of the desert about a lazy monk who was useless when it came to his monastic responsibilities but was admitted to heaven nonetheless because, from the time of his tonsure, he had not judged anyone at all.

In this homily Anastasius exaggerates the faults of laypeople on purpose, in order to make his rebuke more effective, whereas the Questions and Answers and even the Lenten Homily on the Sixth Psalm provide a corrective to this highly critical view. These latter texts suggest a laity that is devoted to the sacramental elements of their faith and eager to learn more. We must be cautious not to assume that all laypeople were this interested in their religion. At the same time the various questions suggesting a less-than-spotless record in regard to carnal sins

and an imperfect understanding of some basic doctrines of Christianity offers a built-in corrective, showing us that we are not dealing solely with an élite corps of philochristoi and philoponoi.

Anastasius’ high, perhaps idealistic, estimation of the capabilities of his lay audience even led him to impart to them some of his more speculative and controversial thoughts on the Eucharist as it related to the spiritual life. There is in fact a tension in Anastasius’ thought between, on the one hand, his fascination with physical and physiological explanations (even for spiritual phenomena) and his emphasis on the central materials symbols of Christianity (Eucharist, Cross(es), relics, pilgrimage sites, icons), and on the other hand his exaltation of the soul as the divine element in man and an esoteric conception of a transcendent spiritual Eucharist beyond the material sacrament. The most extensive discussion of the spiritual Eucharist is found in an intricate and somewhat obscure passage near the end of the Hexaemeron, but the essence of his teaching on this point is expressed succinctly early on in the Questions and Answers.\textsuperscript{1214}

Coming on the heels of his instruction about the nature of true Christianity as the personal indwelling of God in the individual human being, he uses an exegetical question to further develop his mystical theology.

Q. Who are those true worshippers, who will worship the Father and God neither on the mountain, nor in Jerusalem (Jn 4:23, 21)? For it is obvious that insofar as they do not worship in Jerusalem, then neither in any other place on earth, because there is nothing more worthy of respect here below than Jerusalem.

After warning that the answer is very difficult and obscure, he proceeds to quote a holy desert anchorite who, he said, was still alive:

\textsuperscript{1214} Hex. XII; see also Hod. 22.1-2.
Somebody from here came across a man, an anchorite, leading the contemplative life. He said to him: “I am astonished, father, that you can support in this way to be separated from the holy church and far from communion and the holy services.” (3.) In answer the man of God said to him, “Sir, all the services and liturgies and feasts and communions and sacrifices take place for this purpose, that one may be purified from sins, and that God may dwell in that person … So when someone becomes the vivified, divinely-fashioned temple of God, and the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit inhabit and walk within that person, the God-bearing soul loses all desire for constructed churches and visible sacrifices and material services and human feasts, and she desires to adore God neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem (Jn 4:21). The reason is that the soul possesses the Father within herself, and the Son, the High Priest, is also within, and the Spirit, the true fire; also within are the true sacrifice to God—a contrite heart (Ps 50:19)—and the altar—a pure conscience—and the propitiation for sins—spiritual tears—and the higher Jerusalem—the exulting soul. To sum up, being spiritual, with eyes of the Spirit, one offers up spiritual sacrifices […] The person judged worthy to possess these things, as one divinized through the indwelling of God within himself, this person can truly venerate them within himself, or rather he can venerate himself in himself, and revere himself as seeing his flesh existing as the tent of God, the house, the altar and sanctuary of God. Such a person reveres neither heaven, nor the angels, nor any visible sacrifice, nor anything else that is in the world, above his own temple of the body, in which he sees indwelling the fulness of the Trinity.\footnote{\textit{QA} 6. Q. Τίνες εἰσίν ἐκεῖνοι οἱ ἁληθεῖς προσκυνηταί, οἵτινες οὔτε ἐν τῷ ὄρει, οὔτε ἐν Ἰεροσολύμωι προσκυνήσουσιν τῷ Πατρὶ καὶ τῷ Θεῷ; Ὅπου γὰρ ἐν Ἰεροσολύμωι οὐ προσκυνοῦσιν, εὐθὺς ἐν ἔτερῳ τόπῳ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς· οὐδὲν γὰρ τῆς Ἰερουσαλήμ ἐνθάδε τιμώτερον. Λ. (1.) \ldots Παραγενάμενος γὰρ τις τῶν ἐνταῦθα πρὸς ἄνδρα ἀναχωρητὴν ἃς χαζόντα φησίν πρὸς αὐτὸν, θαυμάζω πάτερ, ὡς οὗτος διακαρτερεῖς}
Anastasius, a Sinaite at heart, used the phenomenon of anchorite holy men isolated from the normal liturgical structures of the Church as a springboard for a de-normativization of those structures. He obviously was aware that he was expressing a somewhat audacious opinion, given his caveat at the beginning of this response; but he appears not to have thought through all of its dogmatic implications. In his view, the physical sacrament of the Eucharist is obviously of immense value, but only as a preparatory, purificatory instrument. Once dispassion has been attained, the spiritual man experiences a kind of participation in Christ that is cut loose from any physical participation in the sacrament. This entails problems for the persistence of Christ’s full humanity even after his Resurrection and Ascension.\footnote{Likewise, his bold argument that the perfect spiritual man only venerates the temple of his own body because of the indwelling of God faintly echoes the teaching of the Origenizing monks known as Isochrists in the Judaean desert of the sixth century, condemned several times during the reign of Justinian.\footnote{The piety of the early Egyptian monks solved the problem of desert hermits in a more naïve but more orthodox way: holy men who could not attend the liturgy were given Communion by angels.}} Anastasius himself offers a similar solution in the 

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εἶναι κεκωρισμένος τῆς ἀγίας ἐκκλησίας καὶ ἀπεχόμενος τῆς μεταλήψεως καὶ τῶν ἁγίων συνάξεων. (3.) Πρὸς δὲν ἀπεκρίθη ὁ ἄνθρωπος τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐπεν- Πάσαι αἱ συνάξεις καὶ λειτουργίαι καὶ οἰκονομίαι καὶ θυσίαι ὅ ἄνθρωπος, διὰ τούτῳ γίνονται, ὅπως καθαρισθῇ ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτοῦ, καὶ οἰκύση ὁ θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ ... (4.) Ἐπάν οὖν ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς ἐμφυσος καὶ θεόπλαστος γενήται τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ὁ Πατήρ καὶ ὁ Υἱός καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα τό άγιον οἰκή καὶ ἑμπεριπατήτη ἐν αὐτῷ, ἀφισταται ἡ ψυχή ἡ θεο-φόρος ἀπὸ παντὸς πόθου ἐκκλησιῶν κτιστῶν, καὶ θυσίων ὀρατῶν, καὶ συνάξεων ὑλικῶν, καὶ οἰκονομίας ἀνθρωπίνων, καὶ οὐτέ ἐν τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ, οὔτε ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ ἐπιθυμεῖ προσκυνεῖν τῷ θεῷ· ἔνδον γὰρ ἐν ἐαυτῷ ἔχει τὸν Πατέρα, ἔνδον τὸν Υἱόν, τὸν ἀρχιερεία, ἔνδον τὸ Πνεῦμα, τὸ ἀληθινὸν πῦρ, ἔνδον τὴν ἀληθῆ θυσίαν τῷ θεῷ, πνεύμα συντετριμμένον, ἔνδον τὸ θυσιαστήριον, τὴν καθαρὰν συνείδησιν, ἔνδον τὸ ἱερατήριον τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν, τὸ πνευματικὸν ἅγιον, ἔνδον τὴν ἀληθευσάλημ, τὴν ἀγαλλιωμένην ψυχὴν. Λοιπὸν ὡς πνευματικὸς τοῖς πνευματικοῖς ἀργυροὶς πνευματικῶς θυσίας προσάγει [...] ἀπέρ ὁ ἄξιωθεὶς κτήσασθαι, ὡς θεωθείς τῇ ἐνοκλήσει τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ ἐν αὐτῷ, αὐτὸς λοιπὸν ἐν ἐαυτῷ, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἐαυτὸν προσκυνεῖ αὐτὸς ἐν ἐαυτῷ, καὶ ἐαυτὸν σέβει ὅρων αὐτοῦ τὴν σάρκα σκηνήν θεοῦ καὶ οἴκον καὶ θυσιαστήριον καὶ ἀγίασμα θεοῦ ὑπάρχουσαν. Ὁ δὲ τοιοῦτος οὔτε ὀφειλόν, οὔτε ἄγγελοι, οὔτε θυσίαι ὀρμωμένη, οὐδὲ ἄλλο τι τῶν ἐν κόσμῳ σέβει ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἱδίον τοῦ σώματος ναὸν, ἐν ὦ ὃ ὁ δὲ πλῆρωμα τῆς Τριάδος κατοικοῦν.\footnote{Cf. Maximus on this point, with his insistence on the fully embodied state of Jesus after his Ascension as a bulwark against Origenist heresy (Ambiguitates 42, PG 91: 1332ff.).} \footnote{Cf. Brian Daley, “What did ‘Origenism’ mean in the sixth century,” in Origeniana Sexta: Origène et la Bible, edited by Gilles Dorival et al. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995), 627–38.}
apply it in his elaboration of Eucharistic theology. He tells the tale of two naked hermits who entered the monastery of Sinai at the hour of Communion, took their portion, and immediately left. They were miraculously hidden from the eyes of all but one monk, who ran after them and obtained a few edifying words before they disappeared into the desert wastes.\footnote{Tales 1.33.}

*Lay piety under new pressures*

We have already touched on Anastasius’ reaction to Islam at several places in this chapter. In this final section I would like to focus in on a few particular components of this reaction to round out this examination of lay piety as seen through his writings. His concern to justify the ways of God to men, at least to a degree, is evident through much of his oeuvre. His appreciative use of the standard science of his day while remaining faithful to the fundamental Christian belief in the providence and judgment of God makes him somewhat unique among contemporary theologians. He has not left behind an original re-examination of the received notions of the Christian empire and its precarious place in the new world order shaped by Islam, since he did not yet fully appreciate that it was a new order. But he did the best he could to apply his knowledge and zeal to the pressing problems facing Chalcedonian orthodox Christians of his day.

In addition to the apologetical problems discussed above and destruction of churches and holy objects by Muslim raiders, the most significant problem was that of Christians pressured to renounce, or at least neglect, their faith by main force or difficult circumstances. Most prominent among these were captives of the Arabs, who were at the mercy of their captors. Many tens of

In beginning of Tales 2.8 he pauses to explain further why he is writing. This second introduction to the work is more to the point than the florid bucolic one that was quoted earlier in the chapter. Instead of speaking of his pastoral duties in general metaphors, he explains that he has collected stories of Christian miracles to bolster the faith of his coreligionists, and especially “our brothers the captives.”\footnote{Tales 2.8.} He then goes on to tell a fantastic and bloody story of the last Christian Arab of Sinai. The tale tells of the forced conversion of the Arabs of the region to Islam. They at first resisted but after a siege on the summit of Mt Sinai they capitulated and converted. The hero of the story alone remained faithful; at his wife’s request he slew her and their children so that they would not fall into the rapacious hands of their opponents, and he threw himself off the rocks but miraculously survived. He then lived the rest of his life as a fugitive in the desert, until he returned to the monastery to give up his soul. At the moment of his death, a divine sign informed the monks that his frightful sacrifice had been acceptable to God and that he had received the portion of the righteous in the next life.

The intention of the story is clearly to encourage captives to persevere in their faith and endure hardship and even death rather than apostasize. Several of the Questions and Answers address their difficulties in more practical detail. The great preachers of early Christianity had used their rhetorical skills to depict the desperate plight of the poor, in order to move grudging
laypeople to actually turn their wealth into alms. Anastasius follows that tradition in this passage, but in a way that evinces the changed religious context. In the response to the “man in authority” quoted earlier, in the course of reassuring him that he can live a Christian life despite his wealth and duties, Anastasius refers to “the present generation, seeing our brethren and co-religionists and children in such straitness and misfortune, in deserts and untrodden places and in torments and hunger and thirst and nakedness and hard labor and toil.” The plight of these captives is depicted in another question, expressed in their voice:

Q. If I am subject to servitude, or in captivity, and I am not able to spend time in church as I wish or when I wish, or to fast or to keep vigil, how can I be saved and obtain remission of sins?

A. It is clear that captivity and servitude and suffering have happened to you for remission of sins. Therefore, if you keep your faith and give thanks to God for your servitude and consider it in humility saying, “You are just Lord, in all that you have done (Dn 3:27 LXX) to me, and I have not suffered anything in proportion to my sins,” this humility and gratitude will be reckoned to you as fasting and liturgy. Not only that, but if a man loves God, he is able, wherever he may be, to remember God in his heart. The questioner considers such practices necessary for forgiveness and salvation, part and parcel as they were of Christian preaching and teaching. But Anastasius, in line with his theological and ascetical principles, turns the answer to the essence of the matter, to the disposition of the heart and its activity. The difficulties of conditions actually serve to bring together monk and the

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1222 QA 87. My translation.
1223 In addition to the previously discussed passages on the inner spiritual life, cf. Const. III.3, which argues that the essential virtues are found in the soul and so can be achieved even by those crippled and ill; the same would apply, mutatis mutandis, for these captives.
layman. Anastasius implies by following up with an old story from the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, where Anthony the Great was informed by God that there was a doctor in Alexandria who was his equal through his alms-giving and constant prayer.\(^{1224}\) Here we see a classic apophthegm, a piece of the wisdom of the desert that had served to emphasize the unity of both monasticism and lay life in the one Christian body, taking on a new poignancy and relevance through its application to the contemporary dislocation.\(^{1225}\)

Yet such captives were not completely short of hope when it came to receiving the sacraments. The Sinaïte fathers appear to have made an especial effort to minister to the captives held by Arabs in the peninsula. One tale in the first book was recounted to Anastsios by an Abba Matthias who dwelt at Arandoula, near the Red Sea, in order to give Communion to the captives in that part of the desert every Sunday.\(^{1226}\) It is not stated whether Abba Matthias was sent there by the Monastery of the Theotokos at Sinai or by another superior, or if he chose this ministry on his own. Another story is recounted by a Christian slave of an Arab, who pastured his master’s camels; he received a blessing from a hermit, but when he thought to go back a moment later and ask him to pray for his emancipation, the hermit had miraculously disappeared.\(^{1227}\) This story focuses on the mysterious power of the anchorite rather than the plight of the slave. In another, however, an unnamed lover of God sold himself into slavery to redeem a captive who was being severely mistreated by his captors. The generous man was soon bought back by a group of pious laypeople (*philochristoi*) and he received a far greater spiritual reward, being flooded by the

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\(^{1224}\) *Apophthegmata patrum collectio alphabetica*, Anthony 24 (PG 65: 84b).

\(^{1225}\) Incidentally, the mention of almsgiving in the apophthegm would be more relevant to the case of the questioner in Question 88 than to the destitute slave of the desert addressed here. The monks of Sinai practiced what Anastasius preached, bringing communion to Christian captives in the desert when possible (*Tales* 1.33). In *Tales* 2.19, Anastasius describes a man who is so full of Christian love that he sells himself into slavery to ransom a prisoner; Flusin argues that Anastasius is the man in question, speaking in the third person out of humility (“Démons et Sarrasins,” 400–404).

\(^{1226}\) *Tales* 1.33.

\(^{1227}\) *Tales* 1.36.
grace of Christ in both soul and body.\textsuperscript{1228} The captors are not specified as Muslim Arabs nor the original captive as a Christian, but the supposition is natural given the other stories. As mentioned above, Flusin has argued persuasively that the man who sold himself into slavery is Anastasius himself.\textsuperscript{1229}

Two more stories return to the theme of the liturgy. In the first, the oppressor is not directly an Arab, but a Jewish overseer of the shipyard at Klysma on the Red Sea. It is not clear whether his Christian workers are slaves, corvée laborers, or hired hands, but he treats them with contempt. When they request to be given some time off to attend the liturgy for the feast of the Theotokos, he refuses and adds insult to injury by blaspheming against the Virgin, only to have his brains dashed out by a falling beam shortly after, which is interpreted as a divine punishment for his enmity toward God.\textsuperscript{1230} The story again emphasizes liturgical life as a primary concern of lay Christians. It is also instructive in that it shows that pressure could be exercised on Christians not just by Muslims, but by other groups that found their social and political position improved under the new regime. The form of monotheism espoused by Jews made them more akin to Muslims in many respects, and they were a natural counterweight to the Christian majority.

Another tale tells of a domestic slave, an elderly Christian woman in Damascus named Euphemia, whose Arab mistress punished her with two hundred lashes every time she attended the liturgy, which she nevertheless continued to do. Anastasius calls her a martyr, although she was eventually freed by the efforts of another Christian.\textsuperscript{1231}

The last tale involving a Christian captive tells of an early martyr under the caliphate, George the Black. He was a slave of an Arab in Damascus from a young age and had converted

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1228} Tales 2.19.
\item \textsuperscript{1229} Flusin, “Démons et Sarassins,” 400–404.
\item \textsuperscript{1230} Tales 2.9. Which feast is not specified. In modern Orthodoxy, the feast par excellence of the Virgin is her Dormition on August 15\textsuperscript{th}. It was becoming popular around this time.
\item \textsuperscript{1231} Tales 2.21. Her rescuer may be Anastasius himself again.
\end{itemize}
to Islam at the age of eight. As an adolescent with more knowledge he converted back to his
original faith and became a model Christian. One of his fellow slaves, also an apostate to Islam,
denounced him at the mosque, and George was stretched on the ground and cut in two by his
master.\footnote{Tales 2.22.} That martyrdom was not an uncommon event, or at least not an uncommon threat, is
suggested by the assumption in one of the Questions and Answers that Christians are often
dragged before tribunals to confess their faith, but sometimes allowed to go free without
converting.\footnote{QA 89.}

It was inevitable, however, that there would be apostates to Islam. Anastasius mentions
them here and there in his writings. The Tales record a sailor from Clysma named Moses who
apostasized while on business in the Arabian peninsula, and the son of a friend of Anastasius in
Clysma, who converted back and forth between Christianity and Islam several times.\footnote{Tales 2.10 and 13.}
This demonstrates a lack of clear boundaries at this time, or at least the enforcement thereof. Apart
from these simple folk, in the Hodégos Anastasius gives us intriguing evidence of more educated
apostates from Christianity to Islam in eastern lands, who following their conversion composed a
list of apparent contradictions found in Scripture, to be used in arguments against Christians.\footnote{Hod. 22.2.}
He does not specify that they converted to Islam, but it is the most likely candidate, since the list
also contains problems from the Old Testament, which would be self-defeating for a Jew.
Furthermore, after the list Anastasius gives an argument for why the Christian Scriptures,
particularly the New Testament, have never been corrupted, claiming that the multitude of
copies, their antiquity, and their translation into all the languages of the earth made it impossible

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{1232} Tales 2.22.\textsuperscript{1233} QA 89.\textsuperscript{1234} Tales 2.10 and 13.\textsuperscript{1235} Hod. 22.2.}
for them to be altered without the change being detected.\textsuperscript{1236} Despite the confidence of his argument, the preface to this whole section reveals Anastasius’ anxiety regarding these apostates. He fears that, by questioning matters of faith that Christians had long taken for granted, they would force them to start questioning their faith critically and try to use reason to understand its mysteries. Anastasius believed that such rational inquiry was doomed to failure, but he felt the need to at least warn Christians about the kind of arguments they would face.\textsuperscript{1237} Most of the ones in the list he gives could be solved satisfactorily, at least for a solely Christian audience, by recourse to old exegetical commonplaces. But the apologetical ground was rapidly shifting under Anastasius’ feet. Such commonplaces would have been more or less sufficient, because in the past no mainstream Christian theologians had questioned them, since most monophysites and Nestorians at least shared a core of trinitarian faith with the Chalcedonians. Islam disregarded this common ground and forced Christian apologists to begin to develop new arguments to defend their flock against this new threat. They were not caught completely flat-footed, since arguments already developed against Judaism could often be adjusted to counter Islam. In Anastasius we see one of the first theologians to began that process.

Despite these harbingers of more intellectual challenges to Christianity, during the lifetime of Anastasius the main threat to Christian faith and virtue was still violence. Apart from martyrdom, the most conspicuous example of such compulsion was the plight of enslaved Christian women who were forced into sex by their masters, about whom Anastasius is asked.\textsuperscript{1238} He distinguishes between those women who submit to the situation out of love of pleasure, and

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  \item \textsuperscript{1236} Hod. 22.3. Presumably they could also be Zoroastrians. But it seems unlikely that Christians would be converting to that faith in this period. There remains the problem that Muslims considered the Old Testament, or at least the Pentateuch, inspired Scripture. But Christians and Jews were both accused by Muslims of corrupting their scriptures, which may have offered an opening for talking points such as these.
  \item \textsuperscript{1237} For unquestioning faith in Anastasius see QA 22.
  \item \textsuperscript{1238} QA 76.
\end{itemize}
thus receive a heavier judgment, and those who do so out of necessity. This passage is difficult to interpret. The question appears to have been asked on behalf of the women in question, not by them directly. It may reflect male anxiety about the honor of their kinswomen, but it may also express the anxiety of the slaves themselves regarding their spiritual state and access to the sacraments. Anastasius’ answer seems to be attempting to steer a middle course between predominant notions of female shame, and honor as defined by physical purity, and a more spiritualizing view that located purity primarily in the inner disposition, allowing women a way to respond to the violence visited on their persons.

The question leads him to address a related issue, which pertains to communal solidarity among Christians: he attacks those women who in the midst of these circumstances flaunt luxury right in front of their sisters who are in chains. It is unclear whether he is referring specifically to the concubines already mentioned, or generally inveighing against those Christians who would enjoy wealth while others are in want. This latter category was not limited to slaves who prostituted themselves in order to obtain a measure of physical ease. The aforementioned Question 88 was posed by someone who was apparently not a slave, but who was rather “in a position of authority and has many blessings from God, who administers affairs …”1239 The questioner would presumably have been one of the many Christians who still held a post in the civil bureaucracy, a necessary cog in the machinery of tax gathering and governance that the Arab conquerors inherited from the Roman state, and largely maintained to their own benefit.1240 Whether those who stood to gain by Arab rule were slaves or secretaries, the dichotomy of oppression and opportunity was, in fact, one of the greatest challenges facing Anastasius and his

1239 Ibid., 88.
fellow Christian leaders and teachers at this time. The advent of Islamic rule brought with it not a full-fledged persecution, which might have strengthened and purified the Church through adversity. Instead it imposed a long-term, continuous burden of subjugation and taxation that, however, allowed some of the Christians to benefit by serving as middlemen or providers of goods and services to the ruling Muslim elites. The resultant tensions threatened to fracture the Christian community along lines of wealth and privilege. The danger was, of course, not completely new; class differences had always been seen by conscientious pastors as obstacles to unity within the body of the Church. In fact some of the same remedies were supplied by Anastasius: notably almsgiving and the simple empathy and compassion that came of considering the sufferings of one’s brethren, rather than ignoring them. In this way he mobilized age-old virtues and long-held Christian practices in a creative way under the new circumstances.

**Conclusion**

Many more examples of Anastasius’s instruction in lay piety could be adduced, but let this suffice to indicate the typical concerns of his flock and the general lines of his thought. A broadly erudite and competent theologian, his true genius lay in interpreting doctrines for his Chalcedonian brethren and laying down clear guidelines of belief and conduct, along with sufficient basic reasoning to make these rules convincing and broadly applicable. The picture of his audience that can be gleaned from his writings is of a pious people who knew the general requirements of belief and practice, and were intelligent enough to ask for the deeper meaning, but needed further guidance on details. Such instruction was always necessary for the laity,

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1241 For the early development of redemptive almsgiving as a response to social pressures, see Roman Garrison, *Redemptive Almsgiving in Early Christianity.* (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1993).
especially in a climate of Christological competition, but the political dominance of Islam changed many of the circumstances of Christian life and debate. In response, Anastasius emphasized a strong commitment to the holy pilgrimage sites of Sinai and Jerusalem (crucially, still in Chalcedonian custody), a sensitive application of monastic ascetical principles to life in the world, and a fervent defense of Christian relics, images, and sacraments in the context of a strict Chalcedonian orthodox theology. In this way, he was able to produce an articulate expression of lay culture to sustain the Chalcedonian ecclesiastical community as it faced the theological and political challenges of living under Muslim rulers and alongside Monophysite neighbors.
9. Law, Word, and Grace: State, Church, and laypeople at the turn of the eighth century

Sources

The late seventh and early eighth century are often considered the darkest years of the Dark Ages of Byzantium. Recent efforts of scholars to expand the historiographical net beyond the old standard sources—especially beyond Greek into Syriac, Armenian, and other eastern languages—have reaped a rich harvest for the period up to about 660.\textsuperscript{1242} Thereafter even these valiant efforts trail off. Yet for the purposes of the present study, there is no lack of texts.\textsuperscript{1243} These can be divided into four categories: theological, legislative, historical, and hagiographical.

In the first category are primarily the works of Andrew of Crete and Germanus of Constantinople, both later canonized as saints by the Byzantine Church. Their careers span the whole length of our period and, in a sense, define it. Both were career clergy of an ascetical bent. Andrew was born in Damascus around 660, enrolled among the clergy of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem at a young age, and moved to Constantinople in the early 680s shortly after the Sixth Ecumenical Council. After spending some years as a simple monk, he was made a deacon of the Great Church and appointed head of two major charitable houses, the Orphanage and the Eugeniou, around the turn of the century. At some point thereafter he was appointed Metropolitan of Gortyna and thus primate of all Crete, perhaps around 715. Germanus was from

\textsuperscript{1242} As mapped out in James Howard-Johnston, \textit{Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

\textsuperscript{1243} As already discussed in the introduction, especially with reference to the work of Averil Cameron. Cf. her observation: “In such a situation, the proceedings and antecedents of church councils and the many other kinds of religious and theological writings do not constitute the backdrop of seventh-century history so much as its centre ground.” From “Byzantium and the Past in the Seventh Century: The Search for Redefinition,” in \textit{The Seventh Century: Change and Continuity, Proceedings of a Joint French and British Colloquium Held at the Warburg Institute 8-9 July 1988}, edited by Jacques Fontaine and J.N. Hillgarth (London: Warburg Institute, 1992), 260. For an overview of the available sources for this and the subsequent period, see Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, \textit{Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era} (c. 680–850). \textit{The Sources: An Annotated Survey} (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2001), and for an overview of its history, see idem, \textit{Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), Ch. 1.
Constantinople, from a family related to the Heraclian dynasty, which led to his being made a eunuch at a young age as a result of a power struggle. He also rose in the ranks of the patriarchal administration and attained the office first of Metropolitan of Cyzicus and then of Patriarch of Constantinople between 715 and 730. Both Andrew and Germanus supported the brief monothelete resurgence under emperor Philippicus (713–715) but then prospered after the restoration of dyothelete orthodoxy. Both opposed the anti-icon policy of Leo III, leading to the loss of their episcopal sees. Neither was a theological genius, but they served to consolidate and popularize the ascetical and liturgical heritage of previous age through homilies, hymnography, and treatises summarizing traditional doctrine. What they did offer that might be considered “original” is the beginning of a theological defense of icons, which, though unsuccessful in their lifetime, provided the seeds for the eventual vindication of the cult of icons.1244

Twenty-five of Andrew’s homilies have been published—though the authenticity of a few is doubted—while ten known ones are still unedited.1245 In the category of hymnography, he pioneered the new kanôn form which was being developed in monastic settings; his most famous one is the Great Canon, a very long penitential hymn for Lent.1246 Many of his sermons and hymns have become integral components of the Byzantine liturgical cycle. In both genres Andrew combines high theology with devotional piety and ascetical practice. There is explicit evidence in several of his sermons that they were preached to laypeople as well as monastics.

1245 CPG 8170–8214; cf. Cunningham, “A High-Style Preacher,” 268. The bulk of the edited homilies are published in PG 97: 806–1302; others will be cited as presented in this chapter.
1246 On the Great Canon see Giannouli, Die beide byzantinischen Kommentare, 31–47.
and his hymns were probably heard by a similar audience. Of Germanus’s works eight homilies have been preserved, along with a fragment of a ninth; all are Mariological, preached on the occasions of feasts such as the Presentation of the Theotokos in the Temple (November 22), the Annunciation (March 25), the Dormition (August 15) and the Sacred Girdle (August 31).

Making allowances for accidents (or choices) of manuscript preservation, this exclusive focus on the Virgin seems to indicate her centrality in the civic and imperial identity of Constantinople. Another work entitled *Ecclesiastical History* is in fact a commentary on the Divine Liturgy, simpler and more practical than the *Mystagogy* of Maximus and destined to great popularity in the succeeding centuries, both East and West. Germanus also wrote several works of more dogmatic content. Among his epistles, a long one to Thomas the metropolitan of Claudiopolis provides much information on nascent hostility to icons and early arguments in defense of them. Lastly, two treatises are preserved, one a *Synopsis of Heresies and Synods* up to his time, and the other a dialogue *On Predestined Terms of Life*. The homilies of Germanus can thus provide us with some comparanda to Andrew, although they are generally less rich in information than those of the latter, while his doctrinal works give us insights into various Byzantine controversies and their impact on Byzantine society—lay, clerical, and monastic—

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1248 *Historia mystica ecclesiae catholicae*, text after Nilo Borgia and translated by Paul Meyendorff, *On the Divine Liturgy* (Crestwood NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984). Germanus is also credited with many hymns, but the reliability of these attributions is questionable.

1249 *Epistula ad Thomam episcopum Claudiopoleos*, PG 98: 164–188.

1250 *The Synopsis* (published as *De haeresibus et synodis* in PG 98: 40–88) shows signs of being a composite work, with parts incorporated later in the eighth century, but I will not draw on it heavily in this chapter anyway. *On Predestined Terms of Life*, was edited and translated by Charles Garton and Leendert G. Westerink (Buffalo: Department of Classics SUNY Buffalo, 1979), cited henceforth as *De vitae termin.*
some more recondite but others more pressing, in particular the emerging movement against icons.

The legislative sources for this period consist of church canons and imperial legislation. Both express their motivations and concerns at some length and mark the development of law in a more medieval, Christian direction. The *Canons of Trullo* were promulgated at a major council held in the imperial palace (in the domed hall, i.e. *Trullo*) in 691–92 in order to make up for the lack of canons at the previous two ecumenical councils held at Constantinople. The convening of Trullo was a means for the young emperor Justinian II to stake his claim to imperial majesty as a major legislator, but there was also a real need for a concerted episcopal response to the past half-century of upheaval. The *Proophonëtikos Logos* (an opening address to the emperor by the bishops) and the canons themselves expresses an articulate and confident theory of ecclesiastical governance working hand-in-hand with the imperial authority for the healing of the whole Church and especially of the laypeople travailing in spiritual ignorance.

This attitude is also present in the major imperial law code in this period, the *Ecloga* instituted during the joint reign of Leo III and his son Constantine V, as a simplification and rationalization of the vast and complex corpus of late antique Justinianic law. There is a rather stronger accent on the strict application of justice in the prologue to the *Ecloga* than there is in that of Trullo, and the code has often been seen as the invasion of Roman law by brutal Oriental penalties such as hand-chopping and nose-cutting. But the rhetoric at least that frames and justifies the laws emphasizes, like Trullo, the philanthropic and remedial effect of punishments.

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1251 The Council Fathers claimed essentially that they constituted an extra session of the Sixth Council, and thus Trullo was often assimilated to the Sixth in later accounts. This status was, however, contested by the see of Rome which never accepted several of the canons that contradicted Roman usage; cf. Heinz Ohme, “Die sogennanten ‘antirömischen’ Kanones des Concilium Quinisextum,” in George Nedungatt and Michael Featherstone, eds., *The Council in Trullo Revisited* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale: 1995), 307–21 and, more recently, Reinhard Flogaus, “Das Concilium Quinisextum (691/692): Neue Erkenntnisse über ein umstrittenes Konzil und seine Teilnehmer,” *BZ* 102, no. 1 (2009): 25–64. It was also implicitly rejected by iconoclasts due to Canon 82 which assumes the propriety of icons.
both in deterring would-be offenders and in leading criminals to repentance.\textsuperscript{1252} The whole code is permeated by an explicitly moralizing and biblical approach, more marked than in the Justinianic corpus. The emperor who issued the code was himself a layman of sorts—although, as in the preceding decades, the sacral status of the emperor continued to be disputed. Many of the laws focused primarily on lay concerns such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance, and sometimes in relation to ecclesiastical and monastic institutions, which are themselves incorporated into the fabric of legal and social life.

Two curious texts that originate in our period are the \textit{Parastaseis syntomoi chronikai} and the \textit{Apocalypse of Ps.-Methodius}.\textsuperscript{1253} While they might not fall under the usual modern criteria of “history,” both works record narratives of past, present, and future in an attempt to make sense of the world as they knew it. The \textit{Parastaseis} is a curious work on the antiquities of Constantinople, especially statues and other imagery, written by a self-conscious group of intellectuals who researched, or fabricated, stories for these objects in an attempt to show what hidden powers they contained. The authors were lay officials with a pretension to learning; thus we have a rare text written by laypeople themselves rather than for them by clergy or monks. The collection is not specifically theological in character, but a sense of the religious character and power—good or bad—of the monuments is integral to the concerns of the writers and thus provides a unique window into the religious ideas of a certain class of educated laypeople.\textsuperscript{1254} The \textit{Apocalypse} claims to be the work of Methodius of Olympus, a bishop, theologian, and martyr of the late third century. The actual anonymous author was writing in the second half of the seventh century.


\textsuperscript{1254} Cameron and Herrin, \textit{Constantinople in the Early Eight Century}, 12–14.
in north Mesopotamia, attempting to come to grips with the catastrophic loss of the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire to the new Arabic power. His record of contemporary events and prophecy of future ones, into which are woven condemnations of various forms of immoral behavior, provide a sense of the hopes and fears of those living in the provinces that were being overrun by the Islamic armies, as well as a sketch of the life of clergy and laity in this period, or at least the aspects of it that concerned the author. The original text was written in Syriac but soon translated into Greek. Given the parameters of this study, I will draw on the Greek, which shows that the concerns of an author were also shared, to some degree, by those living at the center of the shrinking empire.

Lastly, we can draw on several miracle collections for detailed information about the lives of laypeople. The largest and richest is the anonymous Miracles of Artemius. It consists of forty-five stories about miracles attributed to a fourth-century martyr of that name, whose relic was venerated at a church of St John the Forerunner and Baptist in the Oxeia quarter of Constantinople, along with that of another fourth-century martyr. In the context of competition between saints’ cults and of these cults with contemporary medical science, the collection places great emphasis on the power of Artemius to cure testicular and other hernias, especially through the means offered at his shrine. While certainly not lacking in down-to-earth literary skill, the

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1256 Although written later, the Brief History of Nikephoros and the Chronicle of Theophanes both record events from this period, for which they, logically, would have relied on older sources in closer temporal proximity to these happenings. Thus we can glean a considerable amount of information about lay life in relation to church and cloister, although mostly limited to the upper echelons of society. Editions: Nicephorus of Constantinople, Short History, edited and translated by Cyril Mango (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1990); Theophanes Confessor, Chronographia, edited by Carl de Boor, Theophanis Chronographia (Leipzig: Teubner, 1883; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1963), translated by Cyril Mango and Roger Scott, The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

author(s) or compiler(s)—the collection may be based on records of cures kept at the shrine—rarely intrudes with explicit sermonizing, apart from the obligatory praise of Artemius as Christ’s effective servant. It is an invaluable source for the topography of Constantinople, both sacred and profane, as lived by its people on a day-to-day basis, and also includes some provincials who, in one way or another, are involved in the cult of Artemius, thus illustrating ties that bound center to periphery even in this age.

Of the other miracle collections, that of Therapon (probably authored by Andrew of Crete) begins with the saint’s miracle as his relic departed Cyprus a step ahead of the Arabs, but then settles down into a Constantinopolitan routine, like the Artemius collection showing us a variety of laypeople but in far less detail.1258 Then there is a collection related to the empire’s second city Thessalonica—in fact the second, anonymous collection of *Miracles of Demetrius* written in the later seventh century to complement the *First Collection* by the archbishop John, which we considered in the fifth chapter of this study.1259 Although the focus is on Thessalonica itself, the miracles provide information about lay life in places tied to it in some way, such as the communities of semi-barbarian Christians forming in captivity among the Slavs and Bulgars in the Balkans, and the military camps of the valiant but beleaguered squadrons striving to defend the few remaining Byzantine outposts in the region. Lastly, the *Miracles of Theodore Tiro*, though brief, present a dramatic picture of life in one of the Byzantine fortress towns of Asia Minor as its clergy and people tenaciously maintained their devotion to the Christian God and his saints in the face of annual devastating raids by the ascendant Arabs.1260

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Historical context and developments

Reading these sources, two things are prominent: first, the looming threat of military disaster that overshadows Byzantine thought and life in this period; and second, the way that spiritual life seemed to nevertheless proceed at its own pace. The combination of the two brings us back to one of the stated reasons for studying lay piety in this long seventh century, of all periods from which to choose: namely the desire to see how lay piety was affected by new political and social conditions. More and more scholarship for this age is complicating stereotypes of radical decline or of monolithic continuity. For example, discussion of the central question of urban history today recognizes, on the one hand, the continuation of gradual and long-term developments that had already been transforming the Greco-Roman city for several centuries, and on the other hand, the dramatic effects of Persian and then Arab attacks on the prosperity and security of the Empire. The same can be said for religion and more narrowly for lay piety: we see the slow and organic development of various beliefs, concepts, and practices from previous times, along with a new urgency and particular emphasis on some of these in response to the crisis of Empire and Church. John Haldon has described this as the selection of older traditions and their weaving into new forms—and particularly, of new personal and communal narratives—to make sense of the new conditions and address them.  

Overall, the sense one gets from the sources is of the same religion and society as in older sources, but somewhat more grimy and frayed at the edges. Occasionally a more desperate tone breaks through, for example in the Apocalypse of Ps.-Methodios and Miracles of Theodore Tiro, both of which reflect conditions on the front line of the war against the Arabs. The metropolitan

\footnote{Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 403–35.}
sources reflect a more secure and detached view, even when speaking of the crisis—for example, the mandate of Canons of Trullo that provincial bishops return to their sees suggests a rear-echelon general ordering his routed soldiers back into a distant battle rather than a chief leading from the front. But since Constantinople itself was on the front lines twice (during the siege of 674–78 and 717–18) a sense of urgency can sometimes color even a metropolitan writer like Germanus.

Furthermore, the sense of religious urgency is in many ways more constant and all-pervading. Spiritual warfare was ubiquitous. On the one hand, it faced every individual person at every moment as he or she struggled for salvation. On the other, it was the foundational concern of the Christian Empire as a whole that sins be purged away and piety triumph, lest the divine wrath hand the faithful over to their enemies. This latter worry permeates even times of relative peace, because it was then that the danger was greatest: the sins of prosperity brought the sufferings of disaster, and by the time the latter came, it was too late, or nearly so.

The labors of penance and purification thus took many forms, from the preaching of individual orthodoxy and asceticism to the legislation of general canons of conduct and true belief at an imperial level. This involved reinforcing and adapting elements of a tradition that was, by this time, ancient—Christianity was already over six hundred years old and had accumulated a vast repertoire of theories and practices for piety. In some ways, then, it was business as usual. Yet tradition could not necessarily be taken for granted. Monotheletism itself, seemed to have suffered a resounding defeat in 681 with the close of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, but this may have been more apparent than real: Philippicus was able to revive it during
his brief reign, possibly with the support of theologians as Germanus and Andrew.\footnote{It is not clear, however, how popular or firm this revival was. Its repeal immediately after Philippicus’ downfall suggests frailty, but its continuance in other regions of the Christian \textit{oikoumene}—such as Alexandria and Syria—even after this shows that it possessed some staying power.} Of much greater consequence than this abortive revival was the rise of iconoclasm in the late 720s.

Although that movement falls outside the scope of this study, it does impinge on the end of our period and the thought of some of our authors and we will thus need to consider it briefly in the conclusion.

\textit{Cosmology and ecclesiology}

Although it may have been the worst of times from the perspective of political-military strength, it was still seen as the best of times from an ecclesiological point of view. I will begin with the theological bird’s-eye view of the place of the Christian polity—the Church and Empire conceptually distinct yet for all intents and purposes inextricably intertwined—and then move on to a closer examination of the structures within this polity, especially the various orders of the Church and their various subdivisions and mutual relations.

The most eloquent expression of the Christian optimism is found in Trullo’s opening address to the emperor.

Now that the ineffable divine grace of our Redeemer and Saviour Jesus Christ has compassed all the earth and the life-giving preaching of the truth has been sown in the ears of all, the people who sat in the darkness of ignorance have seen the great light of knowledge and have been delivered from the bonds of error, exchanging their servitude of old for the kingdom of heaven … For everywhere has reasonable worship been ordained and the perfect sacrifice is offered; and God, as he is sacrificed and distributed for the care of both bodies and souls, makes divine those who partake of him. By him are
demons put to flight, and the holy festal congregation of men gathered in Churches is mystically sanctified; the garden of delight is opened to all and, finally, everything is made new.1263

Andrew of Crete avers the universality of Christianity even more forcefully in one of his homilies:

And who would be so rash as to contradict the fact that all nations worshipped and even now worship Christ, seeing that all that is under the sun and all the ends of the earth are worshipping and reverencing him, and that they are taking pride in the name of him who is worshipped in a Christ-befitting manner, by being Christians and being thus designated?1264

What are we to make of these claims? On the one hand, they follow from a certain missionary optimism that is evident in the earliest Christian sources; on the other, they express, in a religious key, the idea of the Roman oikoumenê. At the same time, the world that they knew was still recognizably Christian: despite the political threat of Islam, the new religion had not yet made large demographic gains.

These ideas would doubtless have been current among laypeople too, who even if they may have started doubting the omnipresence and eternity of the Empire, will have hardly been able to fathom a world that was not mostly Christian. More importantly for both the bishops who voiced the claims and the people who heard them, they were clearly articulated in liturgical terms. The pronouncement of Trullo mentions preaching, Eucharist, and festival, while the statement of Andrew quoted above is preceded by reflections on the incarnate economy of Christ, his union to human nature, and his dwelling in believers through baptism. A passage in

1263 *Trullo prophoner* (Nedungatt and Featherstone 46–47).
1264 *Or. II (In nat. B. Mariae II)*, PG 97:829cd.
Germanus’ first homily on the Entrance of the Theotokos has Christ bringing all nations and kings to the spiritual Jerusalem, symbolized by his Mother, to fall down before her in reverence.\textsuperscript{1265} It is clear, then, that these claims must be understood on the mystical level of ecclesiology, which was ritually enacted in the symbolic action of the liturgy. As Taft has noted, the space of Hagia Sophia, the central church of Byzantium and the crucible of its liturgical synthesis, was especially suited to the development of the idea of the Church, symbolizing and embracing the universe, as building and not just as corpus mysticum.\textsuperscript{1266} The opening of Germanus’ Ecclesiastical History expresses this blending of cosmic and definite spatial elements:

Church means temple of God, holy precinct, house of prayer, gathering of the people, Body of Christ; her name is Bride of Christ, cleansed by the water of his baptism and sprinkled with his blood and bridally adorned, and sealed with the myrrh of the Holy Spirit according to the prophetic saying ... Church means heaven on earth, wherein heavenly God dwells and walks, symbolically representing the Crucifixion and Burial and Resurrection of Christ; glorified above Moses’ Tabernacle of Testimony, wherein were the altar and the Holy of Holies; foreshadowed by the Patriarchs, heralded aforetime by the Prophets, founded by the Apostles, adorned by Hierarchs and perfected by the Martyrs.\textsuperscript{1267}

\textsuperscript{1265} Germanus, \textit{Oratio III in Pres. B. Mariae}, PG 98:305d.  
\textsuperscript{1266} Taft, “Liturgy of the Great Church,” 47.  
\textsuperscript{1267} My translation of Germanus, \textit{Hist.Eccl.} 1: Έκκλησία ἐστὶ ναὸς θεοῦ, τέμενος ἄγιον, οἶκος προσευχῆς, συνάθροισις λαοῦ, σῶμα Χριστοῦ· ὄνομα αὐτῆς νύμφη Χριστοῦ· τῷ ὤδητῳ τοῦ βαπτίσματος αὐτοῦ καθαρθείσα, καὶ τῷ αἵματι ραντισθείσα τῷ αὐτοῦ καὶ νυμφικῷ ἐστολισμένη, καὶ τῷ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος μύρῳ σφαγιζομένη κατά τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον ... Έκκλησία ἐστὶν ἐπίγειος οὐρανός, ἐν ὃ ὁ ἐπουράνιος θεός ἐνοικεῖ καὶ ἐμπροσπατεῖ, ἀντιτυπῶσα τῇ σταυρωσιν καὶ τῇ ταφῇ καὶ τῇ ἀνάστασιν Χριστοῦ· δεδοξασμένη ὑπὲρ τὴν σκηνὴν τοῦ μαρτυρίου Μωσέως, ἐν ᾗ τὸ ἱλαστήριον καὶ τὰ Ἀγιά τῶν Ἁγίων· ἐν πατριάρχαις προτυπωθείσα, ἐν προφήταις προκηρυχθείσα, ἐν ἀποστόλοις θεμελιωθείσα, ἱεράρχαις κατακοσμηθείσα καὶ ἐν μάρτυρι τελειωθείσα.
In this passage there is a mingling of a universal and local understanding of the Church. Taft emphasized it as the natural historical articulation of theology in the Byzantine context. As such it retains the early Christian emphasis on the Church as inherently local, where the individual Eucharistic gathering around the bishop expresses the fulness of the Catholic Church in communion with other equally complete local Churches in other places. The ease with which Germanus conceives the Church as both locally-bounded and universally-extended in the quotation above is related to the event of the Eucharistic liturgy on which he comments.

The liturgical synthesis of the Great Church reflected Constantinople’s continuing development as both imperial and ecclesiastical center. Somewhat counterintuitively, as the jurisdiction of the Empire shrank, that of the Patriarchate expanded. While the Church was understood to be spread throughout the world, the see of Constantinople was increasingly seen as its head. The same attitude is apparent in the legislation of the Council in Trullo, which expressed a tendency to standardize church practices according to Constantinopolitan usage, over against both Armenian and Roman customs. Epithets for the Church blended easily with those of Constantinople and its Empire: the Church as the Queen of the nations paralleled Constantinople as the Queen City; the Church as the new and spiritual Israel was hard to distinguish from the Romans as the new and improved Israel, saved from latter-day

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1268 A similar development occurred in the late Byzantine era, although under very different circumstances.
1269 Nicetas, Vit.Andr. 4: τῇ θεοφυλάκτῳ καὶ βασιλίδι πόλει, ώς κεφαλή τοῦ σώματος τυγχανούσῃ τοῦ παντός χριστιανικονστάτου πολιτεύματος. Nicetas was probably writing in the early 740s, but referring to the Sixth Ecumenical Council, held at Constantinople in 681–2; despite the time lapse, his sentiment would probably have been more true for the earlier date than the latter, when the promotion of iconoclasm was damaging the Orthodox credentials of Constantinople among many of the other ancient sees, especially Jerusalem and Rome.
1270 The actual motives and attitudes of the see of Constantinople toward others, especially Rome, have been long debated by scholars. It is probably the case that there was no intentional hostility toward Old Rome—there is even language of deference even when disagreeing with Roman practice—but that an ideology of Byzantine dominance or at least self-absorption was at play is undeniable. See Ohme, “Sogennanten ‘antirömischen’ Kanones,” 307–21.
1271 Andrew, Hom. XIII, PG 97: 1080 and Nicetas, Vit.Andr. 4 (latter just quoted above).
Egyptians.\textsuperscript{1272} The body politic was an exclusively Christian one: Nicephorus, writing about the usurpation of Leontius in the late seventh century, says that he ordered “all Christians” to be present for this acclamation, while the civil war between Constantine V and Artabasdos in the early 740s is described as a war between Christians rather than between Romans.\textsuperscript{1273} Consequently, Germanus, in his \textit{Homily on the Akathist}, states that the Theotokos ought to be honored by all Christians for her contribution to the Incarnation, but especially by the denizens of Constantinople for her miraculous deliverance from the Arab siege of 717–18. He nevertheless sees the others as being affected by the fate of the City.

And such dangers as our city had never before experienced, or rather not even the ends of the whole civilized world, in which the Christian name and way of life is found! For the whole complement of the flock of Christ would without hesitation acknowledge that it would have run the same risk as us if the Saracens who fight the confession of his glory managed to successfully accomplish their campaign against us.\textsuperscript{1274}

The \textit{Apocalypse of Ps.-Methodius}, giving a view from the Syrian provinces, sees the Roman Emperor as leader of Christendom and the Empire as the bulwark against the advent of the Antichrist.\textsuperscript{1275} The unexpected victories of the Byzantines against the two great Arab sieges of the City, in 667–68 and 717–18, certainly played a major role in boosting Christian confidence in the face of the inexorable Muslim advance. Furthermore, the sources show us Constantinople as a haven for refugees from the lost provinces of the East and beyond. Cypriots brought with them the body of at least one of their saints, Therapon, and deposited it in a Constantinopolitan church

\textsuperscript{1272}Germanus \textit{Akath.}20; Anon. \textit{Mirac.Demetr.}2.204; Ps-Method., \textit{Apoc.}1.0.
\textsuperscript{1273}Nikephoros, \textit{Brev.}40, 65.
\textsuperscript{1274}Germanus, \textit{Hom.Acath.}9: καὶ τοιοῦτων ὃν οὐ πόσοτε ἡ ἡμετέρα πεπέφαται πόλις, μάλλον δὲ καὶ τῆς οἰκουμένης ἀληθείας τὰ πέρατα, ἐν οἷς τὸ τῶν κριστιανῶν δόμομα πολιτεύεται· συνκινδυνεύειν γὰρ ἡμῶν δία τῶν δισταγμοῦ ὠμολόγητο ἀπάν τῆς Χριστοῦ ποιμήν τὸ πλήρωμα εἰ σαρκικοῖς ταῖς ἀντιτασσομένοις τῇ ὁμολογίᾳ τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ ἐξεγένετο τῆς καθ’ ἡμῶν ἐκστρατείας εἰς πέρας ἁγαγεῖν τὸν σκοπὸν. The same sentiment is in fact found a century earlier in the \textit{Homily on the Avar Siege} by Theodore Syncellus.
\textsuperscript{1275}Ps.-Method. \textit{Apoc.}1.0.
where he continued his miracle-working activity and was supplicated to intercede for his new city against the barbarians. The various miracle collections also mention an Alexandrian granary guard and an actor and a Persian doctor living in Constantinople, while Nicephorus records that a group of Egyptian sailors deserted to the Byzantines during the siege in 717–18. Theophanes mentions a Byzantine general Theophylactus with the Arabic surname Saliba, presumably a descendant of Christian Arabs who had fled the advancing Muslim armies, and later mentions certain “citizens of ancient lineage,” who were probably Syrians. In addition to these more or less permanent residents, Constantinople had a constant stream of visitors on commercial, ecclesiastical, or personal business, most clearly revealed to us, again, by the miracle collections: from Bizya, Nicomedia, Amastris, Chios, Rhodes, Phrygia, Africa, Italy, Gaul.

Of those coming on ecclesiastical business some of the most important were Syrians and Palestinians. Andrew, born in Damascus and educated in the patriarchal household at Jerusalem, was one of these. His move to Constantinople is presented by his hagiographer as an improvement, preferable to Muslim-ruled Palestine: “[God] profitably granted him the translation from the land of the enemies, as from Jericho to Jerusalem, to the Queen of

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1276 Mir.Ther. 6–7 and 10.
1277 Trullo 39.
1278 Nikeph. Brev.40 and 54. The reasons for which the monk Patapius of Thebes moved to Constantinople from Egypt are not mentioned by his encomiast Andrew of Crete, but may have had to do with pressures from Muslims or from monophysites in Egypt. However, the exact date of Patapius is not known and he may have flourished in an earlier period.
1280 Not necessarily in the order above: Mir.Ther. 12 and 15; Mir.Dem.2; Mir.Art. 2 (though possibly from the Golden Horn; cf. Crisafulli and Nesbitt 230–31), 3–5, 8, 9, 27, 35.
This statement is obviously colored by the point of view of his Constantinopolitan biographer. Andrew’s clerical career did indeed profit from the move, but he brought as much as he gained, namely the ascetical and liturgical resources of which Jerusalem continued to be the great laboratory for the Chalcedonian orthodox world. The liturgical synthesis of the Great Church to which we made reference above was profoundly stamped with the emphasis of the local Jerusalem church on the commemoration of the earthly life and passion of Christ, which so greatly distinguishes the *Ecclesiastical History* of Germanus from the *Mystagogy* of Maximus: “What was spread across the map of Jerusalem’s holy history came to be written small in the humbler churches of eastern Christendom …” While we cannot trace any such influence on the Divine Liturgy itself specifically to Andrew, he clearly shaped the rest of the divine office through his voluminous homiletic and hymnological writings, which still hold a central place in the Byzantine rite.

Andrew himself shows a curiously ambivalent attitude toward Jerusalem: the blood-soaked city of the prophet-slayers, but also the site of the miracles of Christ and his Mother, which seems to have been relatively easy of access to pilgrims despite Byzantine-Arab hostilities. Ps.-Methodius gives Jerusalem a special position with his scene of the last Roman emperor dwelling seven years in Jerusalem and then surrendering his crown at the True Cross on Golgotha, a clear reminiscence of Heraclian propaganda of the early seventh century, although perhaps based on older Jewish and proto-Christian apocalyptic materials. This may reflect the point of view of the eastern provinces lost to the Arabs more than the mentality of

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1283 He presents it negatively in *Or.IX.ramos* (PG 97:1003d–1004a) but that is in the context of anti-Jewish polemic surrounding his exegesis of Palm Sunday; in *Or.XII* and *XIV*, both on the Dormition, he speaks of certain places as testimonies to the feast (PG 97:1056 and 1104).

Constantinopolitans, but the fact that the text was translated into Greek and widely diffused suggests that Jerusalem remained of interest to people in the capital and that eschatological thought might question the long-term viability of the imperial church system. Its traditional prestige and the continuing strength of its theological tradition also meant that it was ready to assume the mantle of orthodoxy when Constantinople seemed to deviate, as in the iconoclastic period.

Constantinople’s role was thus grounded more in the practical effect of its political, military, and administrative status than on a mystical conception of the Great Church itself. But as a physical city it was often too imperiled, depopulated, dilapidated, corrupt—or simply too far away—to serve as the focus of the loyalty of the citizens of the empire. Instead the cult of saints played a key role as a focus for patriotism, directed both to the immediate homeland and to the larger empire. The patron saint of Constantinople—the Virgin Mary—was also a kind of universal patron saint, whose cult was ubiquitous. The Theotokos, as she was more commonly referred to, became the embodiment of the Body of Christ. This was an easy transference due to the fact of her being the source of her Son’s incarnate body: as Germanus states, “You constituted a Christian people for him out of your own flesh, and you rendered those of like nature to you conformed to his divine and like image.” Therefore this people (laos)

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1285 Andrew sounds a rare eschatological note in his Homily on the Ten Martyrs of Crete 1.2: “Children, it is the last hour and we should pay attention to ourselves and attend to God and all the more draw near to him—as the divine trumpet Paul the divine orator cries—as we see the day approaching.” It is unclear, though, whether he actually saw the signs of the times as indicating the imminent end, or if this is a general pastoral warning toward remembrance of the judgment and repentance. He does not, in any case, make a connection with Jerusalem.

1286 This is in keeping with Byzantine ecclesiology, which grounded the status of Constantinople as the second see of the Church on the fact of its being second capital of the Empire, in contrast—and conflict—with Old Rome with its mystique of the chief apostles Peter and Paul.

1287 On the dilapidated condition of Constantinople at this time, see Cyril Mango, Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1980), 78ff.

1288 Germanus, Or. VII in Dorm., PG 98:353b: λαὸν αὐτῷ Χριστιανικὸν ἀπὸ σαρκός τῆς σιδήρου συνεστήσω, καὶ τὸ ὀμοιογενές σου, σύμμορφον τῆς θείας αὐτοῦ καὶ ὀμοιωτικῆς εἰκόνος ἀπειράγισσο.
belonged to her just as much as Christ and she was praised as a source and confirmation of true belief: “support of the faithful, diadem of the Church, engraved seal of Orthodoxy, gold coin of truth.”

But while there was plenty of discussion of her own body in theological reflections—especially in the sermons on her Dormition by both Andrew and Germanus, as we will see below—her relation to the Church was expressed rather in the verbal depiction of her as heavenly City, lavished with the epithets of the biblical Jerusalem, as characterized with reference to her Nativity in a homily by Germanus. She had received power over all from her Son, and, exhibiting that familiar imperial and episcopal attribute of merimna, delivered the Christian commonwealth from both earthly and spiritual danger; her feasts were thus occasions for celebrating the various elements of the Christian polity.

This celebration naturally focused on the Queen City of Constantinople, in language that gave it attributes characteristic of the Church as Body of Christ: “in her [i.e. in the Theotokos] forever compassed with ramparts, the animate and honorable and God-ruled city takes pride.”

It could be even more narrowly focused on one of its main churches, the Blachernae, associated in particular with the wonder-working relics of the Virgin that served as the City’s palladium, as in Germanus’ homily on the anniversary of the church’s founding.

‘Glorious things have been spoken of you, O City of God’ (Ps. 86:3) … She is indeed a glorified city; she is the intelligible Sion. It is her, I think, whom David addressed by divine inspiration. And if one should call her house a glorified city, he would not fall outside truth and goodness in so speaking … For if she became the animate city of Christ the king, it is right that her all-holy temple, whose Inauguration we also now celebrate, is

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1289 Or. VII in Dorm., PG 98:352b; Or. III in Present. 305b. and Or. V in Annunt., ed. Fecioru 394.
1290 Germanus, Or. III in Pres. B. Mariæ, PG 98:305d.
1292 Germanus, Or. V in Annunt. PG 98:321a (Fecioru 71).
a glorified city and is so designated. A city that does not enroll her subjects as citizens of an earthly and mortal king, but of the heavenly, of the one who sends them over to eternal life and who grants his own kingdom to those who follow him.  

The Blachernae was part of the imperial palace in that quarter of the city, but for all the blending of the idea of the Church with that of the ecumenical empire, the last sentence of the above quotation clearly distinguishes between earthly and heavenly citizenship. It is possible that this emphasis is an implicit criticism of the iconoclast policy of Leo III. Such an interpretation was suggested by Grumel for the *Homily on the Akathist* that he first edited, due to the fact that it attributes the breaking of the siege of Constantinople in 718 to the aid of the Virgin without mentioning the emperor even once. If that were the case, it would follow in the steps of previous theologians who had accentuated the Church’s independence from the emperor at the moments when they felt that the latter was promoting heresy. Thus the Theotokos, whose image had been mobilized by late sixth century emperors to lend support to imperial authority, could also be invoked to challenge that authority.  

The cult of Theotokos was a particular mark of the capital, but also spread far and wide. In his first sermon on the Dormition, Germanus says that her glory was reflected in the splendor of the various churches dedicated to her:

For what race of human beings, except Christians, has been blessed with such glory or is privileged with such a reputation? The angels luxuriate in their heavenly dwellings, but

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1293 Germanus, *Or. IX In Encaen*. PG 98:372d–373b: «Δεδοξασμένα ἐλαλήθη περί σοῦ, ἡ πόλις τοῦ θεοῦ,» θείος ἡμῖν ἐν Πνεύματι ὑπέψαλλε Δαβίδ ... Αὕτη ὄντως δεδοξασμένη πόλις· ἀὕτη νοητῇ Σιών. Ταύτην, οἴμαι καὶ Δαβίδ θεόθεν προσε-φώνησεν. Εἰ δὲ τις καὶ τὸν ταύτης οἶκον δεδοξασμένην πόλιν καλέσει, σύκ ἐξω τῆς ἄλθειας καὶ τοῦ καλοῦ φήσειν ... Εἰ γὰρ αὕτη πόλις ἐμφυκος τοῦ βασιλέως ἐχρημάτισε Χριστοῦ, δικαίως ἥκαί καὶ τὸ ταύτης πανάγιος ναός, οὗ καὶ τὰ Ἐγκαινία σήμερον ἑορτάζομεν, πόλις δεδοξασμένη ἔστι τε καὶ ὅνομαζεται. Πόλις οὐκ ἐπηγείω καὶ θητείᾳ βασιλείᾳ πολιτιογραφοῦσα τοὺς ὑπὸ χείρα· ἄλλα τῷ ἐπουρανίῳ, τῷ εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον παραπέμποντι, καὶ βασιλεύει τὸν οὐατοῦ τοῖς αὐτῷ ἑπομένοις παρέχοντι.

1294 As remarked by Grumel in his introduction to his edition of the text, p. 88.

we rejoice to take our leisure in your holy temples. For if the temple of Solomon once represented heaven in an earthly image, will not the temples built in honor of you, who became the living temple of Christ, all the more justly be celebrated as heavens on earth? The stars speak out with tongues of flame in the heavenly firmament; and the material colors of your icons, O Mother of God, dazzle us with the representation of your gifts. The sun and the moon illumine one pole of the sky above and around us; but every house, every city and region, shines with your light, which comes from the light of the Son you bore.1296

This eloquent evocation of the splendor of Byzantine temples is a concise summary of the ideas expressed above regarding the physical church building and its liturgy as symbol of the cosmos. An independent confirmation of Germanus’ encomiastic exclamation is found in the Life of Andrew of Crete, where Andrew is said to have built a new church to the Theotokos on Crete as a thanksgiving-offering for her blessings bestowed upon him and named it after the Blachernae church.1297

The Cross, while not a saint, was a relic and its cult was similarly both imperial and local.1298 Its prominence in widely-distributed visual propaganda such as coins and seals is well known.1299 Ps.-Methodius characterizes it as the invincible weapon of the Romans and Andrew

\[\text{\footnotesize 1296 Homilia ii in dorm. PG 98: 356bc; transl. by Brian Daley, On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998), 164. Despite using its CPG title for references, in the body of the text above I follow Daley: “Although it is generally recognized by modern scholars to be a single work, this homily was published in two parts by Combéis, its original editor—perhaps with the purpose of representing Germanus’ preaching on the Dormition as a trilogy similar to those of Andrew of Crete and John of Damascus” (Daley 167, n. 1).}
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\[\text{\footnotesize 1297 Nicetas, Vit.Andr. 7.}
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\[\text{\footnotesize 1298 Andr. Hom. X.1021 (social and political benefits of Cross, including maintenance of virginity and of marriage); X.1033 (Cross defeats barbarians, such as Scythians); XI.1045 (socio-political benefits of Cross).}
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\[\text{\footnotesize 1299 Brubaker and Haldon, Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History, 146–151. The Virgin was also prominent on seals, though usually by a written invocation rather than an image.}
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says that it routes the Scythian.\footnote{Ps.-Methodius, Apoc. 5, 9; Andr. Hom. i in exalt, PG 97:1033c: this is probably a reference to the Bulgarians or Slavs, and thus may indicate that this sermon was delivered in Constantinople.} Given the emphasis on its political as well as religious significance, it is no wonder if the caliphal authorities ordered crosses to be removed from church in his territory, according to Theophanes.\footnote{Theophanes, Chronicle (Mango and Scott 476). Christians in the caliphate at this time, regardless of confessional affiliation, were identified by their adherence to the symbol of the Cross.} Likewise Germanus emphasizes Muslim hostility to the Theotokos, claiming that they despised her as a mere woman and boasted that they would turn her church at Blachernae into a mosque.\footnote{Hom.acath. 13–14. He also imagines the Theotokos as indignant against the Muslims’ blasphemy (10) and their wish to abolish the royal worship of Christians (11), and calls on Old Testament typology to characterize her as the rod with which Christ the new Moses parted the waters of the Bosphorus and drowned the new Egyptians (13).}

Cults of saints who were more or less local promoted regional solidarity but could also be harnessed to loyalty to the imperial center, and even to fraternal relations directly between regions without imperial mediation. John of Thessalonica, whose First Collection of Miracles of Demetrius we examined in the second chapter, was remembered by the anonymous author of the second collection as a saint:

… he who was before our father, John, who even after his departure hence toward God discourses with us as though present, supplicating along with his compatriot and genuine friend, I mean the most august martyr of God Demetrios, sending up supplications on our behalf to God the compassionate, and whose Christ-delighting and soul-saving admonitions it is meet for us to recite as a perpetual memorial.\footnote{Mir.Dem. 2.195 (Lemerle 184).}

John was a purely local saint. Devotion to him sprang partly from his authorial labors recording the gesta Dei per Demetrium for future generations of Thessalonians. It also stemmed from the impression produced by his active leadership during sieges, when he heartened the flagging
citizens and encouraged them to fight for “fatherland and most holy temples and faith.”

The insertion of “temples” between the familiar “faith and fatherland” shows how important these landmarks were to the sense of local identity as both civic and eccelesiastical body. Turning back to the city’s main patron Demetrius, it is suggested that the church of the martyr is one of the city’s main attractions. The relationship to the capital is not neglected: the unnamed emperor is spoken of with the usual positive titles, although his chief local representative the eparch is depicted as a troublemaker.

Yet a connection with the far away province of Africa is also described: the saintly bishop Cyprian of Thenae, while sailing for Byzantium on urgent business, was captured by Slavs but subsequently delivered by Demetrius’ miraculous intercession. As a result he wished to build a church in his own town in the likeness of the martyrium in Thessalonica (note the similarity to Andrew’s construction of a replica of the Theotokos of Blachernae as a thank-offering) but lacked the desired columns and marble. Demetrius intervened again, this time in cooperation with the regional African martyr Victor. Similar materials had been ordered from Constantinople for a church being built to the latter, but since in the meantime the necessaries had been acquired in that locale, the shipment was diverted to the Demetrius project. The church built as a result also enjoyed a reputation as a center for healing of scorpion bites, a particular concern in North Africa, through anointing with the saint’s lamp-oil. The whole story demonstrates the continued ties that bound the various regions of the empire between themselves and to the capital, in ecclesiological and commercial terms, and despite the real perils of travel.

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1304 Ibid. 2.206 (Lemerle 187).
1305 Ibid. 3.226 (Lemerle 196): after the church of the martyr burned down, one of the custodians bitterly exclaimed: οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ ἐπίσκοπος καὶ τὸ ἐξ ἡμῶν πρὸς σὲ καύχημα; πῶς δὲ οἱ ἐνταῦθα προσπλέοντες ἐνθάδε παραγένονται;
1306 Ibid. 4.231, 232, 237: πανήμερον βασιλέα, παγγάληνον βασιλέα, ὁ τὴν μέριμναν πάντων ἀναδεδημένος φιλόχριστος βασιλεύς.
1307 Ibid. 6 (Lemerle 237–41).
also shows how a foreign cult could be adapted to local circumstances through a narrative connecting it with local saints and through ritual practices addressing local needs. On a more humble lay level and shorter geographical distance, the *Miracles of Theodore* tell of a Paphlagonian peasant bringing an ox as an offering for the feast of Theodore at his church in Euchaita in neighboring Pontus.  

The activity of Andrew of Crete is also revealing as to the importance of local cults and their place in a larger empire-wide network. His encomium of St Nicholas of Myra was apparently delivered there, as a guest of the local bishop and people on the occasion of the saint’s feast. He recounts local benefactions of the saint and also mentions the local martyrs Crescens, Dioscourides, and Nicocles.  

Sermons in his own see show his interaction with local patriotism through the cult of saints. The encomium of the apostle Titus, Crete’s patron saint (probably Andrew’s enthronement speech) draws on patriotism of both a Hellenic and Christian kind. He claims that Titus was descended from Minos and Rhadamanthos, the offspring of Zeus, a playful parody of the typical clichés of encomiastic rhetoric that would have won a smile from his more educated auditors. More seriously, he calls his audience a “gathering of priests and divinely-sealed company of the sacred hand of Titus.” This is probably to be understood as a reference to the priesthood of all believers, not to an exclusively clerical audience, and it emphasizes the apostolic succession of the local church, in which all the Cretan faithful

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1308 *Mir. Theod.* 16 (Delehaye 201).
1309 *Hom. in s. Nic.* PG 97:1200–1204. Andrew mentions Nicholas’ diversion of a grain ship bound elsewhere to the regional harbor Andriakê, saving Myra’s inhabitants from a famine. This incident occurs in the *Life of Nicholas of Sion* 37–38, showing how that saint was already being confused with his earlier namesake 150 years or so after his lifetime. The attribution of the homily is, however, disputed.
1310 *Hom. in apost. Tit.* PG 97:1 145c.
1311 Ibid. 115 6d: ἱερέων ἄθροισμα, καὶ τῆς ἱερᾶς Τίτου χειρὸς θεοσφράγιστον σύστημα.
partake. In the same sermon as Andrew prays for God’s help against the onslaught of the Arabs, in addition to Titus he also calls upon the Ten Martyrs of Crete, executed during the Decian persecution. A separate encomium dedicated to the Ten Martyrs expands on their place in local piety. Given their provenance from various parts of Crete, they are viewed as patron saints for the whole island and its people, showing concern (merimna) for their native land and providing it with abundant benefits both temporal and spiritual, so that even the earthly-minded think their relics, deposited at the metropolitan see of Gortyna, more precious than any merchandise to be found in the markets. A revealing juxtaposition between these two homilies shows us how Andrew himself came to identify with his see, how he “went native” so to speak. In his invocation of the Ten Martyrs in the Homily on Titus, he calls them “your blessed decade of martyrs,” whereas in the Encomium of the Ten Martyrs he speaks of them as “the God-grounded towers of our homeland.” The rest of the latter text breathes a sense of genuine solidarity and devotion to his flock. Doubtless his experience of being cooped up inside a fortress with his flock during Arab raids—a common happening in the provinces—aided this development. Yet he ever remains the representative of central authority: the end of the Encomium of the Ten Martyrs concludes a passionate prayer against the abominable Hagarenes with a look toward the emperors and the ensign of the Cross:

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1312 Ibid., n. 36 by the editor Combéfis. To add to Combéfis’ observations, the divine seal through the hand of Titus suggests chrismation, which was a development of the primordial Christian initiation rite of laying on of hands and was understood to sacramentally “seal” the preceding rite of baptism.

1313 Ibid., 116:8c. Στήσεται γὰρ μεσίτης αὐτόθεν ἱλεως ὁ τρόφιμος τοῦ λόγου Τίτου καὶ πρόμαχος. Στήσεται δὲ καὶ ἡ παρ᾽ ὑμῖν ἀοίδιμος τῶν μαρτύρων δεκας καὶ τοῖς ἐκατοντῖς πάθεσιν ξελάσει τὸν σώσειν ἐκ θανάτου δυνάμενον Κύριον ...

1314 Encom.mart.Cret. 2.1, 10.1f., 10.6, 10.9. This is probably not much of an exaggeration—in those unsettled times, belief in the protective power of relics would have been very strong, even among those normally indifferent to their religion.

1315 Ibid., 10.2.

1316 Nicetas, Vit.Andr. 8; the fortress is specified as that Tou Drimeős, and its deliverance and the subsequent capture of the Arab force is attributed to Andrew’s prayers.
… and especially now when even more maniacally the disgraceful abortions of Hagar have been raging and continue to rage against Christ; against whom may the Lord take a stand, whom may he destroy, whom may he quickly uproot and mow them down through the spear of the Cross of the co-emperors and kings, whose heads the Lord himself crowned and whom he worthily beautified with the glories of rulership, to whom may he who anointed them hand power over the ends of earth and sea everywhere by your supplications … 

**Pastoral program of bishops and emperors**

Given the usually close identification of the Church with the Empire, it is natural that both bishops and emperors would be important for religious life. In fact our period sees the most ambitious attempt up to that point to bring social life into accordance with the spiritual ideals of the Church, though following closely in the traditions forged by bishops and emperors of previous centuries. The *Canons* of the Council in Trullo and the *Ecloga* both state at some length an ideal of religious leadership and legislation and then implement it in some detail through their respective legislation. The specificity and comprehensiveness of these canons and laws could not but affect the laypeople, especially since there was an effort to see to their practical application rather than just grandiose rhetoric.

Despite the optimistic vision of a universal Church expressed by the Fathers of the Council in Trullo in their opening address to the young emperor Justinian II, they noted with concern that the previous two ecumenical councils had not issued regulatory canons.

… and thence it follows that the holy nation, the royal priesthood, on whose behalf Christ died, is torn asunder and led astray through the many passions resulting from indiscipline,

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\[1317\] Encom.marty.Cret. 11.3
and is detached little by little and cut off from the divine fold, having slipped away from
the achievements of virtue through ignorance and neglect; in the words of the Apostle,
“They have spurned the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant by which they
were sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29).”

This is quite a dire picture, especially due to the scriptural quotation at the end. Here no mention
is made of the societal disruptions caused by constant warfare as a factor in breakdown of
ecclesiastical discipline, but some of the canons themselves address specific disorders due to
incursions of barbarians. The Fathers praise Justinian for convoking the synod to rectify the
situation and ask him to confirm its canons. Their depiction of his virtue is purposefully
extravagant.

Wisdom bore you in her womb and nurtured you well with virtues; she brought you up
and educated you and filled you with the Spirit of God; she has made you the eye of the
universe, you who brightly illumine your subjects with the pureness and splendour of
your mind. To you she has entrusted her Church and has taught you to meditate on her
law day and night, for the correction and edification of the peoples subject to you. In the
fervour of your desire for God you have surpassed the zealot Phinehas and have
transfixed sin (cf. Num. 25:7–11) with the power of your piety and understanding, and
you have chosen to lead your flock away from iniquity and corruption. For it is fitting
that one who takes over the helm after mankind’s upward turn should not only consider
himself, how his own life is to be kept on a straight course, but also should preserve all
his subjects from the swells and great turbulence of their transgressions, as the spirits of
evil everywhere deluge and confound our humble bodies.

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1318 Trullo prosphon. (Nedungatt and Featherstone 52).
1319 Ibid. (49–51).
Such a catalogue of spiritual qualities clearly delineates an ideal, not a reality, as the troubled reigns and sorry end of Justinian II shows. The language is different from that of George of Pisidia in the early seventh century, but it is the same attempt to forge a specifically imperial Christian piety, combining a formation in individual virtues with the qualities necessary to govern subjects, too, toward piety. This dazzling combination is considered the result of divine providence, which predestined the emperor’s excellence. The image of a pastor is used freely, instead of restricting it to an episcopal context; his illumination of his subjects, though not unprecedented in the Apollonian imagery of earlier emperors, also recalls mystagogues passing divine illumination down the angelic and ecclesiastical hierarchies according to the system of the Areopagite.

The rhetoric of the prologue to Leo and Constantine’s *Ecloga* is more down-to-earth. It eschews any mystical language of illumination and states briskly that law was bestowed by God as an aid to man’s free will, showing him right from wrong. Instead of Trullo’s elaborate image of divine Wisdom birthing and nourishing the emperor, “he entrusted to us the authority of the Empire, according to his good pleasure.” As a demonstration of the emperor’s love of God tempered by fear, like Peter he is appointed to lead the sheep to pasture; but unlike the mystical improvement of his subjects that Trullo assigns to Justinian, Leo sees his chief duty as justice, the consequence of which is “to loose every bond of injustice and dissolve the crookedness of contracts made under duress” (Is. 58:6) and ultimately receive the reward from God of victory over enemies, great royal glory, and peace for the empire. The emperor occupies himself with cares and sleeplessness for the common good and prefers justice to all earthly things since it brings heavenly rewards and earthly victories (cf. Mt. 6:33). His solution is very

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1320 *Ecl.* prol. ll. 11–20.
1321 Ibid. l. 21.
practical: it involves the collation, clarification, and simplification of the inherited Roman legal tradition for its more effective application, for the punishment and correction of those who do wrong. One such practical measure is to provide judges with reasonable state salaries so that they need not resort to taking bribes—a measure which was ascribed to John the Almsgiver in the Life by Leontius of Neapolis. The juxtaposition of punishment with correction is not accidental: despite possessing some punishments that seem to us today frightful, the law code is declared in its very title to be “a correction toward the more humane.”

The concise, no-nonsense prose of the Ecloga displays an emperor who, despite his stated hope to obtain a heavenly reward for his labors, is firmly focused on the temporal administration of the Empire. This does not necessarily show that Leo was unconcerned for the spiritual well-being of his subjects; rather, he probably realized that the monumental disciplinary work of Trullo on the ecclesiastical front was sufficient. His emphasis on the philanthropic, remedial nature of the laws may indeed have stemmed from Trullo. The Council had pondered the relationship between strictness and leniency, and leaned somewhat toward the latter. The canons of previous councils had been confirmed “in order to remain also henceforth certain and sure for the healing of souls and the cure of passions.” The response to one particular offense, “That no man is to make a plait of his hair,” neatly expresses the whole sacramental and ascetical context of this therapeutic regime:

Those who through baptism have put on Christ have promised to imitate his life in the flesh. In the case of those men, therefore, who to the detriment of those who see them

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1322 Ibid. II. 22ff.
1323 ἐπιδιώρθωσις πρὸς τὸ φιλανθρωπότερον (in the Titulum of the code).
1324 The principles of akribeia and oikonomia are embodied in the sees of Rome and Constantinople, respectively, but the Council seeks through its regulations mediate between the two extremes and synthesize them, according to Trullo 3 (Nedungatt and Featherstone 70).
1325 Trullo Canon 2 (Nedungatt and Featherstone 64–65).
arrange the hair on their head in elaborate plaits, offering allurement to unstable souls, we shall treat them paternally, with an appropriate penalty, educating them and teaching them to live prudently; so that, once they have given up the error and vanity of material things, they may direct their mind constantly toward the blessed and imperishable life, may preserve chaste behaviour in fear of God, may draw near to God, in so far as possible, through pureness of life, and may adorn the inner rather than the outer man with virtues and honest and blameless manners; and thus they will bear in themselves no trace of the enemy’s perversity. If anyone behaves contrary to the present canon, he shall be excommunicated.  

Far from being one more isolated rule to worry about, the canon explains the denial of the world demanded by baptism, and that this discipline requires a certain attitude toward external things, with the ultimate end of union with God. In this context, the problem with elaborate hairstyles among men is explicitly their vanity, although implicit in the canon is the fear that they arouse sexual desire, particularly in an effeminate way. The penalty of excommunication is not particularly harsh, given that the term indicates an temporary and indefinite period of cessation of Eucharistic communion rather than a permanent exclusion. It would be the responsibility of the spiritual father of the penitent to adapt the stringency of its application according to the built-in provision for a discerning fatherly imposition of discipline, for the sake of education.

The whole principle of this flexible treatment of spiritual illness according to the well-known Byzantine principle of oikonomia is summarized in Trullo’s final canon:

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1326 Ibid. 96 (177–78).
1327 Zonaras laments that it was precisely this fatherly admonition that was not being practiced in his time: “And no one hinders these things: neither patriarch, nor other bishops, nor monks, who are used as spiritual fathers by those who are shameless in this way,” in Georgios A. Rhallis and Michail Potlis, Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων και ἱερῶν κανόνων, (Athens: G. Chartophylax, 1852–59), vol. 2, 535.
Those who have received from God the power to loose and to bind (cf. Mt. 16:19) must consider the peculiar nature of the sin and the readiness of the sinner for amendment, and thus apply a suitable remedy to the illness, lest, exceeding the mark in one or the other sense, he [sic] should fail in obtaining the salvation of the one afflicted … For the entire concern of God and of the one entrusted with pastoral authority is to bring back the lost sheep and heal the serpent’s bite … examining the fruits of repentance and wisely guiding (oikonomounti) the man who is called to the splendour on high.\textsuperscript{1328}

The use of medical metaphors in legal and political thought was not entirely new in the Greco-Roman world, but its sustained and detailed articulation in a legal context, keeping in sight the end of man’s ultimate destiny in God, is striking. It was Trullo’s concern to explain and justify its measures, to a degree unprecedented in synodical rhetoric regarding canons, which allowed it to express in this succinct form the penitential practice and care of souls that had developed through the course of Late Antiquity under the decisive influence of monasticism, as in the case of Anastasius of Sinai in the previous chapter. That this was directed toward laypeople is clear from the whole context of Trullo but receives additional reinforcement in the canon on hairstyling discussed above. The only penalty foreseen is excommunication, which was a layman’s punishment; the corresponding clerical punishment is deposition.

\textit{The art and fact of preaching}

Somewhere between the broad prescriptions of canonical legislation and the one-on-one spiritual therapy of a spiritual father lay the practice of preaching. Trullo perceives its importance in the opening address, it speaks of leaders of the Church whom God raises up in every generation to combat the wiles of the devil by \textquotedblleft drawing forth the sword of the Spirit,\textquotedblright

\textsuperscript{1328} Trullo c. 102 (Nedungatt and Featherstone 183).
which is the Word of God, and thus engaging the evil one in battle … becoming leaders of the flocks and making straight the ways of the Lord for the peoples, lest through ignorance of the good they should be pushed to the precipice of iniquity and slip away.”

In practice, however, preaching seems to have been somewhat lacking, as demonstrated by the need felt by the council fathers to lay down strict rules in Canon 19.

[That] the superiors of the Churches must instruct all their clergy and their people in true piety every day, but especially on Sundays, choosing for them from divine Scripture the thoughts and judgements of truth and following unswervingly definitions already set forth and the tradition of the God-bearing Fathers. If a Scriptural passage should come up for discussion, they shall in no wise interpret it differently than the luminaries and Doctors of the Church have set down in their writings. In this way shall they distinguish themselves, rather than by composing their own works, being at times incapable of this and thereby falling short of what is proper. For through the teaching of the aforementioned Fathers the people are given knowledge of important things and virtues, and of unprofitable things and those to be rejected: thus they reform their lives for the better and escape being taken captive by the emotions of ignorance; giving heed to this teaching they incite themselves to avoid succumbing to evil and work out their salvation in fear of the punishments which hang over them.

The need to enforce regular preaching indicates that not all bishops could be counted on to practice it. This was not a new situation, but it was probably exacerbated by the disordered conditions of the time, when bishops were often absent and books on which to draw were often

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1329 Trullo prosphon. (Nedungatt and Featherstone 48).
1330 Trullo c. 19 (Nedungatt and Featherstone 94–96).
not available. Perhaps for this reason, the canon lacks a specific penalty, in contrast with the only precedent in earlier canonical legislation, *Apost. 58*, which decrees excommunication for the offence and deposition if it is not thereafter corrected. The Trullan canon makes up for this with its much more specific guidelines and moralizing exhortations (altogether lacking in the older rule). The emphasis on Sunday is a practical recognition that laypeople can attend in greater numbers due to the day of rest. Yet clergy too are included among the audience, showing that the duty of preaching was still considered to be the domain primarily of the bishop. Following the whole tenor of opening address, the canon fears lest the people be trapped in “the passion of ignorance,” and lays the onus on the bishop to present them with the choice of good and evil, so that they can take responsibility for their own salvation. The canon emphasizes the importance of ethical teaching—probably as being more suitable for the mass of laypeople—and displays hostility toward more speculative preaching. The likelihood of at least some ambiguous points coming up in church is recognized, however, in the form of a discussion of scriptural passages. But even this is strictly limited within the bounds of patristic tradition.

Our two main episcopal sources for this period, Andrew and Germanus, took the task of preaching very seriously and their sermons became standards in the Byzantine homiletic repertoire for centuries to come. They followed the canon in its broad lines but were not afraid to engage in more challenging exegesis and meditation on mystical theology, even in discourses clearly delivered to lay or mixed audiences. Andrew is particularly self-conscious and self-

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1331 Zonaras cites Apostolic Canon 58; the other parallels cited in the apparatus of Nedungatt and Featherstone in fact have no connection to episcopal preaching. On the effects of the times on church governance, see below.

1332 As noted by the Zonaras and Balsamon (Rhallis and Potlis vol. 2, 347–48).

1333 As we have mentioned in previous chapters, it was the teaching of Gregory the Great as well that one of the virtues of a bishop is to confine discussion of difficult exegetical questions to a small circle of qualified companions, instead of discussing them in front of all and sundry, to the possible scandal and probable confusion of many: André Guillou, “L’évêque dans la société médiéval et la société des VIe-VIIe siècles : un modèle,” *Bibliothèque de l’école des chartes* 131, no. 1 (1973): 13–14.
reflective about this duties to preach and the benefit it can bring. Unfortunately the nature and state of the text where he expatiates most on the task of preaching, is unclear. The *Encomium showing the perfect life of the blessed Patapius, dictated by Andrew archbishop of Crete* (or *edited by Andrew archbishop of Crete*) is clearly corrupt in parts and therefore difficult to understand exactly, and it is explicitly stated to be a written rather than a spoken text. Furthermore, at the end of the text the enthusiastic amanuensis or a later admirer of Andrew added a long gloss that has found its way into the text, making it difficult to know where Andrew ends and his scholiast begins and vice versa. Most of it is a written text composed by Andrew to honor Patapius of Thebes, at the request of the nuns of the monastery affiliated with the memory of that Egyptian holy man; Andrew most likely dictated it and may have edited the resulting transcription afterward. He justified his task with a lengthy proemium reflecting on the importance of instructive and edifying discourse—the word *logos* is used throughout, equally applicable to written and to spoken words. The later scholiast admired Andrew’s reflections on this point so much that he even added a long concluding section reflecting further on the utility of edifying words. The beginning of the first passage is clear, however:

It is meet to believe everything that is divine and beneficial to men. Such things are believed through hearing, as the divine oracle says (Rom. 10:14ff.); for hearing is through

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1334 Ἐγκώμιον τὸν βίον δηλοῦν τοῦ μακαρίου Παταπίου τέλειον, ἀπὸ φωνῆς Ἀνδρέου ἀρχιεπισκόπου Κρήτης. The first part of the sentence can also be read *Perfect encomium showing the life of the blessed Patapius*. The term ἀπὸ φωνῆς can mean “dictated by” (LSJ φωνή Α.1.1) or “(edited) by the hand of” (Lampe φωνή 1e). Thus it is not even clear whether Andrew was the original speaker, the original author, editor of his own text or another’s; in the last-mentioned case, the long gloss at the end may even be by his hand. But this seems unlikely, and most scholars till now have accepted him as the main source of the *Encomium*.  

1335 I thank David Armstrong, Professor Emeritus of Classics at the University of Texas Austin, for this suggestion, mediating between the definitions in LSJ and Lampe. Marcel Richard, "ΑΠΟ ΦΩΝΗΣ," *Byzantion* 20 (1950): 191–222, is useful for the diachronic development of the term. He even considers our homily briefly at 205–6, but appears not to have actually read beyond the title, since he does not seem to be aware of the problems presented by the interruptions of the text by the second voice.  

1336 He also claims to have inserted the account of Andrew’s vision of Patapius (which banished his previous doubts about the authenticity of the deceased saint), stating that Andrew omitted it out of humility (PG 97:1254a). This suggests that this scholiast was someone close to Andrew and privy to some of his spiritual experiences.
Then halfway through the encomium he stops to reflect again on the value of preaching:

Thence, brethren, wishing to be delivered as if out of fire through listening, and stretching out the ears of our mind toward the man’s exceedingly bright works, and attaining to the light of knowledge—as Christ expounds—let us hear what the Holy Spirit will speak in us (cf. Ps. 84:9). For they are his and are designated such and by him are manifested in speech—as the apostolic letter teaches—in order that we may glorify

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1337 PG 97:1233–36: Πάντα πιστεύειν άξιον τά ὄντως θεία καὶ ἀνθρώπῳς συμφέροντα. Πιστεύεται δὲ δι’ ἀκοῆς τά τοιαῦτα, ὡς ὁ θείος χρησίμος· ἀκοῆ γάρ διά λόγον· λόγος δὲ πάντως εἰπεῖν, ἐξ ἁγιάσης προαιρέσεως προερχόμενος, δι’ ἥς ὁ μισθός τοῖς μὴ νωθροῖς εὑρισκομένοις ἐν οὐρανοῖς ἀπόκειται. Οὐκόν ἑπείδη καὶ λόγος ἡμᾶς ἐν τῇ ἀγήρῳ προτρέπεται χώρα πρὸς ἀπάλαυσιν ἀγαθῶν καὶ δόξαιν ἐν Θεῶ, μετὰ πολλῆς ἀκραβείας τά χείλη κανήσαντες, τούτοις ὡς χρέος προσθήσομεν· ἵνα καὶ πλέον ἐν ἑωικταὶ ὁ προφήτης, πρὸς βοήθειαν τοιοῦτον δεδώσθαι χρήμα εἰπόν ἐκ Θεοῦ. Καὶ γὰρ ὡσπερ ὀδός ὁ βίος μὲν ἡμῶν ἐνδείκνυται, χειραγωγὸς δὲ πρὸς ἀμφιστέρους πρὸς τούτοις, καθάπερ τις ἐν τόποις ἱδίοις, τοῖς πρὸς πορείαν αὐτῶν ἐν τούτοις ὤσπερ ἀπέριος, ζητεῖται πρὸς ὁδηγίαν ἐμπείρους, οὕτως ἡ γραφομένη πνευματικὴ θεωρία πρὸς τὸ τὴν πορείαν ἐξορθώσῃ, καλῶς ποιεῖσθαι. The second and the last sentences are particularly corrupt and I have relied on Combēfis’ conjectural Latin translation for the sense, taking the liberty of omitting the final two words.
assiduously the one who has given and always gives such authority, as we utter the Gospel to men together with God.\textsuperscript{1338}

The opening echoes the Paul’s words on the necessity of preaching for the acquisition of faith in Romans; this is in line with the Trullan canon’s intent. Similarly to sources examined in previous chapters, such as Antiochus of Mar Saba and Anastasius of Sinai, the word of God is given an expansive definition here: in the first quotation the oracles of God, i.e. the Scriptures, are compared to Andrew’s discourse, since both have in common the aim of spiritual guidance and profit. Following on this understanding, he notes the recording of the discourse in writing, so that it can benefit future believers. The characterization of the present discourse as a form of “spiritual contemplation” claims for it a rather higher status than a simple collection of anecdotes.\textsuperscript{1339} Andrew was not hesitant to introduce challenging spiritual teaching into his discourses. The character of the text(s) on Patapius, despite their hagiographical origin, is more of a meditation on Christian sanctity, punctuated with mention of vague elements of the saint’s life and more concrete accounts of posthumous miracles.\textsuperscript{1340} The second quotation reinforces even more the inspired nature of the text, but not solely as a product of the preacher: he explicitly

\textsuperscript{1338} Encom.Patap. PG 97:1241bc: Ενεπτεθεὶς λοιπὸν, ἀδελφοί, ἁπαστερ ἀπὸ πυρὸς λυτρωθήσει βουλόμενοι διὰ τῆς ἀκροάσεως, ἐπὶ τὰ τῶν ἀνδρῶν ὑπέρλαμπτα ἔργα τὰς ἀκοὰς τῆς διανοίας συντείναντες καὶ εἰς φῶς γνώσεως καταντήσαντες, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἐκδίδασκε, ἀκουσώμεθα τί λαλήσει ἐν οὐκὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἄγιον. Αὐτοῦ γὰρ καὶ εἰς καὶ λαλοῦντα, καὶ πρὸς τὸ λέγειν φαίνοντα, ὡς τὸ ἀποστολικὸν γράμμα διδάσκει, δῶς δοξὰς ἐκτενῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ πάντως διδοῦντα ἑξοδιοικήτων τοιαύτῃ, συνφθεγμένοι καὶ ἡμεῖς τῷ Ἐὐαγγελίῳ σὺν θεῷ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.

\textsuperscript{1339} θεωρία can also be translated “investigation” (Lampe θεωρία B.1) or “continuous exposition” (LSJ θεωρία 4); neither of these should be excluded from the sense of Andrew’s use. In particular, the whole account presents the results of his investigation into the saint, instigated by the nuns of the monastery that kept his memory.

\textsuperscript{1340} Andrew begs indulgence from his audience for his disregard of the rules of the genre of encomium in the interest of attaining the truth of the saint’s life (Hom. in s. Patap. 1209b). He seeks it from both the educated and illiterate in his audience. One would think that the latter would be happy for him to eschew the high-flown speechifying of an encomium. But it is quite possible that, in such a context as the saint’s vigil, even the uneducated expected a rhetorical show more than meticulous instruction; furthermore, the framework of the generic rules may have allowed them to follow the discourse more easily, so that abandoning the rules would have made comprehension more, rather than less, difficult. For the demands of genre and the preacher’s possible freedom in handling them, cf. Cunningham, “Andrew of Crete: A High-Style Preacher,” 66–67, 76.
includes the audience in the task of straining upward to catch the strains of the divine wisdom. The inspiration is wholly assigned to God and the author and audience cooperate with him in preaching the Gospel. The meaning of this is rendered clearer by what follows, namely and extended meditation on the death of the righteous, consisting of a catena of scriptural texts on the topic connected by brief phrases glossing their meaning. ¹³⁴¹ Thus hagiography claims for itself a quasi-scriptural status by becoming a form of exegesis, using the saint’s life to comment on the Bible and vice versa. ¹³⁴²

This text is unique among Andrew’s sermons for the length and depth of his reflection on the ministry of preaching, but the theme is common to all his homilies. In his Encomium of St Therapon, he says that God, being himself Word, is honored by nothing more than words, as are his saints, and urges his hearers to adorn their souls with them as they anoint their bodies with the fragrant balm from the saint’s tomb. ¹³⁴³ This theological connection with the very divine word is echoed in another comment on the mysterious power of words, in an encomium of St George: “they dare to touch the heavenly vaults, as if ignorant of their nature, and they hasten to hint at his supernatural merits to all people.” ¹³⁴⁴

This second quotation is found in another particularly long rhetorical self-deprecation, as Andrew confesses his doubts about his own oratorical abilities but counters them with his fervent love of St George and hope in his aid for the task. In other contexts Andrew asks not the canonized saints, but his own audience for help in achieving his task through their prayers and

¹³⁴¹ Encom.Patap. 1241c–1244a. This form of exegesis resembles that of Antiochus of Mar Saba in the Pandect.
¹³⁴² Cf. the notion of exegesis as refashioning the scriptural text in Elizabeth Clarke, Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), esp. 45–69.
¹³⁴³ Encom.Therap. 26 (Deubner 133).
¹³⁴⁴ Encom.Georg. 2 (AASS XX.CE): καὶ τῶν οὐρανίων ψαυτίων κατατολμῶσιν ἄψιδων, τὴν ἐκατὼν φύσιν ὄσπερ ἠγνωσκότες, καὶ τῶν ύπερφυών ἐκείνου καλῶν ὑποφηναι πάσι τὴν λαμπρότητα κατεπείγονται.
attentiveness. In a particularly striking passage, after invoking the Holy Spirit, he also turns to his audience and requests: “May you also, who long to obtain the abundant outpouring of light from the same source, pray together with me for the same …” In another, Andrew credits his audience with praying for him even before his arrival at the feast of the Ten Martyrs, as he had been absent on a long journey by sea and they had feared for his safe arrival. He imagines his congregation asking themselves:

Where is our father? Where is our shepherd? Where is he who renders our celebrations brighter and by his presence makes the memorials of the saints more splendid, especially by the spiritual words which serves up to us as he opens to us the sacred books …” and then responds in his own voice:

So I myself am present today with the living word, embracing this sacred gathering and like a guest-gift from my journey setting the present discourse before you and the martyrs of Christ.

This is obviously a captatio benevolentiae, but not merely as rhetorical artifice. The Encomium was mentioned above as evidence for Andrew’s identification with his adoptive land and his flock. It also suggests a reciprocal devotion from his people, a natural response to the pastoral and philanthropic endeavors to which Andrew seems to have devoted himself with energy and a fair degree of success, according to his Life.

Andrew’s appeals to the audience draw to a large degree on the forms of antique rhetoric, but his handling of them suggests a well thought-out concern on his part for the theological role of preaching in the life of the Church. While he is clearly the spiritual leader and provider on earth, 

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[1345] Hom. I in dorm. 1045c, Hom. in s. Patap. 1209c.
\item[1346] Hom. in apost. Tit. 1141cd: Εἴη δὲ καὶ ύμίν τοῖς αὐτόθεν ἀφθόνιοι ἐκβλυζομένης φωτοχυσίας τυχεῖν ἐφιεμένοις τὰ αὐτά μοι συνεύξασθαι ...  
\item[1347] Encom. mart. Cret. 1.1 and 1.7 (Laourdas 101–2).
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he subordinates himself to the saints being celebrated and ultimately to God.\textsuperscript{1348} As such he stands both before and with his congregation.\textsuperscript{1349} This attitude is reinforced by his appeal to the priesthood of all believers in the \textit{Homily on the Apostle Titus}, discussed above.

That he is speaking to a lay or, more likely, mixed audience is clear from several indications in the sermons. What is more, he expects a high spiritual level from all. “Hear these things, both the married and those who practice celibacy,” he urges after an exhortation to be on guard against lust, but then follows “What need is there to say to those who know things of which they are not ignorant? For we are all taught of God in Christ, according to the Apostle (cf. Jn. 6:45, 1 Thess. 4:9).”\textsuperscript{1350} The scriptural references here parallel the doctrine of the priesthood of believers, but here with emphasis on the idea that the teaching role of the bishop is rooted in the direct spiritual education of all the faithful by grace. Andrew nevertheless recognizes differing levels of comprehension and spiritual advancement in the congregation: “But do you, O sacred and great festal gathering, both those who have tasted the philosophy according to Christ as with the tip of their finger and those who strive to become its lovers, fervently open wide the

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\textsuperscript{1348} \textit{Hom. in s. Pat.} 1209bc: “Therefore aided by his prayers and founded on the Word who truly exists by essence and who above all nature and knowledge is transcendingly united to the Father and the Spirit and in whom all the treasures of knowledge are deposited (cf. Col. 2:3), we will begin the encomium.” Ταῦτα αὐτοῦ γονόν ἡμεῖς εὐχαίρει βοηθούμενοι καὶ τῷ κατ᾽ ὑστέραν ωτος ὠντι καὶ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν φύσιν καὶ γνώσιν ὑπερηναιμένῳ τῷ Πατρί καὶ τῷ Πνεύματι Λόγῳ, τῷ ἐν οἷς πάντες οἱ ηθοποιοὶ τῆς σοφίας ἀπόκειναι στηριξόμενοι, τῶν ἐγκομίων ἀρξόμεθα.

\textsuperscript{1349} For example, in contrast with his role as host of the banquet in the above-quoted passage from the \textit{Encomium of the Ten Martyrs}, in the \textit{Homily on the Apostle Titus} he presents the apostle himself as the host (1141d). The difference may, however, also be an indication of his increasing authority as he settled into his position on Crete—while it would be presumptuous to depict himself as the host just after arriving, he could comfortably do so after being bishop for several years. In the same \textit{Homily on the Apostle Titus}, he presents everyone as children of the apostolic father of Crete, but then asserts his role of teaching, as holding the position of a father, and uses the old trope of a bee gathering honeyed words from the spiritual meadows (1144ab). Note also his request to the Theotokos for an inspired word, after apologizing for probing into her mysteries: “For every auditor of the divine yet stands, with his ear inclined toward you in order to hear your voice, as aforetime Israel desired to hear the divine voice” (1053d: Ἑστηκε γάρ εἰσετί πάς ὁ τῶν θείων ἀκροατής τὰ ὡτα προσκεκλιμάτως σοι, φωνῆς τῆς σῆς ἐπαίνει καθά καὶ πρὸ τοῦ τῆς θείας ὁ Ἰσραηλέ ἐριμένος).

\textsuperscript{1350} \textit{Hom. in s. loh. decollat.} 1133ab: Τὸστὸν ἀκούετε, ὅσοι τε μγαδες καὶ οἱ το άγυνον περιποιεστες ... Τι δε δει προς εἰδότας εἴπειν ἢ μη περφύσαιν ἀγνοείν; Πάντες γάρ ἐσμεν διδακτοι θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ, κατὰ τὸν Ἀπόστολον.
ears of your mind.” It seems that the first-named are the more advanced, since they have already tasted philosophy, whereas the second are still trying to become lovers of the love of Christian wisdom; but the reverse could be correct. The reference is probably to monastic and lay ways of life, given that the previous sentence seemed to hint at the two orders and that “philosophy” is a common synonym for monasticism in Byzantine texts. But it is also possible that it is a distinction based on the interior spiritual of each person rather than his or her ecclesiastical order.

In either case, the lack of clear division recalls the Mystagogy of Maximus the Confessor, who distinguished the levels of comprehension of the liturgical mysteries according to broad spiritual states rather than formal orders, though in practice the more advanced states were likely to be attained by monastics. Andrew consequently accommodates different levels of comprehension within the audience. In his Homily on Palm Sunday he suggests that he add some ethical teaching to his reflections up to that point, for the safety of the simpler folk; but the goal is still the same lofty one, to goad them toward greater love of Christ.

Contributing both to the preacher’s engagement with the audience as real participants in the sermon and to their comprehension of the teaching, both Andrew and Germanus developed previous forms and styles in new ways. Following the turn to simpler ethical teaching in the

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1351 Hom. in s. Patap. 1209d: Σῦ δὲ μοι, ὦ ιερὰ καὶ μεγάλη πανήγυρις, ὅσοι τε τῆς κατὰ Χριστὸν ἄκροδικτύλῳ φιλοσοφίας ἐγεύσασθε καὶ ὅσοι ταύτης ἐρασται γενέσθαι σπουδάζετε, θερμῶς τὰ ὅτα τῆς διάνοιας πετάσατε.

1352 Ibid. “So as we said, I will now come to the very beginning of the encomium; a good beginning especially since I have found an ally in support of the prayers of both parts.” Ἐπ’ αὐτὴν γοῦν, ὡς ἔφημεν, τὴν ἄρχην τῶν ἑγκυμόνων ἐλέοςωμα· καλὴν ὑπὸ μάλα ὅτι ταχοῖς καὶ ταχεῖαις ἐυράμενος σύμμαχον τὴν ἐκκεντροῦν τῶν μερῶν τῶν εὐχὰς ἀρωγήν. Combefis understood it this way too, optimo promptoque utriusque ordinis precum invento auxilio. It most probably does not refer to a distinction between laity and clergy, because the encomium was delivered at a vigil for St Patapius at his monastery, where the two main groups in attendance would be the nuns of the monastery and the laypeople who appear frequently in Andrew’s stories about it, as discussed below.

1353 Hom. in ramos palm. 1008a. Cf. Hom. iii in dorm. 1092c, where Andrew intends to reflect on the mystery of the Dormition in way that “neither saddens the gnostic, nor pains the rustic” (μήτε τὸν γνωστικὸν λύπει, μήτε τὸν ἀγροικὸν ἀνιη).
Homily on Palm Sunday, Andrew instructed his audience to imagine the whole series of events of Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday, and partake of them through virtues corresponding to the scriptural symbols, culminating in being crucified with Christ by abandoning all worldly attachments and bearing with all offenses meekly. As for Germanus, his Homily on the Annunciation continues the tradition, begun in the fifth century, of imagining the encounter of the Virgin with Gabriel as a dialogue full of drama but also of insights into the dogma of the Incarnation. Though not the originator of this technique, his is perhaps the most virtuosic execution of it in the Greek homiletic tradition. Andrew uses the ancient forms of diatribe and consolation in his Homily on Human Life and on the Departed. A more radical development is Andrew’s famous Great Canon, the long penitential poem consisting of an extended monologue with the soul, drawing on a moral interpretation of the Scriptures (especially the Old Testament) and intended to be sung in church during Lent. The Canon brought some of the sophistication of monastic scriptural exegesis to a lay audience, interpreting large swathes of the Old Testament (and smaller ones of the New) in a moral-anagogical sense. This interpretation of moral symbols was not new in Christian preaching, and we have just seen Andrew practicing it in the Homily on Palm Sunday. But the sheer volume and perseverance of moral contemplation and its expression in short, simple sentences set to music was unprecedented. The amount of scripture covered and its rumination through the form of short reflections recalls monastic devotional practices. Andrew was thus a major figure in the continuous introduction of

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1354 Hom. in ramos palm. 1008ff.
1355 For earlier use of dialogue, see Mary B. Cunningham, “Preaching and the Community,” in Church and People in Byzantium, edited by Rosemary Morris (Birmingham: Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman, and Modern Greek Studies, 1990), 35. It may have had roots in the Syriac tradition.
1356 Andrew also used it in his Homily on the Annunciation (1092ff.) but to lesser extent.
monastic contemplative and liturgical practices into the liturgy of the broader Church, a process for which his monastic homeland of Jerusalem was a major center.

The mention of sung liturgy reminds us that most, if not all, of the preaching and teaching we have discussed up to this point occurred in a liturgical context. The ancient tradition of preaching at the liturgy after the readings is almost invisible in our sources for this period. This does not necessarily mean that it was not occurring; Canon 19 of Trullo implies that it was neglected but not unknown, and the absence of such sermons in our sources may indicate that they were short and ex tempore, in contrast with the long homilies that have come down to us from this period. The latter represent another setting, the divine offices such as Matins, especially when they formed part of a night vigil. These could take place for divers occasions, in various settings, and in different forms. Some were related to great universal feasts of the liturgical calendar, such as Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday, which formed part of the already highly-developed Lenten and Holy Week cycle, or the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross on September 14—all covered by sermons of Andrew of Crete—or the Marian feasts which were relative latecomers to the festal cycle but by the early seventh century seemed to have become standard in the East. Others involved saints of universal or local importance, such as those at which Andrew’s preached sermons on St George and on St Titus, respectively. Yet others commemorated relatively recent events of significance to the Christian polity, such as the anniversary vigil for the deliverance of Constantinople from the siege of 717–18, for which Germanus wrote his so-called *Homilia on the Akathist or on the Dormition*.

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1359 Andrew does, however, open his first Dormition sermon by stating that he needs to explain it, since it was not always honored. This may be due to the fact that Crete was under the jurisdiction of Old Rome and thus lagged behind the eastern churches in adopting the new feast.

1360 *Hom. acath.* 17 (Grumel 195). The speech was delivered on the day of the Dormition feast, which happened to coincide with the retreat of the Arab besiegers, but does not treat of the Dormition itself at all.
were those held on a more frequent basis, such as the Saturday night vigils at the church of St John the Baptist where the relic of St Artemius was located.

The latter provides us with the most details of its celebration. It was organized and largely conducted by a confraternity of cantors, who contributed to a common fund for the liturgical supplies and themselves chanted the hymns, specifically the kontakia of Romanos the Melodist, the great hymnographer of the sixth century. The elements of candles, oil lamps, incense, holy oil, and holy water all figure prominently in the Miracles of Artemius and in the miracle stories recounted in Andrew’s sermons on Patapius, some of which he recounted as having taken place during vigils for the saint at his monastery. It is unclear in each individual case what exact form a vigil took, and specifically whether it was the older version of the pannychis which, despite its name, did not last all night; or whether it was an actual all-night vigil, which might employ the long kontakia and sermons discussed above, or even the new kanôn form pioneered by Andrew of Crete. Furthermore, the vigil might be broken up into its component parts between evening and morning, so that the overall length was the same, but for the sake of accessibility to more people divided into a long evening office and a long morning office, with time for sleep in between.

Grumel suggests that the sermon may have been preached on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the victory (ibid. 188).

1361 *Mir. Artem. 18. Cf. Georgia Frank, “Romanos and the Night Vigil in the Sixth Century,” in Byzantine Christianity, edited by Derek Krueger (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 59–78. It used to be thought that kanôn form was beginning to replace the kontakion around this time, but now scholars see them as overlapping for several centuries, with kanôn used primarily in monastic settings influenced by the Jerusalem tradition whereas the kontakion continued to form a major component of the asmatikê akolouthia (sung office) of the cathedral rite in Constantinople and elsewhere. See Alexander Lingas, “The Liturgical Place of the Kontakion in Constantinople,” in Liturgy, Architecture, and Art in the Byzantine World: Papers of the XVIII International Byzantine Congress (Moscow, 8-15 August 1991) and Other Essays Dedicated to the Memory of Fr. John Meyendorff, edited by Constantine C. Akentiev (St. Petersburg: Publications of the St. Petersburg Society for Byzantine and Slavic Studies, 1995), 50–57.

1362 Andrew, *Hom. in s. Patap.* 1249b.


1364 As is common in Orthodox practice today, even in monasteries for lesser feasts.
There is some evidence for the popularity of these events, despite their nighttime schedule and length. Andrew exclaims at the start of his *Homily on Palm Sunday* “Why such a great gathering? … Everywhere crowds, everywhere children.”\(^{1365}\) Granted, this is a rhetorical expression of wonder, but it would hardly have been suitable unless the church was in fact quite full. That was also a particularly popular feast, which even today packs churches full with people who otherwise rarely attend. Perhaps a more accurate picture can be derived from the *Miracles of Artemius*, where one miracle centers around the conflict between two employees in an aristocratic household, one of whom devoutly frequented the weekly Saturday vigil at the Church of the Forerunner and was mocked by the other.\(^{1366}\) Thus it is quite difficult to know how popular the vigils were. What we can conclude from the evidence is that they were offered on a more or less regular basis, at least in Constantinople and other cities staffed with sufficient clergy, and that participation was largely voluntary and based on personal devotion.\(^{1367}\) Attempts to enforce more active participation in the divine office, such as Trullo’s canon on closing public entertainments during Bright Week so that the faithful would frequent churches, probably had only a minor effect.\(^{1368}\)

Our preachers, nevertheless, took to their task with relish during the feasts. It was an important occasion both to honor the subject of the celebration and to take advantage of the presence of large numbers of laypeople to convey to them the evangelical word. They portrayed

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\(^{1365}\) *Hom. in ramos palm.* 988a. Τίς ή τοσαύτη συνάθροισις; … Πανταχοὺ πλήθη, πανταχοὶ παίδες. It is in fact not clear whether he is referring to his present audience or to the crowds who received Jesus on his entry in to Jerusalem; but this ambiguity is probably deliberate on Andrew’s part, since he begins the sermon by remarking that yesterday Lazarus hosted us, now Jesus himself does so (987c).

\(^{1366}\) *Mir. Artem.* 15 (Crisafulli and Nesbitt 102–105).

\(^{1367}\) It could also be selective: Andrew urges his audience not to leave the spiritual banquet early (*Hom. III in nativ.* 844c), indicating that people would come and go as they pleased. Given that the sermon appears to be part of a trilogy for the feast of the Nativity, spaced out at different points in one long vigil, it is understandable why some people might require encouragement to stay!

\(^{1368}\) *Trullo* 66 (Nedungatt and Featherstone 148–49). If the imperial government enforced the canon, as it was supposed to do, at least the distractions of public entertainments would be removed, perhaps drawing a few more people to the churches.
the feasts as opportunities for special initiation into the mysteries of faith, to taste of a spiritual banquet, to wear the joy and benefits of the feast like garlands, to inhale its fragrance and to discover its spiritual treasures.1369 The feasts offered bodily as well as spiritual blessings—primarily the healings attributed to God or the saints, but also the psychosomatic benefits of the fellowship, good cheer, and feasting that would occur in the course of celebrations. They could also count on devotion to the various saints as a motive for attendance, and emphasized the combination of gratitude for past blessings and hope for future ones that might draw some to join in the prayers offered in church.1370

In fact the latter formed an especial focal point for preaching. We have already had occasion to look at the use of miracle stories as vehicles of doctrinal and ethical teaching in earlier chapters. The genre is especially rich in the late seventh century. We dispose of two collections by a known author—Andrew’s Miracles of Therapon and the Miracles of Patapius included in the dossier of his writings on that saint. The other three—the Second Collection of the Miracles of Demetrius, the Miracles of Theodore, and the Miracles of Artemius—are anonymous and display various levels of style. Like the earlier collections, these took advantage of the popularity of miracle tales and the context of a feast or shrine to magnify the given saint but also to educate the audiences in Christian truth and virtue, in more or less explicit ways. The anonymous author of the Theodore makes a show of yielding to the audience’s insatiable appetite for miracle stories and adding just one more, but we should expect that this responded to

1369 Andrew, Hom. II in dorm. 1076c and 1084b, Encom. mart. Cret. 1.7 (Laourdas 102); Germanus, Hom. I in praesent. 292cd.
1370 Andrew, Mir. Therap. 19 (Deubner 129–30); Mir.Theod. 8 (Delehaye 193), Mir. Artem. 29 (Crisafulli and Nesbitt 158–59).
a real enjoyment on the part of the hearers or readers—in particular with regard to the dramatic stories he has to tell.¹³⁷¹

Lay piety in theory: the structure

Now I will turn to a closer analysis of the content of the sermons of the Andrew and Germansu, particularly in regard to its view of the status of laypeople and the theological teachings it entrusted to them. First, then, the preachers’ views of marriage and sexuality. Both were celibate monks, more or less voluntarily in their respective situations. They followed the general patristic tradition on the matter of the material world, sensible pleasures, and human sexuality, but I think that we can also detect the specific influence of Maximus. This is most pronounced in Andrew of Crete’s *Homily on Human Life and on the Departed*, a particularly apt place to enter into such questions. After describing man’s wondrous place at the boundary of matter and spirit, Andrew laments the Fall and its effects on human nature, including subjection of the soul to the body, assimilation to animal life, and constant labor and sorrow. He then continues:

Such was the bitter taste of the tree and the ancient misdemeanor. Such was the counsel of the serpent and the transgression of the commandment. Such was the first disobedience and the relation and affinity with sensible things. “It was fair and good for food” (Gen. 3:6), that fruit which put me to death—of course it was. Yet for me the sweet taste became the cause of ugly deformity. Yet to me it brought instead a turbid, bitter draught (Hab. 2:15), exchanging life for death, and blunting incorruption with corruption … And

¹³⁷¹ *Mir. Theod.* 15 (Delehaye 199).
to say what is better-known, instead of the passionless delight that was in Paradise, we were condemned to this life of much suffering and love of pleasure.\footnote{Hom. de humana vita 1272bd: Ταῦτα ἡ πικρὰ γεύσις τοῦ ξύλου καὶ ἡ ἀρχαία παρατροπή. Ταῦτα ἡ τοῦ ὄρεως συμβουλὴ καὶ τῆς ἐνταλῆς ἡ παράβασις. Ταῦτα ἡ πρώτης παρακοή καὶ ἡ πρὸς τὰ αἰσθητὰ σχέσις καὶ οἰκείωσις. « Ὡραῖος ἦν καὶ καλὸς εἰς βρῶσιν» ὥμεν θανατώσας καρποὺς· καὶ προδήλως. Ἀλλ᾽ ἐμοὶ τῆς εἰδεχθούσις ἀμφορίας ἐγένετο πρόξενος γλυκεῖα ἡ γεύσις. Ἀλλ᾽ ἐμοὶ θυλερὰ πικρίας μισθώσας ἀντεστήγαγε, θανάτῳ τὴν ψωθίν ἀντελάξασα καὶ φθορῆς τὴν ἀφθορίαν ἀμβλύνασα ... καὶ ἵν᾽ ἐπὶ τὸ γνωριμότερον, ἀντὶ τῆς ἀπαθοῦς ἐν παραδείσῳ τρυφῆς τὴν πολυπαθή καὶ φυλήδονος ψωθίν καὶ διαίαταν κατεκρίθησιν.}

After attributing death and its myriad sources to this primordial sin, he continues with a bleak view of procreation and the chaos of life in the flesh.

What then? Is not this the source of procreation from the will of man and from the will of flesh, from blood, I mean (cf. Jn. 1:13)? And to be born like irrational animals, and to live and die and dissolve, and in an utterly mean and painful way at that? Whence did thorns sprout for us? Whence the flux and passing away of our frame, the reasons from which growing up and aging happen to us? And furthermore, to grieve and to feel pleasure, and to sigh and fall ill?\footnote{Ibid. 1273ab: Τὰ δὲ; οὐκ ἐνεπέθεσθε ἡμῖν ἢ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρὸς καὶ ἐκ θελήματος σαρκός, λέγω δὴ ἢ ἐξ αἰμάτων ἀποτέλεσ; τὸ δὲ καὶ δίκην ἁλὸν ἠγάθον γεννάθαι καὶ ζῆν καὶ θνῄσκαν καὶ λύεσθαι, καὶ τοῦτο λίγαν εὐτέλος καὶ ἄθλος; Ποῦς ἡμῖν ἔξεφυσαν ἀκανθών; Ποθὲν ἡ ροή καὶ ἀπορροὴ τῆς ἡμετέρας συστάσεως, αἱ ἁφορμαὶ παρ᾽ ὧν τὸ ἡβάσκειν καὶ γηρᾶν τῇ φύσει προσγίνεται; Προσέτι δὲ τὸ ἀνίσθαι καὶ ἕθεσθαι, τὸ τε στένειν καὶ ἀρριστεῖν ...}

This gloomy reflection on human affairs draws on many commonplaces of ancient ethical literature, as Theodore Nissen observed, as well as on patristic exegesis of the Fall described in Genesis. But the particular conjunction of terms and ideas coincides with the particular doctrine of original sin found in Maximus—in particular, the emphasis on affinity for sensible instead of intelligible objects, the loss of primordial freedom from passion, the animal birth and life and death of man, and the vicious circle of pleasure and pain. Even the biblical phrase regarding a “turbid draught” quoted from Habakkuk alludes to Maximus, since its use with reference to
diabolical temptation is otherwise very rare in patristic literature prior to Andrew.\textsuperscript{1374} Andrew’s recently-published *Homily on the Exaltation of the Cross* displays Maximus’ language even more clearly. After explaining why Adam was not immediately pardoned by God, but expelled from Paradise and condemned to a life of toil—out of God’s philanthropic paedagogy, because an easy pardon would have led to an easy relapse—he discusses how Christ healed mankind through assuming its weaknesses.

So it follows that the cross was to be the chief point of the whole cure and the recovery of man. For the first fault was pleasure, by which the sickness took hold, whereas the cross was pain. Illnesses are dispelled from the body by medicines, which are opposite to the causes of the suffering; although in this case same has been healed by same: death by death, our death by that of Christ, and by the tree the lawless use of the tree and the wound that resulted from it. This is not at all surprising: “a peg with a peg” says the proverb. And good medicines cause pain for the patients just as the illnesses themselves do: the latter are the actual debilities of the body, whereas the former chase them away. That is the reason why we men unwillingly endure the first type and willingly the second, for we are freed from the former by the latter, that is, from the more vexing ones by the more bearable ones—for something voluntary is by nature more bearable than what is not—and we are freed by those pains which serve us as much as we wish, from those which spread through our body to the extent that they are furnished with it by diseased matter. Therefore death followed on the sickness of our forefather which was the result of sin, and appropriately also on Christ’s sinless cure of us. And the first death was an

\textsuperscript{1374} Thal. 49, ll. 149–56. A search on TLG turned up only three quotations of the verse with reference to spiritual warfare: one from Hesychius of Jerusalem (*Commentarius brevis* 75.9), two from the vague figure of Ephraem Graecus (*Sermones paraenetici ad monachos Aegypti* 10.25, 25.88). A further one refers it to the devil but in an apocalyptic context: Andrew of Caesarea, *Commentarii in Apocalypsin* 8.24.8.
offspring of sin and a moderate punishment of the offender, whereas the second was its overthrow and likewise Christ’s sufferings were the cure of that pleasure, his sinlessness that of sin, his humility that of arrogance, and all these acts of love for mankind were the cure of all those things that had been dared and suffered.\footnote{Hom. de exalt. cruc. 3 (De Groote 463): "Εμελλε δὲ ἀριστερὸς τὸ κεφάλαιον ἔστησεν τῆς ὀλίγης θεραπείας τῶν παθῶν τῶν αἰτίων ἐξελαύνει τοῦ σώματος, διὸ καὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἐναποθάλασσα ταῦτά τεθεράπευται, θανάτων ἃνατος, τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡ ἁμαρτία, καὶ ἐξ ἔλους χρὴσις παράνομος καὶ τὸ ἐκέθηθαν τραύμα, θεαματικόν οὐδέν· παπάξων γάρ πάπαξως κατὰ τὴν παρομοίαν, ἐκ τὸ ἀναθέων φαρμάκων ὄντος τῶν θεραπευόμενοι ἐγγίζονται, καθαπέρ ἀπὸ τῶν νόσων, καὶ αἱ μὲν εἰσὶν αὐτὰ τὰ πάθη τοῦ σώματος, αἱ δὲ τούτων διώκοντα· ὅθεν τὰς μὲν ἄκοντες, τὰς δὲ ἐκόντες ὑπομένομεν ἀνθρωπίνου, ταῦτας ἐκείνως ἀπαλλαττόμενοι, τὰς κοινωνίας τῶν ἀργαλειωτέρων—τὸ γάρ ἐκουσάνα τὸν μὴ τοιοῦτον φύσιν κοινωνίας—καὶ ταῖς εἰς διὸν ἔθελοι τις ὑπερτεροῦσας, τῶν εἰς διὸν ἀν υλικόν ὑποτελώσας ἐναποθάλασσαν τοῖς σώμασιν. Οὐκοῦν καὶ τῷ διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἑναποθάσας τοῦ ἱμάτερον προπάτορός, εἰκότως καὶ τῇ περὶ ἡμᾶς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡθελεῖ παρακολούθησε θάνατος, καὶ οἱ μὲν ἔννομα τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ μέτριοι κόλασις τοῦ πεπλημμεληκότος, ὁ δὲ ἐκείνου καθαดรέας, ὡσπερ καὶ τῷ διὸ ἀν δίκαιον πάθη τῆς ἠμαρτίας ἐκείνης, καὶ τῷ ἀναμάρτητον τῆς ἁμαρτίας, καὶ τοῦ τύφου τὸ ταπείνω, καὶ πάντα πάντων τὰ τῆς φιλανθρωπίας τῶν ἑκεῖ τετολμημένων καὶ νοσθήκτων ἱμάτα. The translation above is based on De Groote’s but revised by me for ease of comprehension.\footnote{De vitae termin. 2: καὶ ταύτη μὲν ὀφελοῦντα κατὰ λόγον εὐθετοῦσ τε καὶ δίκαιον κατα- φοροεῖσθαι καὶ διαπτύσσατε, διός γοίν ἐνετεύχεσαν παρά τούς τὸ ἡδίς μεταδιάκοψι τῶν αἰσθήσεων δυναστεύοντα καὶ τὸν βίον ἑυτοὺς ὑποτάττοντα. Here and hereafter I use the translation by Garton and Westerink, with occasional modifications of my own.} The paradoxical healing of pain by pain—of man’s culpable pain originating from pleasure by Christ’s innocent pain revealing God’s mercy—recalls several passages in Maximus, and especially his teaching that Christ “converted the use of death, turning it into a condemnation of sin but not of human nature itself.”\footnote{Thal. 61 (Blowers and Wilken 137).} He then describes a curriculum of true wisdom: “It seeks the reason of existing things qua existing things,
and is not mistaken in the discovery of the truth; it digs its way through the natures of things with the mattock of its reasonings, inasmuch as it refuses to remain among superficial appearances but goes down to the bottom of the things which are the subject of the search, and collects thence the contemplation of existing things like a kind of gold dust.\(^{1378}\) This attitude toward the world recalls another side of Maximus’ teaching, namely his emphasis on the primacy of the mind and its need to eschew appearances and penetrate to the spiritual principles informing material realities. According to Germanus, this kind of honing of the mind through contemplation of nature also trains it to selectively read works of profane wisdom and gather from them only what is beneficial.\(^{1379}\)

The method of natural contemplation (\textit{physikê theôria}) crops up elsewhere in Germanus and Andrew, often in conjunction with a sober appreciation of the providence that surrounds mankind even in the fallen state.\(^{1380}\) They thus popularize the spiritual discipline of using visible and material things as occasions for moral improvement, intellectual contemplation, and ascent to God. Theirs is a wary appreciation of the beauty of visible things, since it is all too easy to slip into the entanglements of sensuality. But in one magnificent passage at the end of his \textit{Encomium of St George}, Andrew offers a wholly positive description.

Now all things are at peace, and earth is paradoxically joined to heaven, now that impiety is clean gone. The sea has relaxed its vehemence and embraces the neighboring land with gentle breezes and porphyry-hued it calmly permits voyages wherever one wishes to go.

\(^{1378}\) Ibid. 4: καὶ τῶν ὄντων ἂν δντα ἐστίν τῶν λόγων ἐπιζητοῦσα, καὶ τοῦ ἄληθος οὐ σφαλλομένη τήν εὑρεῖν, καὶ διασκάπτουσα μὲν τῶν πραγμάτων τάς φύσεις τῇ δικέλλῃ τῶν λογισμῶν, ὡς τοις πρωφανέσιν ἑναπομένειν οὐκ ἄναχομένη, πρὸς δὲ τὸ βάθος κατοῦσα τῶν τῇ ἔρευν ὑποκειμένων, ἐκείθεν οίᾳ τινα φήγματα χρυσότιδος γῆς τὰς τῶν ὄντων ἀναλέγεται θεωρίας.

\(^{1379}\) Ibid.

\(^{1380}\) Andrew, \textit{Hom. in s. Patap.} 1221d–1224d and \textit{Hom. de exalt. cruc.} 2 (De Groote 461); Germanus, \textit{Hom. acath.} 3. Cf. Andrew, \textit{Hom. in s. Patap.} 1220–21, where he ends offers a description of the fertility of the saint’s homeland Egypt, purportedly to entertain the audience, but in fact sets up this trope of Greek rhetoric only to undermine it with a smooth transition into the biblical trope of Egypt as a land of sin and moral slavery.
Sailors who before had hung their rudders over the hearth, now take them up and hanging up the sails on the spars, they now traverse the great gulfs with suitable winds. The dolphin, delightfully blowing air and coming up to surface, gives to the spectators a not inconsiderable pleasure. Now the air, casting off the violence of the winds and fog, appears stable to all and kind and lovely, escorted by the festival. Now the sun, since it has through you put off its dishonorable and loathsome honor, shines more clearly and brightly in the sky and shows forth its sparkling more splendid. And all of creation, having shed the gloomy garb of delusion and put on like a white tunic the brightness of the immaculate and pure faith, proclaims you as Savior and acknowledges you as Benefactor.\footnote{1381 Encom. Georg. 27 (AASS XXIV–XXV).}

The passage looks forward to the secure splendor of the visible creation in the age to come when sin will have been overcome. It concludes a reflection on the proximity of George’s feast to both Pascha and Ascension, two great feasts that emphasize the new creation inaugurated by Christ. Andrew draws the connection between the liturgical season and the natural season of springtime with its mild and hopeful aspect. His musing corresponds to the optimistic ecclesiology we considered earlier in this chapter.

The same ecclesiological discussion also provides the frame for the place of virginity and marriage in these authors. Despite their wary attitude toward material things, nowhere do we find
in them an unfavorable contrast between monastic and married life. In his only preserved work on a monk, the *Homily on Patapius*, Andrew identifies the baptismal font as the common mother of Christians, contrasting it with the saint’s earthly birthplace (Egypt) in a series of antitheses. Germanus (or whoever the author might be) in the *Narration concerning Synods and Heresies* characterizes those who preserve their orthodox faith uncorrupted by heresy as presenting their souls undefiled and virgin to God, and he voices the same idea in the *Homily on the Akathist or on the Dormition*, in the context of faith in the Theotokos.\(^{1382}\)

The association between faith in the Theotokos as part of orthodox belief and inward virginity is part of a larger theme: the Theotokos in fact mediates between marriage and virginity in her own person, containing both in her role as virgin mother. In fact her mediation goes even further, as she unites all of society, all of the Church, and even the whole universe in herself. We have seen one aspect of this above, with the Theotokos as synecdoche for the Church. Near the end of his third *Homily on the Dormition*, after exhorting the heavens and the angels to receive the Virgin and addressing the various Holy Land locations associated with her, Andrew offers the following general summons to the earthborn.

> Let us run, then, all together, to the Mother of God; choirs of fathers and patriarchs, spirits of the prophets and companies of priests, the band of Apostles, the nation of martyrs, the gathering of doctors, the souls of the just, the company of the saints in every age and every rank, kings and potentates, rulers and the ruled. “Lads and maidens, old with the young, praise her” (Ps. 148:12), beg for her help. Say, say to the Mother of God, “How blessed is the house of David, from whose loins you, O Mother of God, have sprung.” Mothers and virgins, praise the one who alone was both mother and always virgin. Brides, go before her who remained an unmarried maiden, the incorrupt one who,

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\(^{1382}\) *Narr. synod. 50; Hom. acath. 22* (Grumel 198).
uniquely free from the pangs of childbirth, brought forth the incomprehensible one. Childless people and widows, applaud her who “did not know man” (Lk. 1:34), but who changed the laws of infertility. Maidens, dance joyfully before the incorruptibility that gave birth to a child. All nations, bless her; all tongues, call her blessed; sing to the mother of God, all tribes of the earth—sing! Begin to sing and sound the cymbals, raise a joyful cry, magnify her, sing her praises!\textsuperscript{1383}

This mediation of virginity and motherhood and the Theotokos’ care for all orders and classes of people is echoed at lesser length elsewhere in Andrew and Germanus.\textsuperscript{1384} Germanus also presents her as a model of motherhood and her parents Joachim and Anna as exemplars of marriage. There is, however, an uneasy tension here between the ideal of purity and that of marriage; Germanus speaks at one moment in glowing terms of marriage while at others he denigrates the sexual union that it normally involves. Thus on the one hand he can describe them as “chaste Anna with her most sweet spouse,” “the god-loving couple,” “couple most noble and blameless,” who bore the Virgin “blamelessly through prayer … at the fitting time of their cohabitation”;\textsuperscript{1385} and again Anna as “husband-loving” and “God-loving.”\textsuperscript{1386} On the other hand he presents the Theotokos’ virginity several times as the opposite of sexual pleasure.\textsuperscript{1387} These may be taken simply as indications of hostility to sex outside of marriage rather than the act as such, but in another passage he presents the Theotokos speaking to the married women

\textsuperscript{1383} Hom. III in dorm. 1104bc (transl. from Daley 147).
\textsuperscript{1384} Andrew Hom. acath. 576v, 578r (Themelis 830, 832); Germanus Hom. I in praesen. PG 98:308c–309a; Hom. in annunt. (Fecioru 67, 394).
\textsuperscript{1385} Hom. I in praesen. 300a: ἡ σώφρων Ἀννα, σὺν τῷ γυναικάτῳ ὁμοζύγῳ; ibid. 301a: τὸ θεοφιλὸς ζέγγος; Hom. in annunt. PG 98:324c (Fecioru 77): Ζεγγός εὐγενεστάτων καὶ ἄμεμπτων; Hom. in annunt. Fecioru 67: θύγατρ Ιωακείμ ΚΑ,ID Νης, τῶν ἄμεμπτως ἐκ προσευχῆς τεκόντων σὲ ἐν τῷ προσήκοντι καιρῷ τῆς τούτων συνοικήσεως. The last quotation has been adduced as evidence for a belief in the Immaculate Conception among the Greek Fathers.
\textsuperscript{1386} Hom. in annunt. 316b: φίλανθρος . . . φιλόθεος.
\textsuperscript{1387} E.g. Hom. annunt. 325b: μόιος ἡμπαθείας οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἐμοί and similarly 332ab, 337a.
lamenting her imminent decease and comparing their experience of childbearing to hers unfavorably.

If you, then, who are parents of mortal children, through a sordid kind of union, cannot bear to be separated from them for an instant, how shall I, who have borne God the Son, not be overcome even more than you by maternal affection? For I offered him a womb that was whole, conceived him as a pure virgin, without help of a husband. You are consoled by each other for the loss of your children; but since I have been privileged to have this Christ as both my God and my only son, how can I fail to rejoice at going to him, who lives forever and gives life to all?¹³⁸⁸

Germanus is hardly the only Church Father to demonstrate this ambivalence, which sits uncomfortably with the re-affirmation by the Council in Trullo of the honorability of marriage.¹³⁸⁹ We cannot explore this problem in all its vast extent here. The basic intuition of Maximus, of Andrew as demonstrated by his views on the origins of sexual conception in the Homily on Human Life and on the Departed, and probably for Germanus here (although not explicitly stated) is that sexual intercourse as we know it, in a form akin to the animals, came about after the Fall. Thus it did not constitute an element of human nature that would be found in the redeemed future state after the general resurrection. It seems not to have really been comprehended in Christ, the New Adam who took on only the natural passions and who represented the first-fruits of the resurrection. Although according to Maximus, in himself Christ

¹³⁸⁸ Hom. III in dorm. 365a: Εἰ οὖν ὑμεῖς γονεῖς ὑμεῖς ἐκ φθαρτῶν καὶ ἐκ ῥύπου συναφείας παιδῶν, ὥστε καρπερεῖτε τούτων πρὸς ῥοπὴν χωρισθῆναι, πῶς ἔγω θέδων Υἱὸν κεκτημένην, καὶ σπλάγχνα μονομερῆ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἑπέχουσα, διότι χωρίς ἀνδρὸς αὐτὸν ἀφθαρτὸς καὶ παρθενικῶς ἐκύησα, μὴ μείζων ὑμῶν νενίκησαι παρά τῶν σπλάγχνων; 'Ὑμεῖς γὰρ ὑπ’ ἀλλήλων τὴν ὑπ’ τοῖς τέκνοις ψυχῶν ψυχωγείσθη ζημίαν· ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ θεόν τὸν Χριστὸν καὶ μονογενὴς τοῦτον νῦν ἔχων ἡξιωμένην, πῶς μὴ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἡδέως ἐπαναλῦσω, τὸν ἀεὶ ζῶντα καὶ ζωὴν πάσι διδόντα; (transl. in Daley 173–74). Daley’s translation of έκ τῆς ῥύπου συναφείας is a legitimate translation, but it might be rendered even more stark—“from the filth of intercourse”—depending on how strongly one translates rhupos.

¹³⁸⁹ Trullo 13 (Nedungatt/Featherstone 85).
overcame the division between male and female, this was not so much by embracing sexuality as by transcending it.

The important development in Andrew and Germanus is the application of the same idea to the Theotokos. The indiscriminate application of certain characteristics to both Christ and the Virgin, and even the shift of some from the former to the latter, can be observed from the fifth century onwards. So it was fairly easy to also adapt the idea of Christ as mediator of the divisions of creation to the Theotokos. This was particularly important in her role as bridge between motherhood and virginity. In her case, since her body was virginal, it did not hinder the spirit with grossness and it did not suffer corruption.\(^{1390}\) Despite the tensions within patristic teaching regarding sexuality, this was an important way for married laypeople, particularly women, to be incorporated theologically into the life of the Church. The confusion that the details of this position could cause, however, are evident in the Canon 79 of the Council in Trullo, which bans the pious custom of celebrating the Virgin Mary’s childbirth on the Sunday after Christmas as unbefitting the Theotokos’ supernatural birthgiving.\(^{1391}\)

The Theotokos was doubtless the most important figure in this theological move. But similar thought is applied to the Cross and to various saints. In his first *Homily on the Exaltation of the Cross* in the midst of many other epithets with relation to how the Cross helps various groups of people, Andrew calls it “seal of virginity, knot of marriage”, while in the newly-edited *Homily* on the same, he twice designates it as a cause of celebration for all ages, fortunes, and ranks.\(^{1392}\) In the latter he also associates the Cross with the angelic and, implicitly, the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Areopagite, stating that the angels rejoice in the Cross just as much

\(^{1391}\) *Trullo* 79 (Nedungatt/Featherstone 159–60).  
\(^{1392}\) *Hom. de exalt.* PG 97:1021b: ἀγνείας σφραγὶς, συζυγίας σύνδεσμος; *Hom. de exalt.* 8, 9 (De Groote 480–83).
as humans, because in this blessed system the superior does not begrudge sharing the good nor
does the inferior envy his better. Among saints, Titus is described as *zygios*, which can be
translated either as “married” or as “promoting marriage.” And in hagiographical accounts,
the attempt to assign a pious pedigree to a saint often results in commendations for the devout
married couple that was responsible for his birth (although usually the saint himself is
celibate).

*Lay piety in theory: the content*

Mary Cunningham has written an important piece analyzing Andrew’s homilies on
Lazarus and on Palm Sunday, examining the kind of teaching conveyed in these exegetical
sermons, so I will not retread exactly the same ground here. She showed how, even if the
sermons were not necessarily preached in the form in which they have come down to us, they
can still be relied upon to show what kind of rhetorical techniques a preacher would use to help
his audience follow the argument and what kind of teaching he would convey to them. She also
noted the close connection of those two sermons with their festal context, namely their
placement at the beginning of Holy Week which affected their use of imagery related to baptism
and the events of the Passion. We have already seen how Andrew adjusts to different levels of
his audience, for example in presenting simpler ethical teaching or in adding a discursus on the
abundance of Egypt to keep his audience entertained. We also connected the development of the

1393 Ibid.
1394 *Hom. Tit.*, 1160b. Lampe ζόγιος 1: “of the yoke; hence ... 1. married” but cf. Ps.–Zonaras, *Lexicon Z*
(Tittmann 961): Ζόγιος, ὁ ἐνεργῶν ὁμόνοιαν ἀνδρός καὶ γυναικός, ἤγουν συζυγίαν. Combéfis translates it
blandly as "socialis."
1396 Cunningham, “Andreas of Crete’s Homilies on Lazarus and Palm Sunday: The Preacher and his
Great Canon, in its intensive use of anagogical interpretation as moral exhortation, with monastic rumination on Scripture.

This anagogical exegesis is found in many places in Andrew and is linked with his discussion of mystical theology, that is, the higher stages of the Christian life. Andrew has high expectations of Christians and does not distinguish in this regard between monastics and laypeople. In the *Homily on Patapius* he states that there is one single way of virtue, to keep the word of the Lord, and one word which sums everything up: “He who desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me (Mt. 16:24).” He then goes on to explain:

What is it that the cross hints at? Mortification of the flesh, freedom from passions, forgetfulness of things present, the swiftest ascent to the life on high; and to sum it up, the unstoppable longing for the ultimate object of desire. This emphasis on striving to attain to God himself marks even small elements of his exegesis: the three gifts of the Magi, for example, become the three theological virtues leading up to God. His most extensive instruction in the whole process of purification, illumination, and deification is, appropriately, found in the *Homily on the Transfiguration*. It opens with an exhortation to turn from the earthly to the heavenly, and a few pages later connects the more profound contemplation of Scripture with the experience of the mysteries themselves which it describes: “For [the mystery of the Transfiguration] wishes us who have understood, through knowledge, the depth of what was done and said to draw down the grace more drastically, through the imitation of the one transfigured, and have it in us ourselves effecting this wondrous and strange

1397 He does not, however, hesitate to deal with more literal puzzles in the text: *Hom. Transf.* 937 (harmonizing Gospel accounts), *Hom. Laz.* 972 (Christ corrects Martha's imperfect theologizing).
1398 *Hom. in Patap.* 1212b.
1399 *Encom. mart. Cret.* 2.2 (Laourdas 103).
Andrew takes a very methodical approach to such a contemplative ascent. First he latches onto a crux in the synoptic Gospel accounts of the Transfiguration, namely that Matthew and Mark place the event six days after the previous passage in the text, whereas Luke places it eight days later. He offers a reasonable literal explanation (based on ancient numbering customs), but then goes deeper by suggesting that the six days represent the labors of love in this age. These include both bodily and spiritual works of charity and are necessary to attain to the eighth day: one must serve Christ as he is present in the “least of his brethren” before attaining to the vision of his Transfiguration. The interpretation of the clothes and flesh of Christ as symbolizing the two books of revelation, Nature and Scripture, parallels Maximus’ *Ambiguity* 10. After interpreting several other elements of the Transfiguration narrative, Andrew comes to his conclusion. He first exhorts the audience to put into practice what they have just heard, and then proceeds to close with a further reminder to avoid attachment to the dead things of the corruptible world and instead cultivate the divine and infinite eros.

What are we to make of this sermon? There is no direct indication of whether it was preached to a lay or to a monastic audience. One phrase may refer to the kindness of sheltering a wandering ascetic, something more suitable perhaps to a layperson than a monk; but the phrase is not quite clear and even if it were, it would not prove anything conclusively. The exhortations to turn away from the world are not specifically monastic; the mystical language throughout is,

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1401 Ibid. 935cd.
1402 Ibid. 937–40.
1403 Ibid. 940–45.
1404 Ibid. 948; Maximus in PG 91: 1128f.
1405 Ibid. 956–58.
1406 944a: καὶ τὸν μὲν ἑκδημήσαντα τῇς οἰκείας πατρίδος καὶ ἐπὶ ξένης γῆς διατρίβοντα καὶ ἀλήτην γενόμενον τὴν ξενιτείαν αἰδεσθέντα τοῦ δι ήμᾶς ξενιτεύσαντος, ἐπὶ τὴν ἰδίαν ἑστίαν, ἧς ποτὲ ἑστιν, ἀσμένως χειραγωγήσει. As the text stands, the kindness is to be done to someone who has left his homeland and become a vagabond out of respect for Christ who estranged himself from heaven for mankind; but Combéfis suggested an emendation of αἰδεσθέντα to αἰδεσθεῖς, making the one respecting Christ the host rather than the guest, and the context seems to support this.
admittedly, weighty stuff, but as we have seen with regard to George of Pisidia, exhortation to be filled with divine eros could be addressed even to such a practical-minded layman as the emperor. Moreover, if this teaching was going to come to laypeople, the form in which Andrew put it was the ideal one. Maximus’ *Ambiguity* 10, on which Andrew perhaps draws, is an extremely long text—a full one hundred columns in Migne—and disjointed, reflecting the meandering flow of private rumination on Scripture. As such it was not in a form suitable for the reading and digestion of most laypeople. Andrew’s sermon maps out the way of salvation much more succinctly, and ingeniously incorporates the practical life of virtue in its anagogical interpretation. Furthermore, the practical virtues which he espouses are not just the guarding of the senses and heart on which Maximus focuses his monastic reflections, but the external acts—whether in word or deed—involved in active philanthropy (such as Maximus emphasized in his *Epistles* to lay government officials). These certainly do not belong exclusively to laypeople but they are more closely associated with their capabilities and concerns. It cannot be proven that the text was directed to lay people, but it is certainly possible. The supposition is further strengthened by finding much of the same material, if in a more summary form, in a sermon that was clearly preached to laypeople—in fact, the sermon on the Dormition quoted above to show how the Theotokos was seen to unite all orders within herself.\(^{1407}\) Furthermore, the second homily in that trilogy on the Dormition (which would have been preached during the same vigil) invites the congregation to look into into the depth of the teachings of Dionysius the

\(^{1407}\) *Hom. III in dorm.* 1108d, where Andrew challenges the audience to go beyond what they have learned from him by learning directly from Christ, who wishes to deify them.
Areopagite.\footnote{Hom. I in dorm. 106 1df. The homily is printed first in the PG, following Combéfis, but is actually second in the trilogy (Daley 135 n. 1). The emphasis here is on Dionysius’ account of the Dormition of the Virgin; this is a more “hagiographical” element in his writings, but he gives it a mystical interpretation.} This shows that, for Andrew, lay piety was in theory no less demanding than monastic spirituality.

Germanus, for his part, hews more closely to ethical teaching. His sermons on feasts of the Virgin use typology extensively, of course, for the purposes of magnifying her, but we do not have any non-Marian homilies by him to see how he might have expanded into mystical theology of the kind that Andrew treats. Yet he provides even more definite conclusions for the level of scriptural engagement and moral excellence expected of laypeople. His most extensive exegetical exercise, \textit{On Predestined Terms of Life}, was written at the request of Marinus, identified in the title as consul and chief secretary of state (\textit{antigrapheus}). Germanus yielded to such a difficult request because of the duty of friendship; just like the other rhetorical tropes we have already seen, this one must have contained a kernel of truth. Maximus’ correspondence, as discussed in Ch. 6, shows how important it is to pay attention to friendship as a force that drew together the monastic and lay orders on a person-by-person basis. In regard to Germanus’s treatise, we have already discussed his exhortation to turn from temporal instability and engage in natural contemplation. The advice on how to benefit from secular literature indicates that the recipient would be inclined to do so, suggesting that despite its decline in this period, Byzantine humanism was not totally moribund and was of interest to laymen.\footnote{Germanus himself quotes Aristotle, the Aristotelian commentator Ammonius, Galen, Hippocrates, and Diogenes Laertius, along with the Church Fathers Athanasius, Basil, and Gregory Nazianzen (see the list at Garton and Westerink 79).} The purpose of the text is to discuss the perennial question of how much control God exercises over the world and in particular over human life. The method of Scriptural exegesis employed by the spokesman for patristic tradition is far from the symbolic anagogical method employed by Andrew, following
Maximus and others, but neither is it a stubbornly literal one. In order to harmonize the varied patristic and scriptural evidence, the spokesman (representing Germanus) has to pay careful attention to context and the larger scope of Scripture. Questioning and dispute is not completely ruled out, but it is placed in the framework of theological tradition. This kind of cautious exploration of the theological questions, reflected also in Germanus’ *Epistle to Thomas of Claudiopolis*, seems representative of the kind of discussions occurring among the educated élite, including laypeople as well as higher clergy and monastics. It is in this kind of climate that emperor Leo’s anti-icon policy was discussed and then implemented, in a more gradual and less “iconoclastic” way than has been previously thought.

To get a sense of Germanus’ ethical teaching to larger audiences, one passage from his *Homily on the Inauguration of the Temple of the Theotokos*, will suffice.

But hearing “inauguration,” O honorable and august audience, do not take the word “inauguration” to refer to newly-erected buildings and recently-founded constructions, but rather the renewal in spirit, according to which our inner man, putting off the old and ragged clothing of sin and putting on the new clothing of piety, walks in newness of life.

In such things the most immaculate Lady also rejoices. In which virtues, being renewed in the the godly and pious way of life, let us also virginally delight in the virginal inauguration of the Virgin. And since we are about to approach her and she is herself present, and in this wise approaching her reverend temple, let us put everything in order, and let us transform everything for the better: deed and word and contemplation. Let nothing of ours be unworthy of the day: neither let our gait, nor our laugh, as it is said (cf. Sir. 19:29–30), nor the decoration of our clothing err toward the improper. So what am I

1410 Cf. the summary and evaluation of the argument in the introduction by Garton (Garton and Westerink xvii–xxiii).
saying? Let us even put in order our thoughts themselves. And let mercy precede all these, by which God is served, so that new in both soul and body we might newly celebrate the day of Inauguration of the Mother of God in the flesh.  

This teaching is clearly more “basic” than that of Andrew’s Homily on the Transfiguration. Although it concerns itself with the inward state of the hearer, it also lays great emphasis on his outward comportment, particularly with respect to behavior and attitude while in church.

The care taken to explain the feasts of the Church and all that they involve is an important element of both Germanus’ and Andrew’s preaching. Germanus writes to Thomas of Claudiopolis that the creed of Orthodoxy is expressed through its rites, among which are icons, psalmody, Eucharist, lights, and incense. The purpose of celebrating the saints and of depicting them is to rouse the faithful to imitate their zeal. Andrew explains the motions of the rite of the Exaltation of the Cross on September 14.

Yet the preachers are also very careful to keep the saints and other objects of veneration in their proper place in the pious imagination. Andrew disavows veneration of the Cross for its own sake, stating that: “Christ was not lifted up in order to glorify the Cross, rather the Cross was lifted up to glorify Christ.” He also uses his authorial license to place speeches in the

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1411 Hom. Mariae zonam PG 98: 373ff.: Ἐγκαινίων δὲ, ὃς τίμιον καὶ σεπτόν, ἀκηκοότες, ἀκροατήριον, μὴ νεοκτίστους οἴκοδομাι καὶ ἀρτισμῷ κατασκευάζω τὸ τῶν Ἐγκαινίων ὑπολάβητε ὅνομα, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἐν πνεύματι καινισμόν, καθὼς ὁ ἐσω ἡμῶν ἀνθρώπος, τὸ παλαιὸν καὶ διερρηγώς τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἀποθέμενος ἐνδύμα, καὶ τὸ νέον τῆς εὐσεβείας περιβάλλομεν, ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς πολιτεύεται. Τούτους καὶ ἡ πανάμομος εὐφράεται· οίς ἢ ἔρεταις, καὶ τῇ κατὰ Θεὸν εὐσεβεί καινιζόμενοι πολιτείας, ὅτως καὶ τῶν ἂγνῶν τῆς ἁγίας ἄγνως Ἐγκαινίων κατατρυφήσωμεν· καὶ ὡς αὕτη παρουσίᾳ μέλλοντες προσέναι, ὅτως ταύτης σεβασμοῦ ναι̇ προσερχόμενοι, πάντα ῥυθμίσωμεν, καὶ πάντα πρὸς τὸ κρείστον μεταβαλλόμεθα· πρέξιν τε καὶ λόγων, καὶ θεωρῶν. Μηδὲν ἐστὶ ἡμῶν τῆς ἡμέρας ἀνάξιον· μὴ βήμα ποδός, μὴ γέλως οἰκτέσθω, τὸ δὴ λέγομεν· μὴ στολισμὸς ἐσθίτος πρὸς τὸ ἀπερεπετές ἑκτρεπέσθωσαν. Τί ὁν ἡμι· Καὶ αὕτης τὰς ἐνθυμήσεις ῥυθμίσωμεν. Τούτων δὲ πάντων προπορευέσθω καὶ θέλεις, ὃς ἐν καινοὶ φυσή τε καὶ σώματι, τὴν τῶν Ἐγκαινίων τῆς παναχράντου τοῦ Θεοῦ κατὰ σάρκα Μητρός ἡμέραν, καὶ νεομέτρες ἔντονως ἐνθυμίσωμεν.

1413 Ibid. 172; Andrew, Hom. in Baptiz. PG 97:1109 and Encom. mart. Cret. 10.9.

1414 Hom. de exalt. PG 97:1040.

1415 Hom. de exalt. 1024: Οὐ̃ υψούται Χριστός ἓνα δοξασθῇ ὁ σταυρός, ἀλλ’ υψούται ὁ σταυρός ἓνα ὁ Χριστὸς δοξασθῇ.
mouths of Patapius and the various people who come to him for healing, creating dialogues
which emphasize that it is the power of Christ which acts through the holy man.\textsuperscript{1416} The
anonymous authors of the \textit{Miracles of Theodore} and \textit{Miracles of Artemius} are likewise depicted
as receiving their power from God in return for their confession of faith in him, and as always
working through and for the Trinity.\textsuperscript{1417} Germanus even distinguishes the relative worship of the
Theotokos from the absolute worship offered to God, an argument that would receive its full
articulation later in the course of the iconoclast controversy.\textsuperscript{1418} This insistence on the proper
understanding of the saints—most insistent, in fact, in the presumably more popular genres of the
miracle collections—shows the awareness of educated church leaders that piety toward the saints
was likely to go astray. This precaution against possible abuses corresponds to the arguments on
the other side of the issue, against those who doubted the power of the saints to a greater or lesser
degree.

\textit{Lay piety in practice: the people}

This glimpse of top-down attempts at control of the cult of saints leads us to the cults
themselves and other elements of lay piety as lived and practiced, inasmuch as we can glean it
from our sources. Andrew’s list of orders in the Church and world united in the Theotokos
quoted earlier is doubtless representative, but nevertheless rather stylized. A perhaps more
interesting listing of orders brought together by a saint is found at the end of Andrew’s \textit{Miracles
of Therapon}.

Let us priests rejoice in finding in this wondrous saint a fellow-struggler, church wardens
the truly divine adorner, emperors the one who holds the kingdom above. Rejoice also,

\textsuperscript{1416} Hom. in Patap. 1221, 1228.
\textsuperscript{1417} For example, Mir. Theod. 8, 12, 14, 16; Mir. Artem. Prol., 6, 34.
\textsuperscript{1418} Hom. acath. 9.
you educators, on account of the teacher, you students on account of him who was a good disciple of Christ. You choice company of monastics, Nazirites and temple attendants, do not shame your fellow-ascetic. Let the soldier too behold the champion of Christ and take care to perform his duty. Let the private person not give up, seeing the guileless and godly-minded one defeating evil and the serpent. You entire flock, do not run away from the good shepherd—both rich and paupers, virgins and chaste, those in old age and youth, foreigners and natives—all together let us acclaim the servant of Christ, let us euphoniously clap the hands of our souls, and let us together here shout unto God. For this is the house of God, unshakable foundation, place of repose, spring of refreshment, water of rejoicing, tent of rest, eternal hospital, cleansing of souls anew, restoration of bodies to their primordial state.1419

This list reinforces the argument presented earlier in this chapter that saints’ cults were local centers of catholic, universal Christianity. Even in the capital city, where the Great Church was such an important presence, smaller public or private churches played a great role in the everyday piety of the faithful, whether monastic, clerical, or lay. The Therapon catalogue goes beyond the stereotypical categories found in the earlier quotation from Andrew’s Homily on the Dormition and presents us with the ascetics, lower clergy, and lay helpers who clustered in the penumbra of such temples.1420 The Miracles of Artemius provides an even more detailed look at the staff and clientele of a neighborhood martyr shrine and the other sources flesh out the picture in various ways.

We already had occasion to remark on Germanus’ discussion of tough theological questions with the high official Marinus. The stage-setting at the beginning of the fictive

1419 Mir. Therap. 27 (Deubner 133).
dialogue written on this occasion has one of the characters returning from a rather long absence at a shrine “not too far away” for the sake of prayer. Unlike Plato with his famous “I went down yesterday to the Piraeus with Glaucon the son of Ariston, that I might offer up my prayers to the goddess,” Germanus does not provide much more information, but we can supply the kind of details that would have been evoked in the mind of a contemporary reader of On Predestined Terms. We can imagine a Constantinopolitan aristocrat, a lay official of Marinus’ type, leaving the city for a period of *otium* at one of the churches or monasteries to be found in the suburbs, perhaps on one of his own estates. The multitude and popularity of such private churches is attested throughout Byzantine history, and in our period the bishops attempted to reassert their control over them, with varying results. Despite the depredations of Arabs and Bulgars, such trips were still possible. But the city itself might supply sufficient destinations for pious members of the upper-class, especially when they were seeking a specific benefit, such as the chief physician Anthius, Sergia the wife of a palace courtier, and the anonymous relative of a *patricius* and imperial judge named Sergius, who all came to the shrine of Artemius seeking a cure. The stories also show the special treatment such personages might receive, such as the separate room granted to Sergia and her ailing son, or the jester who was allowed to accompany the relative of the *patricius* into the church—the latter a courtesy that would later fall under the sanctions of the canons of Trullo. The more antiquarian interests displayed by the unknown

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1421 *De vitae termin. 8.*
1423 Episcopal authority over country and village churches (*Trullo* 25), liturgy in private chapels w/episcopal consent (31), no baptism in private chapel but rather at public churches (59).
1424 *Mir. Artem.* 1, 31, 17, respectively. The commentary suggests that “Anthimos was probably a physician attached to a ἱερων, that is, a medical facility owned and administered by the church” (Crisafulli/Nesbitt 229). This would have been a prestigious and relatively well-paid position.
1425 Not specifically, but as part of the general ban on eating inside churches or conducting commerce on their premises (*Trullo* 68, 76) and general hostility to entertainments (e.g. *Trullo* 24). The story told in *Mir. Artem.* 17 took place during the reign of Heraclius, so at least fifty years before these canons were issued, although such behavior inside a church would have been frowned on in any age by the more pious.
author(s) of the *Parastaseis syntomoi chronikai* show us a less ecclesiastical but no less religious side to the life of upper-class laypeople in the early eighth century.

Most of these aristocrats were state officials, since the surest way to wealth and power was government service. Lower down on the imperial totem pole were soldiers. The law on the division of military spoils at the end of the *Ecloga* expects a high spiritual state of soldiers: “Those who go out to war against enemies must guard themselves from every evil word and thing and have their mind directed only toward God …” The *Miracles of Demetrius* shows us a naval task force pausing to celebrate Holy Week on the island of Skiathos, even clearing an abandoned church in order to use it, and the *Miracles of Therapon* several soldiers benefiting from the curative powers of the saint through pious attendance at his church. But the same collection mentions abuse of power by a group of soldiers (described as “overseers of the public corvée”), who beat an old man nearly to death for no apparent reason.

When we come to the general run of the population as depicted in the *Miracles of Artemius*, two things stand out: the frequency of families and the difficulty of staying at the shrine for a long time due to the need to work. Family relations and the domestic sphere are depicted simply and matter-of-factly. A man practicing incubation at the shrine dreamed that he was at home sleeping next to his wife. A woman who managed a bath house and was occupied with this and domestic business was unable to attend the shrine, so Artemius came to her instead—disguised as an aristocratic client of the bath house. Others were able to come to the shrine, but felt pressure to leave: one because his ship was sailing, another because he was

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1426 *Ecl*. 18: Τοὺς ἐξερχομένους εἰς ἔχθροὺς ἐπὶ πολέμῳ φυλάξαι δεῖ ἑαυτοῦ ἀπὸ παντὸς πονηροῦ ῥήματος καὶ πράγματος καὶ πρὸς μόνον τὸν θεὸν τὸν νοῦν αὐτῶν ἔχειν ...

1427 *Mir. Demet*. 5.


1430 Ibid. 11. Another man did not come because he feared losing his job (ibid. 16).
missing work and also running out of the supplies he had brought with him, yet another because he was worried this house would be burgled while he was away—and also that he was disturbing his fellow patients with his moans of pain.\textsuperscript{1431} The emotional response of one woman to, first, her child’s severe injury suffered upon falling out of his bed, and then his miraculous cure at the shrine, is described in tender detail. Likewise a woman observed a forty-day lying-in period after giving birth, all the while suffering in sympathy with the newborn who was diseased.\textsuperscript{1432} The importance of family ties was later reinforced by relevant legislation in the Ecloga, which placed great emphasis on children’s respect for their parents but also the reciprocal duty of parents to support their children, even obstructing monastic retirement on the part of either in some cases that neglect of these duties.\textsuperscript{1433}

The laity and clergy at the shrines mingled on a wide spectrum, which was clarified somewhat by Trullo with its strict laws for the reform of the clergy. The canons of the Council suggest that in many cases the clergy were not quite sterling examples of piety. The Council felt the need particularly to address the marital status of the clergy, confirming that they could be married, against the custom of the Church of Old Rome, but regulating strictly how they should be married: only once, before being ordained, and to suitable women.\textsuperscript{1434} The concern for priestly morals is not expressed in terms of purity so much as in the therapeutic language already encountered in our discussion of the Council: with respect to the deposition or suspension of an offending priest, the motive is that one tending his own wounds cannot properly bless

\textsuperscript{1431} Ibid. 5, 9, 44. The ubiquity of burglary is suggested in the tale of the cantor’s stolen clothes in Miracle 18.
\textsuperscript{1432} Ibid. 45. It is unclear whether she observed the lying-in period as a general custom, or whether it was associated with the “churching” of an infant as in later Orthodox tradition.
\textsuperscript{1433} Ecloga Titles 2 and 6.
\textsuperscript{1434} Trullo 3, 13, 26.
another. Priestly marriage is related matter-of-factly in the *Miracles of Artemius*, where a priest suffering from a hernia has a dream of Artemius’ visitation while sleeping next to his wife and wakes her up when he comes to and considers the dream with himself out loud.\textsuperscript{1436}

Lower clergy such as cantors and lectors were also regulated by the Council, which required of them official tonsure and proper recitation of the divine office.\textsuperscript{1437} The confraternity for the vigil at the shrine of St Artemius would have been instrumental in enforcing such standards among its members, but in practice we see that it was not particularly strict: one cantor plays dice with impunity, something forbidden by Trullo for both clergy and laity.\textsuperscript{1438} The more unsavory entertainments of mimes, theatrical dancing, and wild beast hunts were forbidden for all, and entertainments in general were forbidden for the clergy.\textsuperscript{1439} Yet we find Stephen, a deacon of the Great Church, moonlighting as a *poiêtés* of the Blue circus faction.\textsuperscript{1440} The historical sources also show us clergy and monks engaged in state service against the canons, even after the Council in Trullo: these include a deacon of the Great Church employed as imperial logothete, killed during a mutiny when he was temporarily appointed as admiral of a fleet.\textsuperscript{1441} Theodotus, one of the cruelest ministers of Justinian II was a monk and former recluse, while Leontius was aided in usurping Justinian’s throne by several accomplices from among the monks, one of whom was also an astronomer.\textsuperscript{1442} However, we also come across a young lector who distanced himself from his parents’ shady money-changing business, perhaps out of

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1435} *Trullo* 3, 26.
  \item \textsuperscript{1436} *Mir. Art.* 23.
  \item \textsuperscript{1437} *Trullo* 33, 75.
  \item \textsuperscript{1438} Against dice playing: *Trullo* 50 (although the incident in the *Miracles* occurred before the Council). More seriously, that particular dice-playing cantor was also a thief (*Mir. Artem.* 18).
  \item \textsuperscript{1439} *Trullo* 51, 24, respectively.
  \item \textsuperscript{1440} *Mir. Artem.* 21. To be fair, during this period, the factions were settling down into more respectable ceremonial bodies, so this deacon was probably not involved in outright hooliganism.
  \item \textsuperscript{1441} Nicephorus, *Short History* (Mango 50), Theophanes *Chronicle* (Mango and Scott 535).
  \item \textsuperscript{1442} Nicephorus, *Short History* (Mango 40), Theophanes *Chronicle* (Mango and Scott 514).
\end{itemize}
awareness of the older canons forbidding clerics to be involved with usury, which were repeated by Trullo; he eventually became a monk and subsequently was ordained priest.\textsuperscript{1443}

Monks, in fact, are few and far between in the sources for this period. Peter Hatlie has analyzed the period carefully and concludes that previous doctrinal conflict in the city along with the economic disruption caused by political instabilities led to a steep decline in Constantinopolitan monasticism.\textsuperscript{1444} But we catch hints of them here and there. They were likely to be snatched up quickly for clerical service. Andrew, after living some years as a simple monk in Constantinople, was appointed to positions managing charitable foundations and proved himself very capable. The times called for such practical skills rather than withdrawn contemplation. Nevertheless, Andrew himself staffed his Church of the Theotokos Blachernae in Crete with monastic clergy.\textsuperscript{1445} The disorder of the times in monastic ranks is also revealed by the various canons of Trullo that sought to regulate monasticism more strictly, and in particular to drive wild-haired independent ascetics—self-proclaimed “eremites”—out of the city to the desert where they belonged. The Council also sought to prohibit clerical couples who were abstaining from cohabiting.\textsuperscript{1446} These were described as dwelling in barbarian lands, meaning possibly westerly-lying areas that were under the ecclesiastical supervision of Constantinople but not under its imperial jurisdiction, and were following the Roman custom of clerical abstention. The council actually disfavors their abstention but seeks to at least regularize it by forcing them to live apart, in effect making them monastics. In any case, even if monasticism was in decline, it continued to be an option for laypeople as the very image of repentance. This traditional view

\textsuperscript{1443} Mir. Artem. 38 and Trullo 10.
\textsuperscript{1445} Vit. Andr. 7. Cf. John the Merciful of Alexandria a century earlier, establishing monasteries for the good of his soul in Amathous, in Ch. 4.
\textsuperscript{1446} Trullo 30.
was reinforced by Trullo, which prohibited rejecting anyone from monastic life on the grounds of previously committed transgressions.\textsuperscript{1447} Although not necessarily in keeping with the lofty goal of this canon, monasteries in this period became a frequent resort for those who had to repent of being emperor when they lost their throne—Leontius, Anastasius, and Artemius all endured this fate, though it was a marked improvement on the past expedient of execution.

As for the lesser clergy or lay attendants at such shrines, they may be the people referred to by Andrew in the \textit{Miracles of Therapon} as \textit{neokoroi} and also by the archaizing term of \textit{zakoroi}. The difference between clergy, laity, and monastics here was sometimes blurry. Was a lay ascetic such as the kind described in the previous paragraph, or a long-haired eremite, technically a monk? Were the laymen who performed helpful services at a shrine, either while waiting for a cure or afterward—such as the man who did carpentry work, or the child who served as a kind of altar boy—clergy?\textsuperscript{1448} The answers would have been relatively easy if everyone kept to their assigned roles and was honest about their credentials; but we know that there was plenty of movement from countryside to city and within the city also, both for reasons of safety from invaders and of profit from better-paying jobs with a wealth private patron.\textsuperscript{1449}

When a cured patient volunteered to stay at the shrine of Artemius and serve as church warden, none of the ten positions were filled, as their occupants had all died.\textsuperscript{1450} This was probably not due to an overall lack of job seekers in the city, but to the availability of posts with better remuneration elsewhere.

Lay people continued to be important to the functioning of monasteries. Thus we encounter a factotum of the monastery of the Theotokos at the Spring, mentioned in the \textit{Miracles}

\textsuperscript{1447} \textit{Trullo} 43. Cf. John Climacus, \textit{Ladder 1.xyz}, cited in the previous chapter.
\textsuperscript{1448} \textit{Mir. Therap.} 15; \textit{Mir. Artem.} 27, 36,
\textsuperscript{1450} \textit{Mir. Artem.} 30.
of Artemius; when he is incapacitated by a hernia, “the abbot was distraught over him because Andrew was indispensable to him in all things.”

In the Miracles of Patapius Andrew tells a long and detailed story about a nun who left her monastery, fell into prostitution, and was turned back to repentance by a group of unnamed pious laymen and women and initially placed under the care of a certain priest Dometius who was protopresbyter at the Church of the Theotokos en tois Petrou—possibly a married priest, since there is no mention of a monastery at that church.

Lay piety in practice: rituals and customs

It is clear enough from previous chapters what kind of pious activities helped fill out the liturgical activity in churches for the average believer—the use of the Eucharist, oil, candles, wax plaster, wine, water, bread, and other materials for blessing and healing. The late seventh century sources, however, show us better than before the adaptation of such actions to a more private setting, in the home and the neighborhood. The Miracles of Artemius mentions a family celebrating Easter by breaking the fast together. It also mentions a woman who used to light and clean the lamp in front of the icon of John the Baptist in his church (where the relic of Artemius was located), at her own expense, as a family tradition. She also introduced a young girl from a neighboring house to the practice, having her light the lamp when she herself was busy with chores at home. When the girl almost died of bubonic plague, her neighbor was inconsolable until she recovered. The young girl is mentioned as having a mother of ill repute, so

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1451 Mir. Artem. 37.
1453 Mir. Artem. 10. Trullo 89 regulates the exact hour when the fast is to be broken.
the older neighbor may have substituted as a mentor in religious practice where the young girl lacked proper instruction at home. The story demonstrates how pious habits connected to churches also affected the relationships of families and neighbors.\textsuperscript{1454} 

The use of such objects as lamps for devotion was often accompanied by the making of the sign of the cross. Andrew of Crete testifies to its ubiquity: preceding every written word and contract and work of the pious, represented in the body during prayer (probably with arms outstretched or in the classic \textit{orans} position); it was used in icons (depicted on them?), the Eucharist, and baptism and could stand in for them when they were unavailable.\textsuperscript{1455} Germanus mentions widespread invocation of the Theotokos in daily life.\textsuperscript{1456} Furthermore, the simplest prayer “Kyrie eleison” seems to have readily come to people’s lips. It is the spontaneous cry of the entire city of Thessaloniki when an earthquake strikes; a layman cries it in his sleep; the cure of one patient at the shrine of Artemius leads others to exclaim it and a doctor responds spontaneously with the same words after witnessing a miraculous cure.\textsuperscript{1457} Another pious habit (or impious, depending on how strictly one applied the evangelical word) was to swear oaths in Christian terms. Thus the commander of the landwalls of Constantinople in the early eighth century was entrusted with the keys through oath on an altar and a cantor swears a solemn oath before an icon of the Forerunner; whereas a philosopher swears, in the course of a discussion, “by divine providence” and the jester for the aristocrat at the shrine of Artemius swears minor oaths by the patron saint of his Alexandrian homeland, St Menas.\textsuperscript{1458} These mundane habits, ingrained and often performed reflexively, indicate the extent to which lay piety marked life from day to day.

\textsuperscript{1454} Mir. Artem. 34.
\textsuperscript{1455} Hom. de exalt. (De Groote), 1, 4, 6.
\textsuperscript{1456} Hom. de dorm. PG 98: 352.
\textsuperscript{1457} Mir. Demet. 2; Mir. Artem. 2, 22, 32.
\textsuperscript{1458} Theophanes Chronicle (Mango and Scott 517); Parastaseis 28; Mir. Artem. 17, 18.
10. Conclusions

Challenges

As we draw to the close of this study in the early eighth century, many things seem quite similar to our starting point in the early seventh. This is what we might expect to find in Byzantium, a society conditioned by a myth of changelessness that has fooled even modern scholars. The theological principles and day-to-day practices both show a great degree of continuity. Part of this is inevitably due to the relatively short span of this survey. Although not on a geological time scale, in a pre-modern society such as Byzantium we would expect to see changes in theological and cultural patterns only gradually and over the course of generations. Even the military and political crises that occurred almost uninterruptedly in this period became to an extent customary, so that no single crisis can be pinpointed as a decisive factor in the history of lay piety.

In the previous chapter we saw an ambitious imperial and episcopal pastoral program, outlined in laws and canons and manifested in the preaching of eminent theologians. We also saw vibrant grassroots piety, evident especially in the miracle collections. Nevertheless spiritual life was challenged and disrupted in multiple ways that can be detected in the sources. Externally, wars disrupted the church hierarchy in threatened areas and, by a ripple effect, threw the safer areas into disarray as well because of refugees and the general impoverishment of the empire in this period. Trullo tried to force clergy who had fled from the barbarians to return to their own locale instead of remaining in Constantinople indefinitely. Yet recognizing the impossibility of this in some cases, the Council regularized the ordinations and other acts of bishops who were appointed to a see but could not be canonically enthroned there because of the
There was even an abortive attempt to transplant a bishop and his entire diocese, with the settlement of the metropolitan of Cyprus and much of his flock in the region of the Hellespont near Constantinople. Another real-life case of episcopal disruption on a smaller scale is the adventure of the bishop of Thenae in Africa when he tried to travel to Constantinople, recounted in the *Second Collection of the Miracles of Demetrius*. The story emphasizes his hesitancy, as a good bishop, to leave his city and his concern for the neglect of his flock during his involuntarily extended absence after he was enslaved in the Balkans.

Even in those cities which maintained some semblance of administrative regularity, the normal processes of civic and liturgical life were often interrupted due to war and the poverty and depopulation caused by it and by other factors such as natural disasters and plague. The later collection of *Miracles of Demetrius* recalls that the capacity for rebuilding of the saint’s basilica in Thessalonica after being destroyed in a fire was doubted by many, but that the holy bishop John, author of the earlier collection, was able to manage it, and in some grandeur too, by the help of the saint. Likewise, the *Miracles of Theodore Tiro* records the firing of the city of Euchaita along with the saint’s church by vengeful Persians earlier in the seventh century; although the bishop Eleutherius later rebuilt it, it was nearly destroyed again by Arab raiders. Even if the church building stayed standing, the divine office was subject to disruption as well. Thus when citizens evacuated to their acropolis in the face of an approaching Arab unit right on the eve of Theodore’s festival, the bishop took the risk of sending a liturgical “task force” consisting of a brave priest with a few assistants into the city to conduct the services in the empty

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1459 *Trullo* c. 18, 37.
1460 Ibid. c. 39. This was justified by the old Chalcedonian canon that ecclesiastical jurisdiction should correspond to changes in civic boundaries, which Trullo repeated in the previous canon 38.
1461 *Second Collection* 6.
1462 *Mir. Theod.* 11.
church.\textsuperscript{1463} As an example of a case where flight and abandonment became a reality, the Byzantine fleet that anchored at Skiathos found the island uninhabited and its churches deserted.\textsuperscript{1464} Part of Andrew of Crete’s labor when he became metropolitan of the island and while he was not penned into a fort by an Arab raid was to restore the many neglected churches.\textsuperscript{1465}

In pre-modern societies, morbidity and mortality were always high.\textsuperscript{1466} None of the diseases and injuries shown in the miracle collections resulted directly from war, but it is likely that the conditions that allowed them to develop were exacerbated by the military situation. More general aspects of morbidity are demonstrated in our sources. One of the disputants in Germanus’ \textit{On Predestined Terms} points out that the variety of outcomes of disease often reflects socio-economic stratification, since the wealthy are able to afford better medical treatment.\textsuperscript{1467} This is confirmed more vividly by the description in the \textit{Miracles of Artemius} of a mother’s suffering over the disease of child, about which she can do nothing because her poverty is so great that she does not even own a golden icon or silverware to pawn for medical care.\textsuperscript{1468}

The causes of these evils were sought, to some degree, in specific material and political factors. Overarching all of these, however, was the search for spiritual solutions. Catastrophe was usually ascribed, on this level, to the sins of the Empire—whether as a whole, or in some

\textsuperscript{1463} \textit{Mir. Theod.} 15. The task force was captured by the Arabs but escaped through a miracle of St Theodore.

\textsuperscript{1464} \textit{Second Collection} 5.

\textsuperscript{1465} \textit{Vit. Andr.} 7. This situation may not have been due solely to raids, however; the constant difficulties bishops faced in maintaining churches, especially private ones not directly under their jurisdiction, was a perennial problem during both good and bad times, as traced in John Philip Thomas, \textit{Private Religious Foundations in the Byzantine Empire} (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1987).


\textsuperscript{1467} \textit{Vitae termin.} 8.

\textsuperscript{1468} \textit{Mir. Artem.} 36.
specific subset which was guilty of a particular crime. Sometimes the explanation was not entirely consistent: for example Theophanes attributed a defeat at the hands of the Bulgars to the sins of Romans, but assigns the subsequent peace forced on Constantine IV to the emperor’s obedience to the mild spirit of the Gospels; in this he was likely repeating traces of imperial propaganda in his source.

In this context, the Council in Trullo showed an especial concern to eliminate the influence of “pagan survivals” which had survived up till then as well as that of Jews and Christian heretics. There is no need to list these in detail here, but only to point out two grey areas where disagreement continued even among the leaders of the Church, not just between the rules imposed from above the habits of humble folk. The first of these is the proper response to demons. Trullo punishes feigned demonic possession; this may have been practiced by those who hoped to gain influence or material profit by using their artificial demonic persona to make predictions to eager listeners. That demoniacs were consulted for such predictions is evident in a story in Miracles of Artemius. When the unfortunate cantor of the confraternity at the church of the Forerunner realized that his dress clothes had been stolen, he asked his neighbors if they noticed anything amiss. They were not able to help, but suggested that he go to a church of Saint Panteleimon in the Rufinus quarter to obtain information.

For it happened at that time that there were a very large number of possessed in many churches. Relieved for the moment by these words, the man went off to Saint Panteleemon’s, but upon hearing the cry of the possessed one said to himself: “Now I am

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1469 For example, the Apocalypse of Ps.-Methodius sees the cause of the divine punishment meted out through the Arabs in the especial sexual depravity of Christians at that time (ch. 11).
1470 Theophanes, Chronic. AM 6171 (De Boor 359, Mango and Scott 499).
1471 Trullo c. 60.
forsaking God and approaching demons; now I have been robbed and I have lost my soul.”

This indicates that the practice of consulting demoniacs for routine matters was common, such that people could recommend it as a matter of course, but that it was sufficiently questionable that a pious man could shun it as a danger for his soul. However, Andrew of Crete presents two such consultations: he depicts St George interrogating the demon dwelling in an idol in order to disprove pagan beliefs, and St Patapius conversing with a demon that he is casting out, with the discussion revealing that it is the power of Christ in Patapius that accomplishes the exorcism. These encounters are imagined for past, even legendary events, rather than recounting the commonplace reactions of near contemporaries. Furthermore, they are cases of saints demonstrating their divinely-granted power over demons for spiritual edification, rather than for the divination of lost objects. Yet the boundary was nevertheless unclear. Anastasius of Sinai records a story of a pious layman who, on a visit to Antioch, interrogates the demon in a possessed person and forces the evil spirit to reveal several of its secrets, including what prayers are most effective against his ilk and the fact that they are in league with the Saracens. While these would have also been seen as laudable spiritual results by most Christians at the time, the very fact that a layman without any particular saintly credentials could take it upon himself to hold a conversation with a demon outside of the context of exorcism would have rung alarm bells for at least some ecclesiastical leaders.

Closely related to this was the status of statues. The *Parastaseis syntomoi chronikai* is well-known for its obsession with those found in Constantinople, especially the remaining pagan ones. Some have seen the work as expressing a fear of the relics of pagan antiquity, while others

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1472 *Mir. Artem.* 18 (Crisafulli and Nesbitt 114–117).  
have argued that it instead demonstrates a desire to control their supernatural power.\textsuperscript{1474}

Germanus may be criticizing the attitude of such as the author(s) of the \textit{Parastaseis} in a remark in the \textit{Homily on the Inauguration}.

For if the memory of those whose lands are named after them is preserved for a long time, that of others—whose names it is not even right to bear on one’s lips—is preserved by pillars and temples and idols even until today, though only by reputation. But they have gone beyond bounds and, as if they themselves have survived, they ring in the ears of the more foolish sort.\textsuperscript{1475}

In another passage, however, he adduced the alleged Christian statue at Paneas in his arguments against iconoclasm, even if he thought it rather unsuitable medium for depicting Christ.\textsuperscript{1476} Thus Germanus’s attitude toward the remnants of antiquity was dismissive rather than hostile.

These disputes, along with the enduring one concerning the cult of saints, related to the state of the soul after death and to the veneration of relics, form the controversial backdrop to the emergence of iconoclasm. Thus this period, stretching into the 730s, ends with a vigorous ongoing debate about key elements of Christian practice. It held great significance for laypeople, because much of it hinged on objects and practice that constituted key focuses for their piety.

The arguments for and against icons were self-consciously referred to lay needs, whether by iconoclasts who claimed that laypeople who did not know better were worshipping idols, or by

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1475} \textit{Hom. in Mariae zonam} PG 98:373b. Εἰ γάρ ὦ ὄνομα τά ὀνόματα ἐπὶ τῶν γαῖων ἐπικέκληνται, εἰς μακρὸν τὴν μνήμην τῆς κλήσεως διασώζουσιν· ἄλλων δὲ ὄν σύρε τὰ διὰ χειλέων δίκαιον τά ὀνόματα φέρειν, στήλαι καὶ τεμένη, καὶ εἴδωλα μέχρι καὶ τῆς σήμερον, εἰ καὶ τῇ φήμῃ μόνη· ἄλλ’ ὄν ὑπερεκτέτανται, καὶ ὡς αὐτοὶ περίντοι, τοῖς τῶν ἄφελεστέρων ώσι διεκδονόθησαν...
\item \textsuperscript{1476} \textit{Epist. Thom.} 188. There is also an odd reference to Christian believer taking up the cross of Christ as if it were a statue in Andrew, \textit{Encom. marty. Cret.} 8.3.
\end{itemize}
defenders of icons, such as Germanus, who claimed that they were essential to providing theological truths in a way that the mass of laypeople could understand.

One suggestion that I would like to add to this mix is that these debates were deeply rooted in pre-existing exegetical disputes. Maximus and Anastasius frequently inveigh against Christians who interpret the Scriptures too literally, like the Jews. There are hints of such polemics in the writings of Andrew and Germanus as well.1477 Germanus’ argument on behalf icons in the Epistle to Thomas hinges on the correct interpretation of scriptural passages such as the ban on graven images in the Decalogue, as well as the exegesis of the actual motions performed in church. He urges Thomas to consider not just acts but their meanings.1478 This echoes Maximus three quarters of a century earlier, when he rejected the demand to accept a statement presented to him based on its words alone, without inquiring into their meaning, saying that this was tantamount to Judaism.1479 Andrew, as a disciple of Maximus’s mystical contemplation of Scripture, might be using it to stealthily subvert iconoclasm when, in his Homily on the Pharisee and the Publican, he interprets the Old Testament verses against making images allegorically, as actually forbidding pride, which causes one to form a fantastical image of oneself and worship it.1480 These resources of sophisticated interpretation are part of the repertory that allowed these authors to devise creative solutions to the demands of providing lay people with instruction in piety. Perhaps they also gave them the first tools with which to argue against iconoclasm.

1477 Mir. Therap. 26; Hom. de exalt. 5 (De Groote 471), although these are admittedly obscure and may refer to the Jews as such.
1479 Disputatio Bizyae II. 302–42.
1480 Hom. in Public. et Pharis. PG 97:1256.
Methodological reflections

Such conjectures must remain provisional until I am able to examine the sources of the period after 730 with the same attention I have devoted to the span covered by this study. It would also require great familiarity with the material evidence, especially art-historical. Of course, the same could be said about the seventh century. My study, by being almost entirely literary, has not been able to exploit the evidence from art history, archaeology, papyrology, and epigraphy that would provide a fuller picture of the age, as well as offering access the thoughts and practices of laypeople through an avenue not as closely hemmed in by the views of the élite, especially clerical and monastic. Nor, even on literary level, have I tapped the texts lying outside the Greek language and orthodox Chalcedonian mainstream, except in a few instances for comparative purposes.

Nevertheless, even hewing close to the more limited parameters I set myself, I have been able to mine an extraordinarily rich store of texts. All are already known to historians but many have not received detailed study, especially from the historical-theological perspective that has guided this investigation. That perspective has yielded a detailed and coherent picture of lay piety in the seventh century Byzantine world.

I have triangulated lay piety through various questions. I began with my own contemporary interest in how austere monastic texts are rendered meaningful for Christian believers living in the world, with the challenges that life in family and secular society raises. Given that many of the texts in question were Byzantine classics, I thought this also a useful question with which to investigate Byzantine history as well. This led me to Norman Baynes’ formulation of the historical problem of the double ethic in Byzantium. It expressed my original question more generally as one of a cultural and social tension within Byzantine life and thought.
This approach has served as a useful heuristic tool, and has conditioned my study insofar as it has led me to consider both sides of the equation, monastic and lay. Such was, in any case, required by the sources themselves, which are predominantly monastic in origin.

As a heuristic method, the dual ethic posed the question of difference between two groups within the same society. The sources obliged: they generally rendered laypeople different from monastics, but in many cases also rendered them similar. The degree of respective separation and unity varies from text to text. Both tend to be delineated within an ecclesiological vision, which see people within the frame of the Church, the ideal all-embracing society of (orthodox) Christians, which in turn overlaps in a complex way with the Cosmos in general and with the supposedly universal Empire of Rome in particular. Hence I also have tended to present the ecclesiological schemes of the texts in some detail: their definitions of “Christian,” their organization of the orders of the Cosmos and of the Church, the particular role of leaders and exemplars (saints, monks, bishops, emperors) therein. This also implies a placing in time, a certain relation to history and tradition. For this reason I sketched a brief history of early lay piety in the second chapter, and began most of the chapters with further considerations of the state of these traditions at the start of the seventh century. I have not analyzed the actual genealogy of the ideas and developments in the seventh-century sources in exhaustive detail, since such work in addition to explaining the texts themselves would have been far too much for a single study. Doubtless future investigation of Antiochus’s patristic as well as scriptural quotations in the Pandect, to take but one example, will help deepen and situate our understanding of his thoughts on lay piety.

Before moving on to outline my conclusions, I pause for a moment to reflect on problems of interpretation. A major question that looms over any study such as this, which seeks to
contribute to a history of laypeople in the Middle Ages, is that of rhetoric versus reality. What is
one to make of tendentious sources, most of them written by celibate bishops or monks, that seek
either to prescribe or describe lay piety? In part, the question is misleading. In studying texts we
have access only to discourses. These can be evaluated for historical plausibility—for how they
represent the experience of people in the past—to some degree through seeking to corroborate
their accounts by other sources, either contemporary or comparative (our own experience
included). I have practiced this kind of historical judgment, for example in arguing that John the
Almsgiver endowed monasteries in his hometown of Amathous rather than in Alexandria. But it
is also true that the discourses in our texts are themselves factors in history. The pen is not
always mightier than the sword. But in the long-term formation of lay piety, texts written at
various registers and for various audiences played a tremendous role. To interpret these texts is
to gain access to the thoughts that shaped much of Byzantine belief and practice.

My definition of “piety” in the introductory chapter relates to both of these elements of
historical reconstruction. To recall just the definition, in the *Suda* lexicon, of *eusebeia* as the
“science of the cult of God,” we are reminded of both the problem of cult—physical or mental
acts which relate to God—and of science, the reflection on these acts and their ordering in some
system of knowledge, however rudimentary. For example, anointing oneself with oil from a lamp
at a saint’s sanctuary involves a possible series of actions—entering a church, bowing down in
front of a relic, touching one’s hand to the lamp and then to the afflicted bodypart, etc.—and a
possible mental and emotional map of what this action means—the church is holy, the relic
renders it even more holy, the relic is holy because the saint to whom it belongs was devoted to
God, the holiness issuing from the relic can heal one’s body and perhaps one’s soul as well, as
the subject fervently hopes. Now, perhaps neither the series of actions nor the mental and
emotional process was always, or even ever, quite so. But that variations on this theme occurred is beyond doubt. The discourses which seek to describe and prescribe them are related to real people, their actions and words, and the discourses themselves conditioned what was possible to contemporaries in each of these domains. We know that laypeople were not always pious, as defined by their leaders or even by themselves, but we also know that they had some idea of what piety consisted in, and that this idea could be affected by the discourses they heard or read. The question then becomes: how did they receive the versions of piety that were taught to them? And just as importantly: how did this process of reception influence the authors themselves as they wrote, i.e. how did they write in response to the perceived needs and capacities of their audiences implicit or explicit?

*Forms of piety*

In response to Baynes’ posing of the dual ethic, I argue that in the seventh century in Byzantium this dualism was not dichotomistic, but rather hierarchical and symbiotic. The monastic ideal was clearly perceived as a spiritually superior way by most Christians in Byzantine society, but it was not incommensurable with lay experience. I speak of a way on purpose: monasticism was a means to the end of sanctification and salvation, and a superior one at that because it sought to remove as many obstacles as possible to that end. But how each monk or nun actually walked on this way varied, and this affected their spiritual status in relation to a given layperson. Thus a layman like John the Almsgiver could be found as holy as any monk, according to Leontius of Neapolis, due to his single-minded keeping of the evangelical precepts.

This commensurability was possible because of a common spectrum of belief and practice: orthodoxy and asceticism, respectively. Orthodoxy made of each a member of a
common Body, assigning to each a common baptismal gift of grace as well as a common baptismal responsibility to observe the commandments. Membership in that Body gave one access to the mediating function of Christ, as head of the Body and as perfect Man. As time went on, this mediating function also came to be applied in a secondary way to the Virgin Mary—secondary at least in terms of dogmatic theology, but perhaps more visible and more deeply felt by many laypeople, to whom the Theotokos was presented as the model of a tender mother and the symbol of both Church and Empire. As we have seen, orthodoxy was supposed to trump any ascetical exploits if the latter were accomplished by a heretic or unbeliever. But within the common Body, asceticism was supposed to be a common way of life. In order to keep the commandments one needed to maintain a certain amount of prayer, fasting, alms, and spiritual instruction—whether through reading ascetic teachings or hearing them through preaching or conversation. For this reason, throughout the foregoing chapters I have tried to keep asceticism and monasticism clearly distinct. The former was incumbent on all believers, while the latter was a particularly intense form of it. As a result of this relationship, however, monasticism had a constant influence on lay asceticism, providing it with criteria and methods for success. For example, the system of the octad of evil thoughts delineated by Evagrius and developed by later monastic authors was also taught to laypeople through a miracle account by archbishop John of Thessalonica, and presented as a way of organizing their experience of spiritual combat. Just as an amateur golfer today might watch Tiger Woods and study his technique, without necessarily expecting to win a world tournament, so many laypeople sought to pattern their “amateur” asceticism on the “professional” discipline of the monks.

It is this common ethic of asceticism that also mediated certain sharp tensions. Virginity and marriage was in many ways the starkest. We have seen most of our authors denigrating
sexual intercourse to greater or lesser degrees, as a cause and symptom of involvement in the corruptible world. But at the same time the fact that married people were also expected to engage in a certain amount of self-control meant that even sexual activity could be placed on a spectrum of asceticism. On the other hand, it may be that this tidy solution allowed them to avoid answering the question of the “good of marriage,” which was often extolled in abstract terms but denigrated in practical terms, as we saw in the previous chapter especially.

Another sharp tension that was mediated, I think, more successfully was that of poverty and wealth. The authors of this period seem to have wholly embraced the dual ethic with regard to wealth that had developed through the early centuries of Christianity, incorporating both the ideal of apostolic poverty and the practice of prudent stewardship espoused by Clement of Alexandria. Maximus the Confessor incorporated this duality fully into his thought, expounding both a holy poverty and a holy stewardship predicated on proper use. In this scheme the holy poor—monks, especially—relied on lay friends for support. But in practice monastics themselves could just as easily be found as stewards rather than renunciants. This was assumed by Antiochus of Mar Saba, who in the Pandect without any apologies presented monasteries as being fully implicated in the socio-economic transactions of the world. It is also apparent in Maximus, who enjoyed the aid of monasteries as well as lay patrons. Thus when it came to socio-economic relations laypeople and monks were bound in symbiosis. Lest we forget, the monasteries themselves were often not free agents who could find patrons at will—many were owned by laypeople, as private religious foundations, with all the benefits or handicaps such a status could bring.

At the same time, monastic authors negotiated a constant tension in their teachings between exalting the monastic state and humbling the individual monk, since humility was the
sure way to salvation. Among the authors we have considered this tension is most highly-pitched in John Climacus, with his concept of monks as angelic beings surpassing human nature while at the same time still burdened by mortal flesh and thus always “plunging themselves into an abyss of humility.” This sense of the importance of humility also opened monastic thought up to the possibility of “paradoxical holiness,” as I termed it in the introductory chapter. The cases of inconspicuous laypeople matching or even surpassing great holy men in virtue were not generally recorded by people bent on asserting a self-conscious “lay spirituality” against “monastic spirituality,” but rather by monks, primarily as moral lessons for themselves rather than programmatic statements for laypeople.

Some monastic authors did, however, take this one step further and seek to forge a “theology for the people,” as Déroche calls the thought of Leontius of Neapolis. Leontius built his own peculiar vision of monastic and lay piety precisely on paradoxical holiness. Anastasius of Sinai may have been inspired by similar models, but his teaching on lay piety was more systematic, and perhaps more realistic. Regardless, in addition to asceticism paradoxical or workaday, holiness of monastics and laypeople was also united by a certain sacramental, material piety. The Eucharist, relics, pilgrimage, all were obviously very popular at this period. The gathering of believers that these promoted was also an opportunity to think about the Church as enacted in the liturgy. Maximus’s Mystagogy is the most expansive attempt to do so. In the course of it he also inscribed various categories derived from monastic ascetical theory into the progress of all believers, as they participated together, each according to his ability, in the mystical rites of the liturgy.

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1 Cf. Apophthegmata Patrum Anthony 7 (PG 65: 77ab): “I saw all the traps of the enemy spread out upon the earth and I sighed and said, ‘Who is able to pass through these?’ And I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Humility.’” The opening phrase ἐξὸν πᾶσας τὰς παρὰς τοῦ ξεθροῦ ἡμεθμένας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς is the phrase most commonly found on the scroll that Anthony typically holds when depicted in Byzantine art.

2 ἐν βυθῷ μέντοι ταπεινοφροσύνης ἑαυτοῦ διηνεκῶς καταφέροντες (Ladder 1, PG 88: 636c).
Forms of impiety?

It is clear that the above represents the ideal view of lay-monastic interaction as mapped by our sources. But they are not particularly reticent about showing less-than-ideal situations. Usually, though, these do not mark a wholesale rejection of the ideal but either a falling short due to weakness or indifference (the bad behavior of people at liturgy as described by Anastasius of Sinai is a case in point) or a misunderstanding of the ideal. The latter is the more interesting case because it in some sense proves the importance of some elements of the normative discourse.

I will recall three examples from the foregoing chapters. First, devotion to the Eucharist seems to have been widespread and deeply felt. So far, so good, if one is judging by the authoritative texts. The problem, from their point of view, is that such devotion can actually reinforce certain forms of deviation. Laypeople (or monastics or clerics, for that matter) might be so devoted to the Eucharist that they receive it anywhere they can, including at heterodox liturgies. Second, devotion to saints and relics is also widely attested. Even the “skeptics” who form the object of attack in apologetic treatises for the cult of saints and relics are, if we read between the lines, often not guilty of outright rejection of the cult but of a different understanding of it. Anastasius of Sinai, of all people, cannot be blamed for holding saints and relics in low esteem. Nevertheless, his idea that those who appeared in dreams and visions were actually angels standing in for the saints’ not-yet-resurrected bodies was anathema to the sixth-century author Eustratius of Constantinople. Another danger was that saints would come to overshadow God and his Christ in devotions. Such a concern is more often implied by the texts than stated outright, careful as they tend to be to clearly subordinate the saints to God, as his
servants and instruments of his power rather than possessing any independent authority of their own. A third challenge to piety was that it was accepted but compartmentalized. It could be either left to certain times and places in a layperson’s life—during Lent, say, or on great feasts, which might evoke a spasm of fasting or prayer—or relegated wholly to the “professionals,” clergy and monks. The assurances of John Climacus and Anastasius of Sinai to laypeople that they did not need to become monastics to be saved, but that they did need to take lay piety seriously, provide evidence for such tendencies.

Change over time

Despite the short span of this period mentioned above, it is nevertheless possible to get some sense of how lay piety changed during this period. To begin at the beginning, George of Pisidia’s poems mark a certain high-water mark of imperial lay piety. His formulations are of course bound up with the question of “emperor and priest” which I have not dealt with in detail here. What I focused on instead was the (complementary) possibility of “emperor and monk,” to which George’s rhetoric draws near if one notices his use of ascetical terms to describe the emperor’s peculiar regimen of piety. There are some echoes of this still in the Council of Trullo, but by the time of Leo III these seem to have faded, at least temporarily. In the Ecloga the emperor is certainly pious, but in a very matter-of-fact, even one-dimensional, and certainly unmonastic way, far removed from the rich, if tendentious, portrait painted by George.

Bishops, in contrast, continue to do their episcopal duty. Direct comparison is difficult between the beginning and end of the period, because of the different character of the sources; in the beginning of the seventh century we have much hagiography and few homilies, while at the end of the reverse is the case. But both genres contain enough overlap in themes that we can
trace a continuous endeavor to reach laypeople. The hagiography of Leontius is the most imaginative in forging lay piety, but also somewhat isolated. Other episcopal writers—John of Thessalonica, Andrew of Crete, Germanus of Constantinople—express high expectations of laypeople but do not attempt the utopian thought experiments of Leontius’ Christian cities of Emesa and Alexandria led by Symeon the Holy Fool and John the Almsgiver, respectively. Part of this may be due to the loss of cities with which to think. By the end of our period the Byzantine Empire was reduced to one center of gravity, Constantinople. Yet this urban transformation may not have fully sunk in yet, and it did not eliminate local loyalties or local creativity. Andrew represents both, bringing Palestinian wisdom to Constantinople and then bearing it, now along with Constantinopolitan authority, to Crete.

Monks, who loomed large in the first part of the study, have faded by the last chapter. Anastasius of Sinai was, of course, still active around 700, energetically mediating between monastic and lay piety, and Andrew of Crete comes from a monastic background. But there are no great works of monastic literature after John Climacus’ *Ladder*, in mid-seventh century, until Theodore the Studite began his movement for monastic reform in the late eight century. This may partly be due to the fact that the great syntheses of Maximus and Climacus, and the lesser one of Antiochus, sufficed to nourish monks for a long while. But I think that it was mainly due to the new challenges facing monastics in this period. Outside the Empire, they were called to be more active in championing Chalcedonian orthodoxy on both a theoretical and practical level, a task at which Anastasius of Sinai excelled. Inside the empire, they were still present but were either so actively engaged in practical ministries, staffing churches and charitable houses after

[1483] This verdict would be modified somewhat if either Hesychius or Philotheus of Sinai (CPG 7862–66) could be placed in this period, but their dates are impossible to ascertain in the current state of scholarship. John of Damascus is a seminal author whose career overlaps somewhat with the last years of this study but to cover his works would have made this already long work much longer. In any case, though a monk, he did not write any specifically monastic works.
the manner of the young Andrew of Crete or themselves receiving charity or even caught up in politics, that the ideal of withdrawal from the world in the classic mold of Anthony was very difficult. Thus the economic and political circumstances at the end of our period bring together monastic and lay piety more strongly than ever before.
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Abbreviations


In addition:


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XII.


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