Deviance and Disaster:

Rationalising sexual morality in

Western Christian discourses, AD 390 – AD 520

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Abstract

This thesis argues that the transition from traditional Roman ideas of sexual behaviour to idealised Christian sexual behaviour was a reactionary process, for which the period from AD 390 to AD 520 offers a crucial key stage. During this era, the Roman West underwent significant socio-political changes, resulting in warfare and violent conflict, which created a pressurised and traumatic environment for people who endured them. In this context, the rhetoric of divine punishment for sinful behaviour was strongly linked with sexual acts, causing ideas on sexual *mores* to develop. The thesis highlights three key aspects of these developments. Firstly, warfare necessitated changes in Christian doctrines on marriages and rape, resulting from collective and cultural trauma. Secondly, sexually impure acts of incest and prostitution were defiling to the religious collective yet the consequences of these were negotiated on a case-to-case basis, reflecting adaptation. Thirdly, traditional Roman ideas of polygyny and homosexual acts overrode Christian ideas on the same. After discussing these three aspects, this work offers a revised interpretation of Salvian of Marseilles's *De gubernatione Dei* to illuminate the purpose of the sexual polemic contained in his work – a task that no existing scholarship has attempted to undertake.

Daily realities and conflicts drove discourses on sexual *mores* forwards, and this thesis outlines how this occurred in practice, arguing that attitudes to sex were deeply rooted in secular contexts and were reactionary in nature. This examination of attitudes to sexual *mores* reveals a re-moulding of pre-existing Roman cultural norms, rather than a revolutionising Christian overtake. The thesis concludes that the 'Christianisation' of late Roman society was a process conditioned by contemporary events and concerns, which contributes to interpretations on the dynamics of cultural change in the late antique era.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

CCH	Gonzalo Martínez Díez, ed., *La colleción canónica Hispana* (Madrid, 1965 –)
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout, 1953 –)
C.J.	*Codex Justinianus*, ed. P. Krüger (Berlin, 1877)
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna, 1886 –)
C.Th.	*Codex Theodosianus*, ed. T. Mommsen and P. Meyer (Berlin, 1905)
De civ. D.	Augustine, *De civitate Dei*
De temp.	Quodvultdeus, *De tempore barbarico*
De gub.	Salvian, *De gubernatione Dei*
DVI	Gennadius, *De viris illustribus*; Jerome, *De viris illustribus*
FCNT	The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation (Washington, DC, 1947 –)
HA	*Historia Augusta*
HAP	Orosius, *Historiae adversus paganos*
HP	Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis Africanae Provincae*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
Malaspina	Elena Malaspina & Marc Reydellet, *Avit de Vienne: Lettres* (Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2016)
Mansi	G.D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio* (Florence, 1759-1771)
MGH AA	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Auctores antiquissimi* (Berlin, 1826 –)
NPNF	P. Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (repr. Grand Rapids, MI, 1956 –)
PG	J.-P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus, series graeca* (Paris, 1860-94)
PL	J.-P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina* (Paris, 1844-65)
PCBE	*Prosographie chrétienne de bas-empire* (Paris, Rome, 1982 –)
PLRE	J.R. Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire,* Vol. 2, *AD 395-527* (Cambridge, 1980)
SC	*Sources chrétiennes* (Paris, 1942 –)
Sirm.	*Constitutiones Sirmondianae*; see *Codex Theodosianus*

Improborum probra aeque ut praeconia bonorum inmortalia manent.

'The infamy of vice and the praise of virtue are both alike eternal.'

Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.* 5.8.

1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines Christian ideas of sexual morality in the Roman West during a long fifth century, from AD 390 and AD 520. It will argue that contemporary concerns shaped moral rulings on condoned sexual behaviour. The thesis further asserts that rules for sexual behaviour that emerged in Christian discourses at this time were not self-evident for Christian leaders, their readers or their listeners, and that ideas of sexual morality at this time reflect innovation as well as continued reliance on cultural traditions and customs, while responding to contemporary events and pressures. By examining Christian ideas of sexual behaviour as reactionary and flexible, the research I present here offers new findings not only on the development of Christian ideas of sexual morality in Late Antiquity, but on socio-cultural change in the late Roman world overall.

Societal and cultural paradigms for sexual behaviour are not fixed: the importance and significance of sexual roles and functions fluctuate and evolve from one society and culture to the next; they merge and dissolve according to time and place. The late antique period, from the third century into the eighth, exemplifies such paradigmatic change. These centuries have been characterised as ones of 'Christianisation' in which the Christian faith is seen as an integral catalyst of socio-cultural transformation.[1] By 'Christianisation', we mean a process of religiously motivated social, cultural and political change through which the late Roman world adopted, adapted and was transformed into a world more centred and defined through Christian ideologies and beliefs. Christianisation has been identified as a key factor in changing ideas of moral and immoral behaviour, especially as Christian commentary on moral issues appear stricter and more universal in their aims than pre-Christian authorities' views.

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[1] For the Christian Western church between the years 350 to 550, see Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), pp. 136-173, 213-250; Judith Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 23-36; R.A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Alan Kreider, ed., *The Origins of Christendom in the West* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 2001); Augustine Casiday and Frederick W. Norris, eds., *The Cambridge History of Christianity.* Vol. 2: *Constantine to c. 600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 317-430; Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: triumph and diversity, A.D. 200-1000*, 2nd edn (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2013), pp. 72-122, 145-154.

Scholarly trends on late antique *mores* – societal norms – have considered Christian authors as representing a religious approach that formed a collective idealism of what morality should be.[2] In this thesis, I will offer a more nuanced approach to the study of moralistic texts on sexual behaviour to assess influences on these developing discourses. While discussions on sex are reflective of Christian ideologies and the views of specific authors, they can also be used as evidence of localised conflicts, literary and ideological influences, and may be used to study the behaviour of lay people. I will provide careful analysis of select key sources, some of which have received very little previous study, to explore the ways in which ideas of correct or incorrect sexual behaviour were constructed and how these ideas changed. I will apply textual criticism, discourse analysis, and trauma theory, while providing detailed contextualisation of sources where possible. By a combination of these, I wish to offer new findings on moralistic ideas in the Roman West, demonstrating how communal dynamics and contemporary events affected discussions on *mores*. I wish to underline that attempts to Christianise sexual habits was a struggle, and this thesis examines how this struggle was fought and in what ideological frameworks. An enhanced appreciation of these developments will be an important contribution to the fields of late antique culture, society, gender and sex, as well as add to ongoing discussion on the transformative effect that Christian thinking had on societal change in Late Antiquity.

In this thesis, I will challenge ideas of overarching consistencies in moralising discourses: there is no single-paradigm model on how ideas of morality evolved, nor a universally agreed end goal. Rather there are multiple strands of influence that can account for contradicting evidence much more competently than ideas of a unified intellectual movement. In approaching the material in this way, I wish to review modernisation narratives that outline these developments as cohesive movements,

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[2] See, for instance, the highly important study by Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, 20th anniversary reprint edn (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2008), especially pp. 339-447; Kathy L. Gaca, *The Making of Fornication: eros, ethics, and political reform in Greek philosophy and early Christianity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003); Jennifer Wright Knust, *Abandoned to Lust: sexual slander and ancient Christianity* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2006). See also Ramsay MacMullen, 'What Difference Did Christianity Make?', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 35.3 (1986), pp. 322-43, where MacMullen concludes that Christianity had an impact on ideas of sexual morality in particular.

such as those made popular by the work of Michel Foucault.[3] Instead of looking ahead to medieval developments, I wish to study the era between 390 and 520 as its own period in the development of Christian moral codes, in order to allow the evidence to interact with its own context. This context and its significance is discussed in Section 1.5 below. It will be argued that much of the 'Christianisation' of sexual ideology was reactionary during this time period and that this process was not chronologically consistent. Any idea of a unified, unanimous 'Christianisation' trend regarding sexual morality is inherently flawed.

Key factors in shaping moralistic thinking for the era in question are the importance of religious purity and the prevalence of traditional sex paradigms in a desaturated Christian Church, as well as the violence brought on by warfare and the anxiety, tension and trauma this created. These subtleties improve our understanding not only of the topic at hand, but also of the dynamics of cultural change during the era in which the discussions take place. My results will be limited to the era between 390 and 520 specifically, providing insight into the importance that should be placed on exploring era-specific influences, rather than impose overarching trends on culturally complex time periods. This research should furthermore encourage us to examine Christian authors and their relationships with the laity in new ways.

1.1 SCOPE OF RESEARCH

As the context of this research I have chosen an era that is both rich in patristic material and dynamic in socio-political changes. By placing geographical and chronological boundaries on the research undertaken, this thesis will be able to provide a detailed and informed discussion in the chapters that follow. Under examination are moralising discourses from Italy, Gaul, Hispania and Roman North Africa. These regions will, however, receive differing degrees of attention: for instance, we have written evidence

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[3] Michel Foucault, *L'usage des plaisirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), translated in Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*. Vol. 2: *The Use of Pleasure* (London: Allen Lane, 1985); Michel Foucault, *Le Souci de Soi* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), translated in Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*. Vol. 3: *The Care of the Self* (London: Allen Lane, 1986). Foucault's views, while attested, have been hugely influential. For instance, see Paul Veyne, ed., *A History of Private Life*. Vol. 1: *from pagan Rome to Byzantium* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1987), pp. 5-311. For a discussion on Foucault and patristics, see Elizabeth A. Clark, 'Foucault, The Fathers, and Sex', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 56.4 (1988), pp. 619-41.

from various writers in Gaul throughout the century, and Italy likewise offers a relatively extensive output for the era covered here. North Africa has abundant material from the start of the fifth century, but evidence from the region is scarcer during the years of Vandal occupation. The region that is least accessible because of the limited sources available is undoubtedly Hispania, which will receive less individual study and commentary. Britain is excluded from this study due to the withdrawal of Romans in 410, effectively ceasing its status as a Roman province – the development of Roman societies is at the heart of the discussion here, for which Britain is less useful. The East, on the other hand, has a very different history between 390 and 520 than the western Roman provinces, and as such, this thesis focuses on western Christian thinking. Although we will often come across Eastern links, the shared experience of military campaigns and non-Roman settlers, even if localised and sporadic, is unique to the western sources and provides the focus for this study.

Having chosen our locations, our timespan covers a 'long' fifth century, selected specifically for its political and social instability that provides a fruitful discussion for the link between contemporary events and moralistic behaviour. In 378, twelve years before our start date of 390, the Goths defeated Roman forces at the Battle of Adrianople, and at the start of the fifth century barbarian peoples gradually occupied the majority of the West. In 476, the Western Roman emperor Romulus Augustus abdicated, and this year – for better or worse – is viewed as signalling the fall of Rome in the West in popular thinking.[4] As we come to the end of our period with 520, the beginning of Justinian's re-conquest of North Africa and Italy is only a decade away. In military and political terms, we could hardly choose a more turbulent or vibrant era, and as such the fifth century in particular lends itself to the study of contemporary events influencing moralistic discourses, in particular war and subsequent crisis.

However, this era is also significant for the development of church institutions: the Western church was rapidly evolving as a major establishment in the Latin West after witnessing significant growth in the fourth century.[5] The composition of Christian

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[4] An assessment on the actual significance of this date is given in Stefan Krautschick, 'Zwei Aspekte des Jahres 476', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 35.3 (1986), pp. 344-71.

[5] Indicative studies include Herrin, 1987; Philip Rousseau, *The Early Christian Centuries* (London: Longman, 2002); Brown, 2013, pp. 72-86; Casiday and Norris, eds., 2007, pp. 9-51.

communities was varied with old Christian families and recent converts, although actual numbers of Christians are difficult to quantify.[6] Developments in the Western church, however, give us the cut off points: the survey begins with the death of Pacian of Barcelona in c. 390, and ends with the death of Avitus of Vienne, c. 520. The Latin Christian authors used in this work are listed in Appendix 1 for reference. At times figures such as Jerome and Ambrose of Milan, however, will also be used as points of contrast for later authors, although they will not receive individual study as I have classed them as having flourished earlier. Ammianus Marcellinus's history is likewise included only as a point of contrast. At the other end of the chronological spectrum, the works of Caesarius of Arles are left out.

The research presented here will include discussion on some of the most distinguished church fathers, as inevitably men like Augustine are mentioned with frequency. Augustine's views on sex and sexuality, however, are too complex to be efficiently studied here, and as such, Augustine is used comparatively with his contemporaries.[7] To answer questions on changing discourses regarding sexual ethics, I have made use of sources that contain the most relevant and varied discussion for the topic at hand, making use of a variety of ancient authors. This evidence has emphasised the influence of war and crisis on moralistic discourse, the active polluting nature of immoral behaviour, and traditional moralistic thinking in Christian discourses. To this end, authors such as Salvian of Marseilles, Quodvultdeus of Carthage, Valerian of Cimiez and Maximus of Turin form a bulk of the evidence, and their views are treated with as much weight as the views of those who have overshadowed them.

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[6] For moderate estimates, see the arguments made in Keith Hopkins, 'Christian Number and its Implications', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6.2 (1998), pp. 185-226. For higher estimates, see Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: a sociologist reconsiders history* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), although these are undoubtedly too optimistic. Both studies, however, focus on the pre-Constantinian era. Fifth century figures would have been higher, but moderation should be used in estimating these.

[7] For indicative discussion on Augustine's views on issues surrounding sex and gender, see for instance Brown, 2008, pp. 387-427; David G. Hunter, 'Augustinian Pessimism? A New Look at Augustine's Teaching on Sex, Marriage, and Celibacy', *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994), pp. 153-77; John Cavadini, 'Feeling Right: Augustine on the Passions and Sexual Desire', *Augustinian Studies* 36 (2005), pp. 195-217; Kim Power, *Veiled Desire: Augustine's writing on women* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1995); David G. Hunter, 'Augustine on the Body', in *A Companion to Augustine*, ed. by Mark Vessey (Chischester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 353-64.

The topics included in this research are secular marriages, rape and sexual violence, incest, prostitution, polygyny, and homosexual acts. Imperial legislation will also be considered throughout to allow for discussion of these activities outside the contexts of Christian thinking. It is important to note, however, that the aim is not to include every text that touches upon these topics, as the constraints of the current study would make this impossible. Instead, I have chosen texts that, during the research here conducted, were found to attest to the struggles of creating Christianised sexual *mores*, and texts that illustrate how morality was defined, constructed and negotiated.

1.2 CHAPTER SYNOPSES

Each chapter will discuss contemporary influence that significantly shaped thinking on sexual morality. These influences are three in number: 1) the effects of warfare on sexual morality, 2) the attribution of action and pollution to immoral vice and the negotiation of this pollution, 3) the influence of traditional non-Christian thinking on defining sexual boundaries and sexual morality in Christian ethics. These, respectively, form the first three chapters (2, 3 and 4), and bring us to the final chapter that focuses on an often-misrepresented text that combines all three mentioned above: Salvian of Marseilles's *De gubernatione Dei*.

The first chapter, 'Impact of War on Christian Ideas of Morality', will argue that political and military crises of the fifth century created an ethos of uncertainty and crisis, which can be seen in the way violence through warfare was incorporated into contemporary preaching. Furthermore, military crisis translated into a call for change of Christian behaviour and often this behaviour was described as sexual. Sex and war, therefore, are linked. The chapter then moves on to demonstrate how fifth century warfare changed Christian rulings on secular marriages and changed ideas of rape, thereby enabling us to link contemporary events with the development of Christian moralistic thinking at this time. The relationship between moralistic ideas and warfare in the fifth century West has not, to the best of my knowledge, been explored by existing scholarship, but this chapter will argue that the two are connected and will make a case that contemporary events must always be considered in studies examining changing societal values and ideas.

The succeeding chapter, 'Negotiating Impurity', moves into an analysis of the active nature of morality in fifth century texts, in order to argue that sexual acts had a power to pollute, taint, and condemn communities. While sex was not the only act that could pollute – heresy was another dominant source of impurity – it will be noted that sexual impurities were often negotiable and at the discretion of the cleric. An appreciation of this active, yet negotiable, nature of vice will enable us to understand the importance placed on morally correct behaviour and why immoral acts were found to be offensive and dangerous. I will also discuss the extent to which war was seen as a consequence of unchristian behaviour, and to what extent such behaviour was described as sexual. This importance placed on communal purity and its potential pollution is discussed through the examples of prostitution and incest. The discussion starts with how vice and sin could spread through communities, and how impurity was perceived to be damaging – topics of prostitution and incest will be brought in to illustrate this further, but also to underline how clerics were able to negotiate terms for these polluting activities. Moreover, while rhetoric of impurity is largely consistent in the source materials, evidence on prostitution suggests the sustained availability and use of it, whereas a discussion of incest shows that clerics failed to define incest. Again, the idea of consistency will be challenged.

The third chapter is entitled 'Dominance of Tradition', which examines discussions of polygyny and homosexual acts in fifth century Christian sources. The chapter argues that these immoral acts continued to be perceived in traditional, non-Christian paradigms and that there was a disconnect between ideology and practice. Ideas of sexual propriety continued to be highly dependent on Roman sexual *mores*, despite ongoing attempts to use Christian paradigms in re-defining sexual morality. Homosexual acts were understood by clerics in Roman terms of masculine power rather than Christian sin, while monogynous monogamy was met with resistance amongst lay Christians practising polygyny. Clerics faced difficulties in trying to make stricter sexual *mores* take root amongst lay people as well as within clerical ranks. This role that tradition played in fifth century moralistic thinking is identified as the final major component on the texts examined – and while the role of tradition may at first seem self-evident, I will discuss how this was influential in ways that have been unexplored in past scholarship.

Finally, the last chapter, 'The Self-Inspecting Mirror', focuses on one source that is pivotal for the time period here examined: Salvian of Marseilles, whose sexually fuelled tirade *De gubernatione Dei* is still lacking an exclusive study of its own, in particular with regard to its comments on sexual *mores*. The insights provided by the discussions in the preceding chapters will enable me to offer a new analysis on Salvian as an author and a source, to save him from his oft-quoted but poorly understood place in late antique history. I will illustrate how his work exemplifies contemporary thinking on sexual morality, incorporating the pressure of warfare, the active role of vice, and the role of traditional thinking in sexual matters, which the previous chapters have discussed.

From their different perspectives, all chapters will address aspects and developments in moralistic discourses on sex in fifth century clerical texts that demonstrate transformative thought and ongoing definition of moral codes. The conclusion will address how these findings develop our understanding of evolving societal and cultural customs in late antique societies. Furthermore, I will discuss how material on sexual habits can and should be used to examine lay perceptions of normative sexual behaviour.

1.3 HISTORIOGRAPHY AND METHODOLOGY

A study that examines attitudes towards privately committed acts that leave no archaeological or historical evidence behind – apart from the indeterminable demographics – is a challenging field of study. We must contend with literary sources and some artistic depictions, while an individual's experience of sex and their perception of it in relation to themselves, others, and the divine is irrevocably lost. Furthermore, the evidence that does survive is hardly helpful: Christian writers' views rarely endorse sexuality and instead church figures most often sought to limit sexual expression – yet, simultaneously and paradoxically, they also keep discussing sex.

Academic interest in late antique sexuality has had a surprisingly late start, but as this thesis examines topics of incest, prostitution, *et cetera*, the delay in academic interest is a reflection of society's attitudes and openness towards sex at large. An interest in

ideas of sex and sexuality during the era under study is, therefore, still relatively new. In 1984 Michel Foucault published the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*, in which he argued that Christian views on sexuality derived from the need to care for the self: sexuality was part of an introspective self-analysis and improvement regime.[8] The goal of this was to achieve what might now be called a status of asexuality: the complete lack of sexual desire and impulse. Aline Rousselle's *Porneia*, first published in 1983, examined the struggle of various church fathers to be free of sexual desire and lust, arguing that not even damning the body to years of malnutrition could be effective in ridding oneself from sexual impulse.[9] Following on from this work, Peter Brown's *Body and Society*, first published in 1988, was a further pioneering study in compiling views of Christian writers on sex in the late antique period, drawing from the ideas set forward by Michel Foucault and Aline Rousselle.[10] Brown viewed late Romano-Christian sexuality as a self-aware examination by Christian intellectuals who constructed ideas of sex in order to examine the relation of the Christian with the world. In other words, sex has been considered to have been a very intellectual exercise and a battle over one's bodily urges – and, certainly, to a degree it is. However, there is much more that can be said if we consider the realities of sex behind these discourses.

Discussions of sex are often excluded from political, military and chronological studies of this time period, and in societal and cultural studies, if included, they are a part of a grand narrative and do not receive individual attention. The views of historic individuals on these matters have been considered as separate studies, and if studies have been comparative, they have been so on a grand scale of centuries and/or empires.[11] Some case studies have been done more thematically, especially as analyses

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[8] Foucault, 1984.

[9] Originally published in Aline Rousselle, *Porneia: de la maîtrise du corps à la privation sensorielle: IIe-IVe siècles de l'ère chrétienne* (Paris: PUF, 1983) and translated in Aline Rousselle, *Porneia: on desire and the body in antiquity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988).

[10] Brown, 2008.

[11] Studies on Augustine and his view on sex have already been listed, but see also Henny Fiskå Hägg, 'Continence and Marriage: the Concept of *Enkrateia* in Clement of Alexandria', *Symbolae Osloenses* 81.1 (2006), pp. 126-43; Wolfgang Seibel, *Fleisch und Geist beim Heiligen Ambrosius* (Munich: K. Zink, 1958); Paul Veyne, 'La famille et l'amour sous le Haut-Empire romain', *Annales* 33.1 (1978), pp. 35-63; James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987); Veyne, ed., 1987.

of genre. Virginia Burrus has demonstrated how sexual *mores* could be discussed and idealised through hagiographies, while Kyle Harper has examined late ancient novels and tied ideas of sexual morality with the development of the idea of free will.[12] Jennifer Knust has argued that ideas of morality were not purely passive constructions, but could be actively employed in creating friends or enemies, or to frame entire communities in those terms.[13] Mark Masterson has argued that same-sex desire was conveyed in late Roman panegyrics and other literature composed by and for elite men, and as such expressing such desire was being communicated within well-educated male circles at a time when this was otherwise becoming illicit.[14] These studies have demonstrated, firstly, that the sexual content found in literary sources can be examined in terms of its functions, aims and the context within which it was created, and that, secondly, *mores* and ideas of sex in late Roman cultural studies is a highly profitable field of study that can illuminate the complexities of the society under examination.

While the above body of research has broadened our understanding on late Roman Christians and their ideas about sex, touching on many of the themes of this thesis – ideas of sin, the public uses of morality, the sense of communal religiosity – there nevertheless continues to be a gap in scholarship. Studies on the theological implications of sex, the body, *castitas*, the use of these in literary genres, and so forth, have all laid groundwork for the research done here, yet it is also time to consider real sex in late antiquity as a culturally conditioned everyday occurrence, rather than an intellectual debate that took place on the pages of panegyrics, polemical texts or hagiographies. Sexual discourses did not exist independently of everyday realities, customs and acts of sex. The sex itself cannot be recovered, but some behaviours and ideas relating to it can be. This thesis, therefore, does something fundamentally different from previous studies due to its approach of discursive analysis and its emphasis on society, community, and contemporary events.

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[12] Virginia Burrus, *The Sex Lives of Saints* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Kyle Harper, *From Shame to Sin: the Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

[13] Knust, 2006.

[14] Mark Masterson, *Man to Man: Desire, Homosociality, and Authority in Late Roman Manhood* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2014).

This thesis owes much to recent studies that have looked at the uses of violence in late antiquity, such as the studies by Brent Shaw and Michael Gaddis on religious violence committed by Christians, and especially the collection of studies in Alexander Constantine Sarantis and Neil Christie's edited volume on late antique warfare.[15] In these, the focus has been how Christian authors and their followers legitimised the use of violence by their own kind, rather than how they reacted to violence done upon them in the post-martyr age. There is a void in scholarship on the influence of barbarian invasion on Christian rhetoric and Christian ideologies, although some attempts have been made to gather 'reactions' of clerics in summarising articles.[16] Related to these developments, recent studies on crisis and trauma in past societies are highly important. The recent 2013 *Crisis Management in Late Antiquity* by Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil has been most useful in demonstrating how bishops reacted to violent threats and how they changed practices and established ideologies to allow flexibility in times of crisis.[17] While this study did not discuss the topic of sexual behaviour, it demonstrated how clerical figures actively responded to crisis, some in very innovative ways. Interpreting the late Roman period through a lens of crisis is not a wholly new development, although recently there has been a renewed interest in the topic.[18] It would be misleading to think of all regions at this time in a never-ending cycle of critical danger – rather it is more helpful to consider traumatic events as happening sporadically, yet with enough frequency to keep communities in a state of tension. There is some suggestion visible in scholarship that barbarian threat and ideas

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[15] Brent D. Shaw, *Sacred Violence: African Christians and secretarian hatred in the age of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Michael Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: religious violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005); Alexander Constantine Sarantis and Neil Christie, *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). See also H. A. Drake, ed., *Violence in Late Antiquity: perceptions and practices* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

[16] R. P. C. Hanson, 'The Reaction of the Church to the Collapse of the Western Roman Empire in the Fifth Century', *Vigiliae Christianae* 26.4 (1972), pp. 272-87; W. H. C. Frend, 'Augustine's Reactions to the Barbarian Invasions of the West, 407-417', *Augustinus* 39 (1994), pp. 241-55.

[17] Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil, *Crisis Management in Late Antiquity (410-590 CE): a survey of the evidence from episcopal letters* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

[18] Olivier Hekster *et al.*, eds., *Crises and the Roman Empire: proceedings of the Seventh Workshop of the international network* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Stefan Rebenich, 'Christian Asceticism and Barbarian Incursion: The Making of a Christian Catastrophe', *Journal of Late Antiquity* 2.1 (2009), pp. 49-59; David C. Sim and Pauline Allen, *Ancient Jewish and Christian texts as crisis management literature: thematic studies from the Centre for Early Christian Studies* (London: T & T Clark, 2012); Allen and Neil, 2013.

of morality influenced each other – the current study aims to make this much more than a suggestion.[19]

As such, this thesis seeks to address a significant omission existing in current historiography. Much work has been done on related issues of sexual morality, war, and more recently on crisis, lay culture and daily life, but no work has examined how these issues were in dialogue with one another. Suggestions towards the ways in which the two connected will be made here. Too often are developments of Christian ideology taken out of the context in which they were written – especially its secular context. Sex, however, is nothing if not a manifestation of the earthly, physical existence of man. Furthermore, as this research uses the works of lesser-known figures, I will provide each important source with a contextualisation of any appropriate external pressure (war, for instance) or internal pressure (conflict within the community). A case will be made that while Christian views on sexuality drew from one another and formed traditions of Christian thought, the specific contexts in which each of the authors wrote had an influence in the formation of morality. This influence needs to be recognised further by current scholarship as it demonstrates how daily realities influenced Christian attitudes.

The main methods used have already been listed: textual criticism, discourse analysis, an emphasis on greater contextualisation of sources, and trauma theory. The evidence studied comes from religious texts such as letters, sermons, treatises, but also from imperial law codes. These were public documents: sermons served as a direct tool of communication of ideas and values to Christian congregations, often written down and circulated. Many letters are also discussed, and these too were public documents subject to circulation, as were treatises. Imperial laws were publicly displayed, compiled into collections, and circulated throughout the Empire. Textual criticism includes a close reading of this source material, a study of any scriptural intertextuality, and a comparison of it with other temporally and thematically appropriate texts. It is in this way one may recognise kernels of originality – or, conversely, a reliance on already established views. Within the Christian intellectual and literary elite, one may also trace the circulation of ideas, where possible.

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[19] Rebenich, 2009.

Close readings of texts enable one to examine source materials for scripture used and authorities quoted, but also one can examine the ideas put forth and references made to one's own circumstances. When examining discourses, the word 'discourse' always suggests that a piece of writing is in communication with something or someone else – one cannot have a discourse alone. One of the most important points to recognise of clerical texts of this time is this discursive nature: late antique clerics were extremely well connected and in constant communication with each other.[20] It is often difficult to prove who was reading whom, unless enough overlap in the texts exists. Nevertheless, we may also attempt the tracing of ideas – or indeed, rejecting an idea – to suggest that these people were reading each other's work. I have already said that retrospective narratives are not suitable in studying nuances in reactionary developments, and discourse analysis supports this. We may not be able to conclude that 'late antique clerics thought…' when only one of them did so. However, if there is enough evidence to support the development of a new trend, this will be noted.

THEORIES APPLIED

A final methodological approach not yet mentioned is the application of psychological theories on the source material. Modern sociology and psychology have made significant developments in the fields of war trauma and cultural trauma in the past twenty decades, and these are used here to broaden our understanding of the fifth century west in Chapter 2 and in Chapter 5 in particular. Although ancient societies were more accustomed to violence and death than most in the twenty-first century are, there is evidence to attest that trauma could be and was experienced by ancient individuals after a psychologically scarring event or experience. In the 2013 edition of *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* by the American Psychiatric Association, trauma is defined to be caused by distressing or threatening events that

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[20] Studies in epistolography, in particular, demonstrate this interconnectedness. For Gaul, see Ralph W. Mathisen, 'Epistolography, Literary Circles and Family Ties in Late Roman Gaul', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 111 (1981), pp. 95-109. Further work that examines networks of communication in the late Roman world are Andrew Gillett, *Envoys and Political Communication in the Late Antique West, 411-533* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and Daniel A. Washburn, *Banishment in the Later Roman Empire, 284-476 CE* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013).

have included death (actual or threatened), injury or sexual violence.[21] When looking for distressing or threatening events to Roman provincials in the fifth century, one need not look far.

A 2014 study also placed post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) in Mesopotamian texts dating to 3200 BC.[22] PTSD has likewise been found in Herodotus's work, where a soldier loses his ability to speak after battle.[23] We should not assume that a more violent world was incapable of finding violence damaging or traumatic, just as I do not assume that trauma theory alone can explain changes in fifth century discourses, but it certainly can account for some of the changes we will go on to discuss. Furthermore, there are many signs that the invasions and warfare of the fifth century were deeply upsetting and troubling to many – and, easily, traumatic. When we think of warfare, therefore, we should not approach it only in terms of battle narratives and army logistics, but also in terms of the effect and influence that it had on individuals and their communities. This is a significant oversight in many major studies, but as recently shown by J. P. Toner, military defeats and violence were at par with natural disasters in Roman thought.[24]

The theory of cultural trauma, furthermore, argues that the damage done on existing socio-political structures can destroy communities and their identities, and that an attack on established cultures or sets of beliefs likewise can cause trauma to an entire community. Cultural trauma can be defined as 'an invasive and overwhelming event that is believed to undermine or overwhelm one or several essential ingredients of a culture or the culture as a whole.'[25] The overwhelming events for us are warfare and an increase in barbarian settlements, which undermined the political and social power structures in place, and placed in doubt the belief that the orthodox Christians of the

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[21] American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5*, 5th edn (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), p. 271.

[22] Walid Khalid Abdul-Hamid and Jamie Hacker Hughes, 'Nothing New Under the Sun: post-traumatic stress disorders in the Ancient World', *Early Science and Medicine* 19.6 (2014), pp. 549-57, at p. 550.

[23] Stephen Regel and Stephen Joseph, *Post-Traumatic Stress* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 3.

[24] J. P. Toner, *Roman Disasters* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013). Toner discusses Christian responses to disasters in pp. 60-66, but does not address the time period examined here.

[25] Neil Smelser, 'Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma' in Jeffrey C. Alexander *et al.*, eds., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), p. 38.

western provinces were under God's protection. I will apply this theory in my reading of rape in particular. In his 2013 article on trauma, Ron Eyerman stated:

> Collective traumas begin with disruptions to the established foundations of a collective identity, something which can entirely destroy a collective or at the very least demand a re-narration of the myths and beliefs which ground that collective.[26]

The theory of cultural trauma is not, however, without fault. Jeffrey C. Alexander, a pioneer of the field, has argued that events in themselves are not traumatic to communities, but that the collective meanings given to those events are.[27] This has been criticised for not allowing individualistic responses to events and for enforcing the idea of a unified communal reaction.[28] However, as we begin to explore the influence of wartime trauma on Christian culture – and sexual morality – we may allow the interpretation that individual responses by clergymen are attempts at enforcing and deciding what the collective reaction should be. In this thesis, these modern theories are used, where deemed appropriate, to bring forth new interpretations and an enhanced understanding of the communal effects of war in the fifth century West.

If we agree that late Roman society was being 'Christianised' at this time, and indeed that the people of the time experienced trauma when key cultural foundations were attacked, then we need to have an appreciation of how cultures operate and what they are. John Carter Wood has argued that '"cultures" should be understood as historically accumulated collections of beliefs and practices which are socially produced and aimed at meeting psychological needs.'[29] Late antique Christian culture, in other words, was socially produced and was set to meet the psychological needs of not only a single flock of believers, but of society as a whole. Christian conviction of its universality led to a rejection of alternatives, meaning that at times Christian ideas had to be *imposed*. Yet hardly ever is culture the same for all: 'Not all members of a group observe all cultural prescriptions, or they interpret them idiosyncratically.'[30] It was this

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[26] R. Eyerman, 'Social Theory and Trauma', *Acta Sociologica* 56.1 (2013), pp. 41-53, at p. 49.

[27] Alexander *et al.*, eds., 2004, p. 10.

[28] See, for instance, Conny Mithander *et al.*, *Collective Traumas: memories of war and conflict in 20th-century Europe* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 118.

[29] John Carter Wood, 'Conceptualizing Cultures of Violence and Cultural Change', in *Cultures of Violence: interpersonal violence in historical perspective*, ed. by Stuart Carroll (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), pp. 79-96, at p. 81.

[30] Ibid., p. 82.

idiosyncratic approach that was dangerous to Christianity, which sought to have one unifying and undisputed doctrine. This theory of how cultures function and change is vital in understanding the problems Christianity had in enforcing its sexual doctrines: these views did not represent the historically accumulated beliefs of many lay Christians of the time. This went on to create internal conflict that at its worst turned into physical aggression, but also could turn into blackmail or punitive measures as Chapters 3 and 4 will show.

Lastly, performativity forms an important aspect of this research. Being Christian was not a passive state of being, but an active one that one had to demonstrate every day, through one's actions and thoughts. Christian piety was performative in more extensive ways than traditional Roman piety had been, especially as sex was included in Christian moralistic thought.[31] Having one's sexual habits and behaviour follow the instructions given in church meant that one underwent the active performance of piety or a disregard of it when one engaged in sex. Furthermore, we should note that clerics expected this level of performative piety – their congregations, perhaps, less so. Keeping this performativity of Christian idealism in mind, in combination with the methodological tools and themes outlined, I seek to study clerical texts discussing sexual morality to bring forth aspects of Christian thinking, ideology and pragmatism hitherto underappreciated. To ensure that these changes can be fully appreciated, let us define some key terminology that shapes this research.

TERMINOLOGY

The words 'morality', 'immorality' and '*mores*' have already been mentioned frequently, and it is important to clarify what is meant by these. Morality may be perceived as a set of ideas of right and wrong conduct. In this thesis, morality is a cultural construct and will refer to the approved set of sexual paradigms accepted by a society at a given time. In this thesis, therefore, whenever I discuss morality, I am discussing *sexual* morality (and not, for instance, whether it is right or wrong to kill): what kind of sexual behaviour, sexual acts, sexual habits are wrong and which ones are right? Immorality, conversely, is any act left outside ideas of approved 'morality'.

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[31] Harper, 2013.

This may be linked with cultural theory mentioned above: a culture decides if a sexual act offends their moral standards. If it does, a culture descends on the act in a negative fashion. If a sex act does *not* offend, it is within the accepted moral boundaries. The term *mores* is perceived in this same way: the word for Romans could signify a variety of concepts, such as customs, habits, manners, but here the *mores* we are interested in are sexual habits and customs – thus, I will be referring to (sexual) *mores*.

The above brings us to the next term requiring definition: sex. This word is used to encompass sexual physical intimacy, be that oral, manual, anal, vaginal, or intercural. The type in question will be specified if and when the source material allows us to give the distinction. When not specified, 'sex' and 'sex acts' may refer to any type of sexual intimacy in which the parties physically stimulate each other for sexual release. For the sake of variation, however, I will discuss 'sexual behaviour', 'sexual acts' and 'sexual habits' interchangeably. By using these terms to designate sex overall, I aim not to let semantics distract us from the bigger picture: by including an appreciation for the fluidity and flexibility of human sexual desires and its manifestations, this thesis will not dwell on identifying or labelling sexualities but rather focuses on the generic act of sex, in all forms it may take.

One example of a sexual behaviour that evolves increasingly into an immoral act during the late Roman era is, for instance, homosexual behaviour. It should be noted that 'homosexual acts', 'homosexual behaviour' and 'homosexual sex' are used interchangeably, too, to signify an act of sex between members of the same sex – at times 'male/male sex' is also used. One cannot impose modern constructions of sexuality upon a society that focused on sexual acts rather than a clear-cut preference of one gender over the other. Labels such as 'homosexual', 'gay', 'lesbian' and, indeed, 'heterosexual' are modern terms that do not reflect ancient ideas of sexuality, if it can even be said that 'sexuality' in itself existed as an idea of human self-definition or identification until the rise of sexology in the late nineteenth century.[32] It is therefore much more fruitful to describe individual acts or encounters as homo/heterosexual, but these terms should not be used to describe people. This is the policy used for this research throughout.

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[32] See Section 4.1 for relevant historiography.

I will also use the terms 'laity' and 'lay Christians', here signifying the ordinary believers who attended church services, frequently or rarely, and who perceived themselves to practise and/or believe some, though not necessarily all, parts of Christian teaching. The Christian laity are the masses to whom clerics preached, from shopkeepers and farmers to landowners and officials, whose lives were not consumed by faith but who engaged with Christianity and perceived themselves to be a part of the faith in some way. A new and expanding field within late antique studies is a focus on the culture and experiences of this laity, and work is ongoing in trying to better understand popular culture and the religious habits and experiences of lay Christians.[33] Such work is important because it demonstrates that through clerical sources we can begin to analyse the lives of the non-elite, who often are lost or ignored in scholarship. The current study attempts to keep these lay people in mind to demonstrate that a study of sexual *mores* can be used to explore their lives, rather than only be used for analysis of theological shifts or literary genres. Christian ideas of proper sexual *mores* had direct pragmatic results that affected lives of common Christians, as well as was derived from pragmatic realities of their daily life.

We will also see discussion of societies and communities living through times of 'crisis'. This is a multi-faceted construct: a crisis may be military, social, political, or religious; it can be material in the form of natural disasters, droughts, food shortages, 'plagues' or demolition of city/town infrastructure, and it can have a personal or communal reach.[34] David Sim has argued that 'religious literature … may have its origins in a desperate situation of crisis and that the texts in question may have been

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[33] See, for instance, William Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: the making of a Christian community in late antique Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Mary Cunningham and Pauline Allen, eds., *Preacher and Audience: studies in early Christian and Byzantine homiletics* (Leiden: Brill, 1998); Jaclyn LaRae Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity: John Chrysostom and his congregation in Antioch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Lisa Kaaren Bailey, *The Religious Worlds of the Laity in Late Antique Gaul* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016) and Lucy Grig, ed., *Popular Culture in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

[34] See, for instance, Averil Cameron, 'The Perception of Crisis', in *Morfologie sociali e culturali in Europa fra tarda antichità e alto Medioevo* (Spoleto: Presso La sede del Centro, 1998), pp. 9-31. The influence of material crisis on religious texts in Late Antiquity is a field where not much work has been done. However, there is much potential here, as shown by recent works by Sim and Allen, 2012; Toner, 2013; and Julia Watts Belser, *Power, Ethics, and Ecology in Jewish Late Antiquity: rabbinic responses to drought and disaster* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

composed largely as direct responses to these critical conditions.'[35] In our case, a 'crisis' was often a combination of even most of these, but our focus is on communal, rather than personal, crises. Neither will I discuss natural disasters or droughts, which certainly may have worsened an existing situation, but which were not manmade. Rather, our idea of a crisis is quite selective: it is a military and political crisis, causing violence and communal disruptions, thus creating social crisis and, for some, religious crisis as one's faith was tested. Furthermore, we explore cultural crises as texts find warfare in the Roman West as deeply troubling and disturbing.

Lastly, there will be discussion on purity and impurity in relation to fifth century Christians. As shown by the fundamental anthropological study by Mary Douglas, 'holiness and impurity are at the opposite poles.'[36] Most religions carry ideas of acts and behaviours that render people ritually or morally impure, thus jeopardising their position within the religious collective. Both the Hebrew tradition utilised by late Roman Christians and apostolic scripture adhered to the importance of religious holiness, most emphatically in Lev. 20:26: 'You shall be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy.'[37] Holiness was the foundation of religious purity. In this thesis, 'purity' conveys ideals of religious performativity espoused by scripture as well as by Christian authors. 'Impurity', on the other hand, signifies any act or activity that religious authorities considered as damaging the religious merit of an individual, thus endangering the relationship between him/herself and the divine – and, by extension, between him/herself and the wider religious collective.

With these ideas of morality, moralistic discourse, sex, sexual acts, the laity, crises and purity/impurity in place, we may now proceed to discuss the key thematic and conceptual backgrounds for this thesis. Before doing so, however, I will provide a brief note on translations.

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[35] Sim and Allen, 2012, p. 175.

[36] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: an analysis of the concepts of pollution and taboo*, reprint edn (London: ARK Paperbacks, 1984), p. 7.

[37] This command was repeated in 1 Peter 1:15-16.

A NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

Translations of primary sources are mainly taken from collected volumes of patristic and ancient texts. However, when I have adapted a translation or produced my own translation, this will be noted in the appropriate footnote. Any such translations made reflect one of the main problems in the study of sexual morality, and in particular immorality: censorship on part of the authors, extending from the initial self-monitoring of the author to the censorship of later copyists, librarians, archivists, booksellers and translators. For instance, it is quite different to read the late fourth century *Historia Augusta*,[38] detailing the vices and virtues of Roman emperors, and coming across Commodus' three hundred 'minions'[39] than it would be to read about his three hundred male sex slaves – *exoleti*. The latter gives a far better understanding of these men's functions than the confusing 'minion' does that one finds in key early twentieth century translations.[40] Although Commodus's *exoleti* have survived in manuscripts to our day, some translations attempt to hide these prostitutes' sexually explicit presence in the imperial household. We have had positive developments in this, however: in the 1994 French translation, the *exoleti* have become 'jeunes gitons' (young male prostitutes).[41]

This study further seeks to emphasise the importance of translating sexually explicit material accurately, leaving undue coyness behind. If material is graphic or explicit, its translation must reflect this diligently and accurately, without omissions or euphemisms. Of recent scholarship, both Mathew Kuefler and Craig Williams provide excellent translations of sexually explicit material that often manage to recapture the vulgar and lively feel of the original Latin or Greek. This approach is laudable and indeed the direction towards which these studies should aim.[42]

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[38] Henceforth *HA*.

[39] *HA*, Commodus 5.4.

[40] David Magie, ed., *Historia Augusta*, LCL Vol. 139 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921) at Commodus 5.4.

[41] André Chastagnol, ed., *Histoire Auguste: les empereurs romains des IIe et IIIe siècles* (Paris: Rovwer Laffont, 1994) at Commodus 5.4.

[42] Mathew Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch: masculinity, gender ambiguity, and Christian ideology in late antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) and Craig Williams, *Roman Homosexuality: ideologies of masculinity in classical antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

1.4 THEMATIC OVERVIEW: SETTING THE SCENE

Before we can begin our survey of sexually moralising discourses between 390 and 520, some remarks must be made of the society in which these texts were written, and of the world that had come before. The Christian church had some impressive milestones in its recent history by the year 390. Starting with the 'Edict of Milan' in 313, Christianity had gained momentum so much so that, by 380, Christianity became the religion of the Empire.[43] This success story is, in the West, balanced with increasing levels of political deterioration, especially from the start of the fifth century onwards. It is against these developments that the adaptation of Christianity to include increasing numbers, and the nature of late antique Christians must be considered, as well as perceptions of sex in late antique society. All are important topics that form the background for this research, and here I will summarise some of the main themes with indicative further reading.

The dichotomy of pagan/Christian has been a popular way of understanding the late antique period, but scholarship now recognises this to be misleading.[44] R. A. Markus has remarked that 'there just is not a different culture to distinguish Christians from their pagan peers, only their religion.'[45] More recently, Susanna Elm has argued that Christian/pagan as categories are of little value to late antique studies as the shared cultural ethos of these people bound them to essentially identical views of the world.[46]

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[43] Constantine's religious politics have deservedly been the subject of extensive study. Some indicative works are T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); H. A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: the politics of intolerance* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); Raymond Van Dam, *The Roman Revolution of Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). For the so-called 'Edict of Milan', see the discussion in T. D. Barnes, *Constantine: dynasty, religion, and power in the later Roman Empire* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 93-97. For later fourth century developments, see R.C. Blockley, 'The Dynasty of Theodosius', in *Cambridge Ancient History*. Vol. 13: *The Late Empire, AD 337–425*, ed. by Averil Cameron and Peter Garnsey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 111-37. The series will be shorted as *CAH* hereafter.

[44] Some significant works include Markus, 1990, especially pp. 27-62, 125-135; Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), especially pp. 103-149; John R. Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital: Rome in the fourth century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 159-323; Maijastina Kahlos, *Debate and Dialogue: Christian and pagan cultures c. 360-430* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 1-54; Maijastina Kahlos, *Forbearance and Compulsion: the rhetoric of religious tolerance and intolerance in late antiquity* (London: Duckworth, 2009), pp. 106-110, 135-138; on the late Roman history of *paganus* and ideas of it, see Alan Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 14-32.

[45] Markus, 1990, p. 12.

[46] Susanna Elm, *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the Vision of Rome* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), especially pp. 479-487.

Ideas, beliefs and customs bled from one into the other, or were fundamentally the same. This is important for ideas of sexual behaviour, sexual ideals, and sexual limitations, and it is in this context that sex became under Christian scrutiny. Questions regarding sex were ones of when, how, where, with whom, how often, for what reason – questions that were not being asked for the first time,[47] but were now asked by clerics within the theological and religious frameworks of their religion. Many lay Christians, on the other hand, fused their Christian experiences with pagan elements, and there may not have been any clear distinction between the two spheres in their view, even if the clergy felt very differently.[48] The late antique world therefore had incredibly complex systems of what types or kinds of sexual habits or encounters were acceptable and what kinds were not, and there was certainly no universal sense of agreement, be it amongst the clergy or the laity.

Instead of viewing the society and culture as consisting of distinctive Christian and non-Christian groups, therefore, it is more helpful to approach these as people whose views, traditions and beliefs represented a mixture of both. Maijastina Kahlos has suggested describing people who fall between adamant Christians and adamant pagans at this time as *incerti*: these people's religious habits are inconclusive about their religious beliefs, or incorporated both Christian worship and non-Christian worship.[49] The term is one for historians: *we* cannot be certain of these people's religious views, although they themselves may have been. As evidence, however, is inconclusive, we ourselves must avoid claiming certainty. Thinking of people as *incerti* is particularly useful when we think of the audience of the texts we will go onto examine: a sermon is not necessarily delivered to a group of hard-line Christians, but rather to people whose beliefs and habits lie somewhere between orthodox Christian thinking and more traditional Roman views.

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[47] Vern L. Bullough, *Sexual Variance in Society and History* (New York, NY: Wiley, 1976); Catharine Edwards, *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); John J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: the anthropology of sex and gender in ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1990).

[48] Markus, 1990, pp. 27-30.

[49] Kahlos, 2007, pp. 30-33.

Understanding lay Christians as consisting of people with a spectrum of devotion and varied degrees of Christianised cultural appropriation broadens our understanding of why setting boundaries on sexual habits was often so important for the Christian clergy. Lay Christians of the late antique period, like people of any time, thought about sex, gained sexual experiences and developed sexual preferences. It is estimated that asexuality, that is to say people who feel no sexual attraction or desire, is present in roughly 1% of world population today.[50] The remaining 99% have sexual urges, which are on a spectrum: for some these urges dominate their lives, for some they are of very little importance, and for the majority sexual desire and the act of having sex are of relative importance, falling between the two extremes. Sex is *the* requirement for human existence, and while idolising sexual abstinence proved popular in early Christian thought, this was an ideal only very few could achieve.[51] Due to sources being written by members of a deeply devout clerical elite, it is hard to recreate a sense of lay religiosity outside of these texts or lay devotion to extreme asceticism. However, sources we will go on to examine do not suggest that many were committed to these, but rather that much, if not most, of sexual interpretation of the era derived from traditional Roman views that were an ill fit for Christian beliefs. These will be examined in length in Chapter 4.

Only gradually have historians begun to examine the surviving Christian texts of this era, such as sermons, for what they can tell us about lay Christians, their lives and their religious experiences. Lisa Kaaren Bailey has recently observed that lay Christians 'made their own decisions about what being a Christian meant in their daily lives.'[52] This is especially important for moralistic discourses. Ideas perpetuated by Christian authors do not reflect the ideas of lay Christians or their understanding of these issues: when we talk of morality or *mores*, the rules and idealised guidelines that defined what

[50] There is significant variation in levels of asexuality in accordance with age and sex. See Anthony F. Bogaert, 'Asexuality: prevalence and associated factors in a national probability sample', *Journal of Sex Research* 41.3 (2004), pp. 279-87.

[51] Early church fathers knew that abstinence could not be achieved by all. The often quoted scriptural backing for this came from Matthew 19:12: 'For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can.' On early Christian asceticism and sexual renunciation, see in particular Brown, 2008 and Virginia Burrus, 'Word and Flesh: The Bodies and Sexuality of Ascetic Women in Christian Antiquity', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 10.1 (1994), pp. 27-51.

[52] Bailey, 2016, p. 2.

behaviour was acceptable, commendable or condemnable are not in agreement. Keith Hopkins has argued that, because Christianity was in a continuous process of integrating considerable numbers of new recruits, it 'always had to be questioning its members about the nature and degree of their adherence.'[53] Hopkins' study is concerned with Christianity prior to the fourth century, but if we accept that post-380 large numbers of pagans adopted Christianity, we also need to reflect on the true religiosity of Christian communities in this later period. Indeed, Hopkins' remarks continue to be significant: the newly converted Christians or the *incerti* had an experience of a polytheistic society and religious culture that had addressed the topic of sex differently from Christian scripture. This mixed characterisation of the late antique Christian community will be an important theme throughout this research.

The influence of Roman sexual *mores* to Christian thinking is not to be underestimated. At the centre of the Roman sexual world was the idea of the Roman man: masculine ideals shaped social, religious and political conduct in a male-dominated society. A man's social standing determined the people that he had the right to sexually subject and, more graphically, to penetrate: in any sexual activity, a Roman citizen had to insert himself into the sexual partner in some form, be it vaginally, orally or anally.[54] To reverse this pattern constituted a severe break from the accepted and expected sexual behaviour given to men, in turn subjecting one to ridicule.[55] A Roman man ought to marry and produce legitimate heirs, but marital monogamy was not expected: slaves, prostitutes, foreigners of either sex could be the objects of a man's desire. However, not in excess. Moderation in sexual matters demonstrated idealised self-control expected of respectable Roman men.[56] Economics also played a part: a rich man had more slaves at his disposal to exploit, or could afford more visits to prostitutes than his peers. A wealthier man may also be able to woo more potential mistresses.

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[53] Hopkins, 1998, p. 221.

[54] Williams, 1999, p. 13 states: 'to be penetrated … was incompatible with a fully masculine image.'

[55] One of the best studies remains Amy Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus: sexuality and aggression in Roman humor*, revised edn (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988).

[56] Williams, 1999, p. 141. See also Kate Cooper and Conrad Leyser, 'The Gender of Grace: Impotence, Servitude, and Manliness in the Fifth-Century West', *Gender & History* 12.3 (2000), pp. 536-51.

Christian sexual ideals were bound to clash with the above, especially when it came to men. One of the most revolutionary changes that Christianity brought with it was the idealisation of *male* chastity, which it supported and advocated. While male chastity had been admired before, the Christian emphasis of it recontextualised its significance.[57] Male chastity was central to asceticism and monasticism, which were on the rise in the East as well as the West.[58] Such movements appear to have had some ideological success: inscriptions on Christian tombs in Italy indicate that male virgins came to be admired to some degree, certainly as posthumous self-endorsement.[59] However, this restraint would have attracted religious hardliners, but not those more moderate. Nevertheless, for Christian laymen sexual expectations were very different from the Roman equivalent above: monogynous monogamy, no more, no less.[60] Within this monogamy, sex ought to be for reproduction and not for pleasure. Yet as Chapters 2 and 3 examine prostitution, incest, polygyny and homosexual acts, one cannot fail to note that men clearly were not sleeping with their wives alone. More importantly, they presumably had willing partners to have non-marital sex *with*, suggesting that societal constructions were in place to facilitate these relationships.

There may be significant differences in the Christian and Roman approaches to the sexual behaviour of men, but with regard to women, the expectation of chastity for any woman of note remained. All extramarital sex was a crime for Roman women – a glaring double standard in the formation of sexual ethics.[61] Male licence was broad; women's licence was limited. Extramarital sex was a crime for Christian women, too, but the ideology in which this was set was very different. Roman women of any significant status had to remain untouched until their marriages, after which they were

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[57] See the discussion in Kuefler, 2001, especially pp. 19-21, 171-178.

[58] Monasticism spread in the East at an earlier date, while in the West John Cassian is said to have set up the first monastic communities. The corpus on early Christian monasticism is vast, but indicative works are Brown, 2013; Lynda L. Coon, *Dark Age Bodies: gender and monastic practice in the early medieval West* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Richard J. Goodrich, *Contextualizing Cassian: aristocrats, asceticism, and reformation in fifth century Gaul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: from the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

[59] Christian Laes, 'Male Virgins in Latin Inscriptions from Rome', in *Religious Participation in Ancient and Medieval Societies: rituals, interaction and identity*, ed. by Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Ville Vuolanto (Rome: Institutum Romanum Finlandiae, 2013), pp. 105-20, at pp. 111-116.

[60] An excellent work into idealised masculinities at this time is Kuefler, 2001.

[61] For clerical views on this double standard and the laws surrounding it, see Section 4.2 on polygyny.

expected to be faithful to their husbands.[62] The importance placed on their sexual behaviour diminished the further down one went the socioeconomic ladder – the chastity and fidelity of freedwomen or the very poor was not collectively important, or a source of scandal. Christianity was again more encompassing than these Roman ideas were: even the lowest of the low, theoretically, should adhere to modest chastity.[63]

Normative sexual behaviour was defined by men and imposed on the women, children and slaves under their control, as well as on fellow men. The same was true for Christian developments: the domain of sex belonged to men, but dictating the rules became the prerogative of the religious elite. Our sources are male writers who primarily wrote for other literate men with, perhaps, the obvious exception of public sermons. Ancient preoccupation with the male as the centre of sexual activity means that in our sources topics such as female homosexual behaviour hardly receive a mention.[64] Ideas of sex are phallocentric in quite literal terms: the presence of a penis is required to constitute a sexual act, before it can even be assessed whether it is moral or immoral. There is no indication in the Roman sources that stigma was placed on acts themselves as long as hierarchical and societal conventions had been considered. Once in the bedroom (or one's chosen setting for coitus), one was free to vary positions, kiss and fondle. Oral sex, perhaps, is one example of an exercise that the Romans were not entirely comfortable with – certainly not if performed by respectable members of the upper classes, regardless of their sex. This aside, most Romans had an appreciation for the enjoyment of sex, which few Christian writers did.

The developments that took place in Christian ideologies on sexual *mores* were not necessarily uniquely Christian, however. The valuable point has been made that in pagan thinking of the same era there was also a tendency towards anti-hedonism and

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[62] For a good overview, see Gillian Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity: pagan and Christian lifestyles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1993), pp. 35-41. For Roman women in general, see Eve D'Ambra, *Roman Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society* (London: Routledge, 1990); Pauline Schmitt-Pantel, *A History of Women in the West*. Vol. 1: *From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1992).

[63] Elizabeth Castelli, 'Virginity and Its Meaning for Women's Sexuality in Early Christianity', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 2.1 (1986), pp. 61-88; Clark, 1993; Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: idealized womanhood in late antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

[64] There is some Christian consideration given to females pleasuring themselves or each other, but this sinful behaviour is not on the same level of sin as any deviant act conducted by a man. See Section 4.1.

pronatalism.[65] What obscures this picture is that Stoic ideas were not allowed to develop when Christian emperors began to limit paganism and its believers from the mid-fourth century onwards. The comparison of pagan Stoic ideas and contemporary Christian ideas, therefore, cannot be conducted for the fifth century, but it is important to note that the growing Christian sect did not invent the importance of reproduction and marriage. However, while pagan Stoics likewise voiced the need to dwell less on the physical world and its corporeal manifestations, Christian writers alone viewed this need in terms of the Christian religion and a Christian's relationship with God. Male chastity was nevertheless important in pagan contexts, in both political and imperial spheres, as well as in philosophical circles, such as amongst Plotinus and Neoplatonic thinkers.[66]

One of the downfalls of existing late antique scholarship is the tendency for historians to either be focused on the religious sphere or the political sphere. Where the two overlap, the focus is on the religiosity of emperors, or the political power of holy men and women – a very narrow pool for study. The research presented here intends to approach material differently, in a way some pioneering studies have proved very fruitful: it examines the influence of changing communal life on Christian rhetoric and discourse, and not only sees these developments as a form of Christian intellectual debate, but as reflections of the clergy's interactions with their flocks. As will become clear, many discussions on sexual morality were prompted by real digressions by members of Christian communities. In this sense, while the focus is on a clerical elite, their interactions with their flocks come through in their writings – at times as subtext that needs to be extracted.

A lesser theme that has not yet been mentioned is identity. The importance of being 'Christian' or 'orthodox', for the clerical elite, is assumed rather than extensively discussed. The development of Christian identities and self-definitions in late antique societies has been the topic of numerous studies. Benjamin Dunning has conducted

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[65] See, for instance, the commentary in Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: from Stoic agitation to Christian temptation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 273-287; Michael B. Trapp, *Philosophy in the Roman Empire: ethics, politics and society* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 155-165.

[66] For the former, see Masterson, 2014. For sex in Plotinus, see Asger Ousager, *Plotinus on Selfhood, Freedom and Politics* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2004), pp. 270-274.

important studies on self-identity and alterity in early Christian communities, especially emphasising how sex could be used as a badge of 'us' versus 'them.'[67] For the later Roman period, the search for a Christian identity in a more secularised Christian sphere continued, and important works for this are Isabella Sandwell's study on Antioch and Susanna Drake's recent book on late ancient Jews, and how sex was used to build an idea of Jewish otherness.[68] Ideas of being Roman, barbarian, Gothic, North African, Christian, orthodox were also all in flux at this time, and many studies have focused on these shifts in perception.[69] These studies, however, have either focused on specific authors or ethnic groups, and none of them have examined how the threat of war brought into question the idealised Christian, and how sex played a role in this discourse. The current study will contribute to ideas of Christian identities, therefore, and how Christianity could be performative via the medium of sex. It will be argued here that this was a significant motivating factor in discussions of sexual deviance, as the quest for a pure, clear Christian identity had a pressing need in the fifth century West, in particular as people came face to face with 'the other': Vandals, Goths and Huns, and many more.

In 1993, Catherine Edwards remarked that 'Christianisation brought with it the institutionalisation of morality.'[70] Her excellent work on Roman *mores* does not extend

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[67] Benjamin H. Dunning, *Aliens and Sojourners: self as other in early Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Benjamin H. Dunning, *Specters of Paul: sexual difference in early Christian thought* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). Recently, however, it has been argued that early Christian texts did not consider finding an identity to be a primary concern. See Maia Kotrosits, *Rethinking Early Christian identity: affect, violence, and belonging* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015).

[68] Isabella Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity: Greeks, Jews, and Christians in Antioch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Susanna Drake, *Slandering the Jew: sexuality and difference in early Christian texts* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

[69] The breadth of such scholarship is vast, but some key studies are Patrick Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489-554* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Hans J. Hummer, 'The Fluidity of Barbarian Identity: the ethnogenesis of Alemanni and Suebi, AD 200–500', *Early Medieval Europe* 7.1 (1998), pp. 1-27; Stephen Mitchell and Geoffrey Greatrex, eds., *Ethnicity and Culture in Late Antiquity* (London: Duckworth, 2000); J. F. Drinkwater and Elton Hugh, eds., *Fifth-century Gaul: a crisis of identity?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Richard Miles, ed., *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2002); Andrew Gillett, ed., *On Barbarian Identity: critical approaches to ethnicity in the early Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002); Ralph W. Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer, eds., *Romans, Barbarians, and the Transformation of the Roman World: cultural interaction and the creation of identity in late antiquity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); Jonathan Conant, *Staying Roman: conquest and identity in Africa and the Mediterranean, 439-700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Rebillard, 2012.

[70] Edwards, 1993, p. 32.

to the Christian period with the result that, while her observation is accurate, it fails to acknowledge the long winding and confusing road to such an institution. The development in discourses on morality eventually led to the codification of sexual deviance: this is best seen in penitentials, popular from the seventh century onwards and especially in the Celtic churches of Britain and Ireland. These guidebooks detailed penance from bestiality to rape, from homosexual acts to adultery, fornication, incest and so forth.[71] But in the time period focused on here, this kind of structured categorisation of sexual vice still had not occurred.[72] Rather what existed was a reactionary culture that responded to current events, be that an incestuous local man or the Gothic troops subjecting locals to sexual violence. The research here attempts to re-examine these lost years of Christianising morality, and like any period of growth and soul-searching, the evidence is often contradictory.

While late antique Christian literature contains abundant evidence of men and women of unwavering faith, it would be wrong to assume that these individuals represented a collective spirit shared by all. The lack of Christian conduct in the masses, especially at a time of political upheaval and warfare, was a persistent source of lamentation for many church fathers of this time – to give an example out of many, in 413 Jerome noted: 'The whole world is falling, and still our sins are not decreasing.'[73] There was an expectation or at least a wish that warfare should make sinners recognise their indecent behaviour and turn to God for salvation, without much success. Warfare of the fifth century thus contributed to the discussion on sex and society, creating a situation where sex, problematic to begin with, needed re-definition and new interpretations. This thesis contributes to an eventual clearer image of a complicated religious, social and moral

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[71] A thorough study on codifying sex in the penitentials is Pierre J. Payer, *Sex and the Penitentials: the development of a sexual code, 550-1150* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984). See also Daniel A. Binchy and Ludwig Bieler, eds., *The Irish Penitentials* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1963); Peter Biller and A. J. Minnis, eds., *Handling Sin: confession in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 1998); Stephen Haliczer, *Sexuality in the Confessional: a sacrament profaned* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Julie Ann Smith, *Ordering Women's Lives: penitentials and nunnery rules in the early medieval West* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

[72] It is also important to note that codification occurred for other types of 'deviance', too: heresiologies are another example of Christian attempts to categorise and rationalise deviant behaviour. For more, see Todd S. Berzon, *Classifying Christians: ethnography, heresiology, and the limits of knowledge in Late Antiquity* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016).

[73] Jerome, *Ep.* 128.5.1 (CSEL 56.0161): 'Pro nefas, orbis terrarum ruit et in nobis peccata non corruunt.'

transformation, demonstrating how these developments were heavily influenced by topical daily realities.

1.5 HISTORICAL CONTEXT: AD 390 – AD 520

The warfare that forms the contextual background for the years between 390 and 520 has already been mentioned, marking the era of barbarian[74] advancement into the western provinces of the Roman Empire.[75] The following outlines the relevant military and political developments, but specific textual contexts will be discussed in greater detail in individual chapters. The conditions and causes for these events have divided historians: those who see a fall of the Roman Empire, and those who see transformation. The idea of a fall was made popular by Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, which painted a dramatic wipe-out of Roman life in the West, and later in the East.[76] The idea of a drastic decline is still supported by historians such as Bryan Ward-Perkins, but is challenged as too black-and-white by scholars such as Chris Wickham and Peter Heather.[77]

A more moderate approach to changes between the fourth and sixth centuries is put forward, for instance, by Guy Halsall. He has argued that the socio-economic fragmentation of the Roman West created a political vacuum as imperial power could not govern these regions efficiently. This vacuum enabled a barbarian takeover, but these newcomers linked themselves firmly to Roman ideals, traditions and utilised existing administrative and socio-political systems in their governing.[78] Despite many major narratives accounting for the changes of this period, one narrative is unlikely to

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[74] Here, I will use the term 'barbarian' to denote groups settling in western provinces that consisted of significant numbers of non-Roman peoples or peoples with non-Roman ancestry.

[75] For overall narratives on these migrations, see P. S. Barnwell, *Emperor, Prefects and Kings: the Roman West, 395-565* (London: Duckworth, 1992); Walter Goffart, *Barbarian Tides: the migration age and the later Roman Empire* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Guy Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376-568* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Bryan Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). For region-specific literature, see the discussion below.

[76] Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London: Strahan & Cadell, 1776-89).

[77] Ward-Perkins, 2005; Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400-800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) and Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (London: Macmillan, 2005).

[78] Halsall, 2007. See especially pp. 3-33 for this narrative.

suit all – Wickham's 2005 work, in particular, emphasised the importance of regional variation during these centuries.

The ethnicity of these barbarian peoples has attracted much attention but resulted in few definite answers, and while research into this topic remains ongoing, it is not the focus of research here.[79] The long-standing relationships between Roman and non-Roman people in the borderlands of the Western Empire further obscures the idea of invasions, as does the fact that Roman provincials, and Romans with barbarian ancestry, likewise took part in warfare.[80] The various peoples that moved into the western provinces came from the North, the East and the Northeast, and initially Roman emperors formed treaties with them to keep them at bay. This policy proved unsustainable, and all western provinces of this era witnessed settlement by new arrivals. The warfare that preceded settlement also looked different from region to region, which we will now examine.

Political control of the Italian peninsula changed hands more than once during this era: in 390, Italy was the stronghold of the Roman West, and the city of Rome was home of the Western emperor and the historical focal point of the Empire. In 520, only the historical significance of Rome remained. Invasions began in 401 when the Gothic leader Alaric penetrated Northern Italy with his troops.[81] Rome was sacked twice during the fifth century: first in 410 by Alaric's troops and in 455 by the Vandals. The Huns invaded Italy in the 450s and nearly marched on Rome too, while a succession of Western emperors with differing capabilities left significant power in the hands of generals.[82] War campaigns destroyed crucial infrastructure, cities began to decline,

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[79] For studies on barbarian ethnicities, see Walter Pohl and Reimitz Helmut, eds., *Strategies of Distinction: the construction of ethnic communities, 300-800* (Leiden: Brill, 1998); Gillett, ed., 2002. The sources of this era are not the most reliable for ethnographical studies, and the development of self-identity by producing rhetorical alterity makes determining 'barbarianism' more complicated. This issue did not first appear during the later Roman period, but can be traced hundreds of years earlier in interactions between different ethnic groups. See the valuable study in Erich S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

[80] For the anti-invasionist view, see Michael Kulikowski, 'The Archaeology of War and the 5th c. 'Invasions'', in Sarantis and Christie (eds.), 2013, pp. 683-701.

[81] The events in Italy between 401 and 407 are outlined more clearly in Section 2.1 below.

[82] For a comprehensive assessment on and impact of the sack of 410, see Johannes Lipps *et al.*, eds., *The Sack of Rome in 410 AD: the event, its context and its impact* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2013). For the sack of 455 and Italy in the mid-fifth century see, for instance, Arther Ferrill, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: the military explanation* (New York, NY: Thames and Hudson, 1986), pp.153-155; Walter

and displacement and enslavement of Romans across the peninsula was a problem throughout this era. No emperor ruled in Italy since the 470s, and eventually the Ostrogoths took over in 493.[83] The above summary does not intend to exaggerate disaster: some communities also endured, survived and thrived. Crucially, the Christian religion persevered in these conditions, and most of Italy remained Christianised.

North Africa was the most urbanised part of the Christian West at this time and the home for numerous Christian communities.[84] At the beginning of the fifth century, North Africa observed the tumultuous developments taking place on the north side of the Mediterranean with a sense of dread. Developments in the north were of great concern in the south. The Vandals eventually arrived through Spain in 429. This entry into North Africa was followed by much bloodshed – Carthage was taken ten years later. The Vandal Kingdom that the newcomers established was to last until 533.[85] We should not forget, however, that there were other pressures in North Africa: the so-called 'Moorish' and 'Berber' tribes located further inland from the Romanised coastal strips posed a further threat and source of conflict at this time.[86] Some of the most

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Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans, A.D. 418-584: the techniques of accommodation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 58-102.

[83] Peter Heather, 'The Western Empire, 425-76', in *Cambridge Ancient History*. Vol:14: *Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, AD 425–600*, ed. by Averil Cameron *et al.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1-32; Roger Collins, 'The Western Kingdoms', in ibid., pp. 112-34, at 126-130; S. J. B. Barnish and Federico Marazzi, eds., *The Ostrogoths: from the migration period to the sixth century: an ethnographic perspective* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007).

[84] There is correlation between the two. North Africa has been, deservedly, the focus of many useful studies. For late Roman North Africa, see R. P. Duncan-Jones, 'City Population in Roman Africa', *Journal of Roman Studies* 53.1-2 (1963), pp. 85-90; David J. Mattingly and Bruce R. Hitchner, 'Roman Africa: An Archaeological Review', *Journal of Roman Studies* 85 (1995), pp. 165-213; J. E. Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997); Leslie Dossey, *Peasant and Empire in Christian North Africa* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010); Alexander Evers, *Church, Cities, and People: a study of the plebs in the church and cities of Roman Africa in late antiquity* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010); Gareth Sears, *The Cities of Roman Africa* (Stroud: History Press, 2011); Rebillard, 2012.

[85] Ludwig Schmidt, *Histoire des Vandales* (Paris: Payot, 1953); Christian Courtois, *Les Vandales et l'Afrique* (Paris: Arts et métiers graphiques, 1955); A. H. Merrills and Richard Miles, *The Vandals* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); Conant, 2012; Torsten Cumberland Jacobsen, *A History of the Vandals* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Pub., 2012).

[86] E. Fentress, 'Romanizing the Berbers', *Past & Present* 190.1 (2006), pp. 3-33; A. H. Merrills, ed., *Vandals, Romans and Berbers: new perspectives on late antique North Africa* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004). For terminology on the Berbers and Moorish peoples, which are collective terms for varied groups of peoples, see ibid., p. 5 and Yves Modéran, *Les Maures et l'Afrique romaine (IVe-VIIe siècle)* (Rome: Publications de l'École française de Rome, 2013).

violent religious conflicts also took place in Vandal Africa, when the new political and military elite began to persecute the local Catholic Christians, being themselves Arians.[87] At the same time, the economy of Vandal Africa appears to have flourished, its trade links successful and viable.

The Vandals had travelled a long way to Africa through Hispania, which for the sake of convenience I will call Spain hereafter. The least amount of evidence, be it textual or otherwise, survives from Spain – Orosius's history of the world remains our most important Spanish source for this era.[88] The peninsula was far less urbanised than other parts of the West, forming the hinterlands in Roman as well as in Christian times. Into this more rural setting invasions began from 409 onwards and were followed by 'an orgy of killing and destruction.'[89] The Suevi settled in the north- and mid-west, while the establishment of the Visigothic kingdom in 418 overtook most of the peninsula, stretching from Southern Gaul and over the Pyrenees, along mid- and eastern Spain, and in the southern half of the peninsula, the kingdom stretched from coast to coast.[90] The establishment of kingdoms did not bring stability, however: most notably the Vandals moved through this region and, most likely due to pressures within Spain, they made a move southwards to Africa. Fighting over the region continued throughout the fifth century: the 430s, 440s and 450s witnessed more campaigning, until the more secure position of the Visigoths in the peninsula from the 460s onwards enabled more stable conditions. Under Alaric II (484-507), we find prosperity in Spain once more, but at the start of the sixth century, conflict with the Franks produced another era of violent conflict.

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[87] See Merrills and Miles, 2010. For more on Arianism, see Chapter 5.

[88] For Orosius, see A. H. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 35-99; Peter Van Nuffelen, *Orosius and the Rhetoric of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[89] Blockley, 1997, p. 132. How apt to describe wartime violence as an orgy!

[90] A good overview of these developments is Roger Collins, *Early Medieval Spain: unity in diversity, 400-1000*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 6-57. See also E. A. Thompson, *The Goths in Spain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); Alberto Ferreiro, ed., *The Visigoths: studies in culture and society* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); Karen Eva Carr, *Vandals to Visigoths: rural settlement patterns in early Medieval Spain* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002); Roger Collins, *Visigothic Spain, 409-711* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004); Michael Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain and Its Cities* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

Lastly, we have Gaul, which had strong links to its neighbouring peoples prior to invasion. The Rhine had helped form a natural border between Gallo-Romans and their neighbours, establishing these areas of Northern and Eastern Gaul as places of trade. Despite this familiarity, the move of non-Roman people into Gaul in 406 was unexpected. The Alani, the Vandals, the Suevi and other peoples moved through Gaul on their way southwards. The Visigoths pushed into Gaul likewise from its Eastern side. The pact of 418 that the Visigoths made with Rome gave them control of nearly all of southern Gaul, but this did not bring peace: fighting continued in key areas, such as in and around Arles in the 430s and 450s. The 460s and 470s saw gradual Visigothic expansion northwards into central Gaul, but they had competition in this region. The Burgundian kingdom, for instance, had established itself in the first decades of the fifth century and grew in size significantly in the lead up to the sixth century.[91] Confrontation with the Franks marked a new series of conflicts a century after the initial invasions began. Political stability is hard to find here at this time, but many Gallo-Romans found a way to adjust to the new political circumstances, fluctuating as they were. Indeed, the provincials of Gaul provide examples of remarkable adaptation under new rule, but Gaul also is the location for some of the most violent battles.

The socio-political changes in the western provinces between 390 and 520 are numerous, and I have outlined only a selection that seeks to be indicative of the major developments by region. Important for us is that the Christian communities and their clerics lived in the midst of these significant violent and/or military conflicts. The authors of the materials used here – bishops, monks, priests – were particularly challenged between 390 and 520. When Alaric invaded Italy in 401, or when barbarian peoples crossed the Rhine in 406/7, the violence and disruption that followed fed into ongoing developments in moralistic discourses. The sources will go on to show that

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[91] E. A. Thompson, 'The Settlement of the Barbarians in Southern Gaul', *Journal of Roman Studies* 46.1-2 (1956), pp. 65-75; Bernard S. Bachrach, 'Another Look at Barbarian Settlement in Southern Gaul', *Traditio* 25 (1969), pp. 354-58; Raymond Van Dam, *Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985); Ralph W. Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism and Religious Controversy in Fifth Century Gaul* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1989); Ralph W. Mathisen, *Roman Aristocrats in Barbarian Gaul: strategies for survival in an age of transition* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1993); Drinkwater and Hugh, eds., 2002; Allen E. Jones, *Social Mobility in Late Antique Gaul: strategies and opportunities for the non-elite* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

these developments created an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear, influencing religious views on sexual behaviour.

The socio-political instability made many question the future of the world as they knew it. Already in the 380s Jerome exemplified the uncertainty of the times as he was reluctant to carry his *Chronicon* past the Gothic victory at Adrianople in 378: 'I am content to stop at this date … because with the barbarians still in our land, all things are uncertain.'[92] Neither was Jerome the only author content to conclude on this date.[93] This uncertainty and doubt were the markers of fifth century Christian communities, and while wartime had always caused anxiety in past societies, this uncertainty, in hindsight, does coincide with diminishing Roman control of the West that was never recovered. The anxiety expressed in the sources is teleological in some sense: a certain type of existence was coming to an end, even if much of the old remained. By the 430s already, we have a generation that would not remember a time before barbarian presence within the Western Empire: a Roman governed West only lived in the history of their parents. Yet, even for those who had been brought up to a barbarian world, the uncertainty and confusion remained.

This thesis will, therefore, examine an era of gradual cultural change. I will demonstrate that sexual behaviour was an integral part of idealised conduct imposed on Christians, and that failure to live up to these ideals was a source of friction between clergymen and lay Christians throughout this era. This friction was heightened by a turbulent socio-political and military context, and restrictions and improvements for sexual morality were discussed in this pressurised ethos. The daily reality of sex became a part of the dialogue on performative Christianity as the influence and impact of sex on communities had to be assessed. What follows is an analysis of clerical texts, examining the transformative influence of war on Christian thinking on sex, communal purity as a negotiable catalyst for sexual behaviour, and examining traditional views on sexual habits as fundamental for Christian discourses. From this thesis one will

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[92] Jerome, *Chronicon* praef. (*Die Griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte* 47.0007): 'Quo fine contentus … quoniam dibacchantibus adhuc in terra nostra barbaris incerta sunt omnia.'

[93] Ammianus Marcellinus, whose history is excluded in accordance with the chronological limits outlined in Section 1.1 above, wrote his *Res gestae* to the year 378. Ammianus advised 'abler men' to carry on from this date (31.16.9).

learn new approaches to moralistic discourses, which will emphasise that ideological discussions were firmly rooted in everyday experiences and challenges of the late antique world.

2. IMPACT OF WAR ON CHRISTIAN IDEAS OF MORALITY

This chapter argues that increased pressure caused by warfare on Christian communities affected contemporary Christian discourses on moral behaviour, lay marriages and rape as evidenced by textual sources from the West between AD 390 and AD 520. I will establish the connection between events and ideas, as this link is fundamental for an understanding on the dynamics of societal and cultural change in the late Roman era. The impact of conflicts on the political structures of Western Europe has long been recognised as profound,[94] but outside of political shifts and state formation, the warfare and military conflict that brought them about also affected the everyday existence of people and their communities, as it affected their ideas of the world. This chapter discusses how warfare affected clerical ideas of sexual behaviour and relevant rules, showing that clerics changed Christian doctrines in response to warfare. The impact of violent conflict on Christian moralistic discourse has been underappreciated in existing scholarship, and here I seek to show that conflict and select aspects of moralistic ideas are interconnected.

The influence of warfare on societies and cultures, for more modern periods, has been shown to be definitive and transformative, marking generations from each other.[95] For the late antique period, the influence of war on people, laity and clerical alike, has recently received commentary likewise: in their 2013 work on late antique warfare, Sarantis and Christie stated that 'warfare and its concomitant insecurity … prompted change on wider levels.'[96] One of these wider levels, it is argued here, is the importance of sexual morality, its performance and its definition during a time of violent crisis and heightened pressure. In such circumstances, clerical figures wanted damaged and threatened communities to become more cohesive and harmonious, and this was done by a heightened call to good *mores*, adaptation and increased inclusion, which saw some lenience on the part of Christian authorities. The texts that demonstrate these approaches can be appreciated by employing the theory of cultural trauma, which, as

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[94] See relevant summary and indicative bibliography in Section 1.5 above.

[95] For an indicative selection of such studies, see Giorgio Ausenda, ed., *Effects of War on Society*, 2nd edn (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2002).

[96] Sarantis and Christie, eds., 2013, p. xvii.

discussed in the introduction, is able to explain unexpected changes in culturally constructed norms.

The first section examines how bishops of this time discussed the interconnectedness of war and proper/improper sexual performativity. I will focus on clerics who were faced with warfare: Maximus of Turin, Augustine of Hippo, Valerian of Cimiez, Leo the Great, as well as select authors active in the second half of the fifth century. These authors have been listed in Table 2.1 below. Dates will be given to all material that can be dated with certainty – if a year is not given, the evidence falls in the 'active' column given for each author, providing rough *termini ante quem* and *termini post quem*. Appendix 1 at the end of this work gives a full table of Latin authors used.

Author	Active	Position	Genres
Maximus	390s-410s	Bishop of Turin	Sermons
Augustine	380s-430	Bishop of Hippo Regius	Sermons, letters, treatises
Valerian	fl. 430s	Bishop of Cimiez	Homilies
Leo	440-461	Bishop of Rome	Sermons, letters
Sidonius Apollinaris	450s-489	Bishop of Clermont	Letters
Gelasius I	492-496	Bishop of Rome	Letters
Avitus	490-520s	Bishop of Vienne	Letters

Table 2.1 Authors included in this chapter

The responses of these figures are examined in light of communal correction and sin. Without failure, the hardships of the times evoked calls to increased internal inspection and scrutiny by Christians and their bishops. In this discourse, chastity was often considered a key element that could ensure a Christian community's survival through an era of war. Having demonstrated the importance of appropriate sexual behaviour during times of military conflict, I will turn to two topics that both show change in response to war: lay marriages and rape.

Section 2.2 examines the effect that warfare had on rules surrounding secular marriages. In particular, I wish to show that rules for secular marriages became laxer at this time, in order to accommodate the dire circumstances created by warfare: clerics relaxed

rules to enable heightened cohesiveness and unity of the religious community. I will also consider what demographic implications contemporary warfare may have had on these communities to suggest that the negative impact of war on marriage and birth rates may further help explain changes made to marriage regulations. This is a significant insight into the way morality could be, and indeed was, constructed at this time: as a reactionary response to crisis. Rules for sanctioned behaviour, such as whether or not a second marriage was church endorsed or forbidden, and whether people who had committed accidental bigamy could be received in the church, were made in response to contemporary violent conflicts.

Finally, Section 2.3 examines a drastic change in Christian sexual ideology on rape: as a consequence of warfare, the Christian discourse on raped women was completely revised in the early fifth century. Lenience and relaxation of rules is again visible: raped women had to be reintroduced to their religious communities, rather than be ostracised as would have been the case in even very recent history, as our discussion will go on to show. This new ideology of inclusion was unprecedented. Again, I wish to show that the reality of war caused a re-narration of sexual concepts and moulded conceptions of approved moral behaviour and of people who represented this behaviour. In doing so, clerics had to re-analyse raped women and go against traditional ideas that were prevalent in late antique society. These changes in moralistic thought as a reaction to the realities warfare have not been explored by existing scholarship. As such, I aim to contribute a new and more nuanced understanding of changing conceptions of raped women at this time.

An important point for the discussion below is that, while the late Roman and early medieval world was accustomed to higher levels of violence than we can necessarily appreciate or understand, ancient warfare carried with it connotations of religious orthodoxy and legitimacy. Successful attacks on a group that perceived itself to be in divine favour jeopardised this assumption, laying doubt on if they were worshipping the right God or the right strand of faith. Such assumptions further evoked a sense of existential and religious crisis, alongside the military one. We see this in pagan religions as indeed we see this in Christian contexts likewise – after all, God had actively aided Constantine the Great to military victory a hundred years earlier, and scripture likewise

had established that the Christian God was capable of violent rebuke and deadly correction. The Romano-barbarian conflicts of this era, therefore, were perceived in terms of religious legitimacy, and this is significant throughout the discussion that follows. In a context of military conflict, pious behaviour became more revered, and thus Christian rules on sexual conduct began to become defined under these circumstances. However, these new definitions were not always necessarily *stricter* rules as is often the assumption with 'Christianisation', but rather they could be accommodating and forgiving, reflecting the era of crisis from which they stemmed.

2.1 EXPECTATIONS OF MORALITY IN WARTIME

Texts written between 390 and 520 have a contextual background of shifting socio-political balances, and, in many regions, these shifts took the form of sacks, raids, battles and sieges. It has recently been questioned if describing these events as 'invasions' is appropriate as understanding these conflicts as intraprovincial civil wars is perhaps more helpful.[97] How 'barbarian' the warfare truly was, however, is not the focus of the work presented here, but rather we examine how the fighting that broke out in various parts of the West found its way to Christian writers' orations and treatises and, indeed, their approaches to their congregations. While my concern is not to discuss the 'barbarianism' found in the sources, many texts identify this warfare as having had a barbarian element to it as the discussion below demonstrates.[98]

Recently, much work has been done on late antique preaching and sermons with a growing appreciation of sermons as a way to communicate ideas and ideologies.[99] Jaclyn Maxwell has successfully shown that sermon-giving and sermon-receiving was an interactive dialogue, where both recipient and orator influenced one another.[100] Late antique cultures were oral ones, and as such public speaking formed an integral part of

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[97] Kulikowski, 2013, especially pp. 684-685.

[98] One should not neglect the need to separate an 'us' versus 'them' in a zone with ongoing hostility, even in a situation where parts of 'them' are familiar to or partly composed of the local populace.

[99] John Chrysostom, in particular, has been the subject of several such key studies. See Maxwell, 2006; Sandwell, 2007; Isabella Sandwell, 'A Milky Text Suitable for Children: The Significance of John Chrysostom's Preaching on Genesis 1:1 for Fourth Century Audiences', in *Delivering the Word: preaching and exegesis in the western Christian tradition*, ed. by William John Lyons and Isabella Sandwell (Sheffield: Equinox, 2012), pp. 80-98.

[100] Maxwell, 2006, pp. 164-168.

exchange of ideas. As such, preaching was a powerful tool, one which, Éric Rebillard has argued, preachers used to change the views and habits of the people present.[101] Identifying those who *were* present, however, has posed a problem: Ramsay MacMullen has argued that most congregational audiences composed of the well-educated elite, leaving little room for the *plebs* and the lowborn, but Philip Rousseau has shown this to be a too negative interpretation and that sermons, most likely, had a diverse group of listeners from the local religious community.[102] This active nature of preaching and its spectrum of listeners is central here: sermons were powerful tools of communication to the local community, and, through this medium, clerics were able to articulate ideas of behaviour, norms, and changes to these norms as they saw fit. Morality and warfare were discussed in this context.

For this section, I have chosen to examine sources chronologically, to keep in view the chronological development of military movements and consolidation of power. Under examination are Maximus of Turin, Augustine of Hippo, Valerian of Cimiez, Leo the Great, and select key figures of the second half of the fifth century, such as Sidonius Apollinaris. This is a vast, if not an overwhelming, corpus – yet only select sermons, letters and homilies are examined, to focus this work on violent conflict and its perceived links with moral behaviour solely. While it cannot be said that a single author represents the views and ideas of his respective region or era collectively, it is always a representation of what one author in that context thought – and an author who actively communicated these ideas as a religious leader of his locality, in charge of the religious well-being of the Christian community there. Our sources, therefore, demonstrate thoughts that were shared with multitudes, through being read out or circulated. Clerics addressed contemporary warfare through a Christian understanding, to guide, explain and rebuke, and, in this context, we see sexual sinning become interlaced with war.

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[101] Éric Rebillard, 'Interaction Between the Preacher and his Audience: the case-study of Augustine's preaching on death', *Studia Patristica* 31 (1997), pp. 86-96; reprinted in Éric Rebillard, *Transformations of Religious Practices in Late Antiquity* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013). See Maxwell, 2006, pp. 172-175, for similar conclusions.

[102] Ramsay MacMullen, 'The Preacher's Audience (AD 350-400)', *Journal of Theological Studies* 40.2 (1989), pp. 503-11. Reactions include Wendy Mayer, 'John Chrysostom: Extraordinary Preacher, Ordinary Audience', in Cunningham and Allen, eds., 1998, pp. 105-37 and Philip Rousseau, 'The Preacher's Audience: a More Optimistic View', in *Ancient History in a Modern University*, ed. by T. W. Hillard and E. A. Judge (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), pp. 391-400.

Where possible, therefore, I assess the value given to chastity and appropriate sexual behaviour in the local context.

MAXIMUS OF TURIN

Maximus of Turin has attracted notable scholarly attention only in the past fifty or so years, but his sermons are extensive on contemporary warfare.[103] Little of Maximus's life is known, but his sermons are usually dated between 390 and 410, when frequent military campaigns disrupted and damaged the communities of Northern Italy. The details given in his sermons are not precise enough for pinpointing exact years for when they were preached, however.[104] Nevertheless, his sermons indicate that Turin was the site of much pillaging and several raids at this time, suggesting an extensive breakdown of civic order and disturbances to daily life in 390s/400s Turin and its surrounding regions. A reconstruction of battles and sieges as detailed by Kulikowski in 2007 is shown in Map 2.1 below.[105]

Based on the movements of Gothic armies shown on the map, one is inclined to date Maximus's sermons dealing with war to the first decade of the fifth century, in accordance with the Gothic king Alaric's invasion of Italy in 401 and king Radagaisus's invasion of 405. In 402, Alaric lay siege on Milan and later the same year fought the Roman general Stilicho in Pollentia, some thirty miles south of Turin, after having besieged the emperor Honorius in the town of Asti, likewise thirty miles from Turin itself.[106] Both Pollentia and Asti had direct roads to nearby Turin. Radagaisus's war

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[103] The most useful work is Andreas Merkt, *Maximus I. von Turin: die Verkündigung eines Bischofs der frühen Reichskirche im zeitgeschichtlichen, gesellschaftlichen und liturgischen Kontext* (Leiden: Brill, 1997). See also Marietta Cashen Conroy, 'Imagery in the *Sermones* of Maximus, Bishop of Turin' (Catholic University of America Press, 1965); C.E. Chaffin, 'Saint Maximus of Turin and the Church in North Italy: A Sociological Study in Evangelism and Catechesis' (University of Oxford, 1970).

[104] The sermons are in translation in Boniface Ramsey, ed., The Sermons of St. Maximus of Turin (New York, NY: Newman Press, 1989). The collection is based on CCSL 23, which contains 119 sermons as opposed to PL 57 that contains over two hundred. Out of the 119 sermons in CCSL 23, 106 are considered authentic; see ibid., p. 5. One of Maximus's sermons has been given the more precise date of 408 in Otto Maenchen-Helfen, 'The Date of Maximus of Turin's Sermo XVIII', Vigiliae Christianae 18.2 (1964), pp. 114-15. Chaffin, 1970, argues that the sermons were written between 399 and 408, pp. 98-99.

[105] Michael Kulikowski, *Rome's Gothic Wars from the Third Century to Alaric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 170-173.

[106] See Merkt, 1997, pp. 41-42, who also supports the dating of these sermons to 401 in the earliest cases and to 412 in the latest. For Alaric's campaign, Merkt notes that Alaric was 'noch einen Tagesritt von Turin' – the tension in the city must have been palpable as locals waited to find out which way Alaric went next.

campaign, on the other hand, was 'devastating, and was recalled with horror.'[107] It has recently been argued that Radagaisus's invasion was much more disastrous than historians have given it credit for.[108] Maximus is, therefore, a revealing response to Gothic invasion and extensive, even if sporadic, Gothic-Roman warfare.
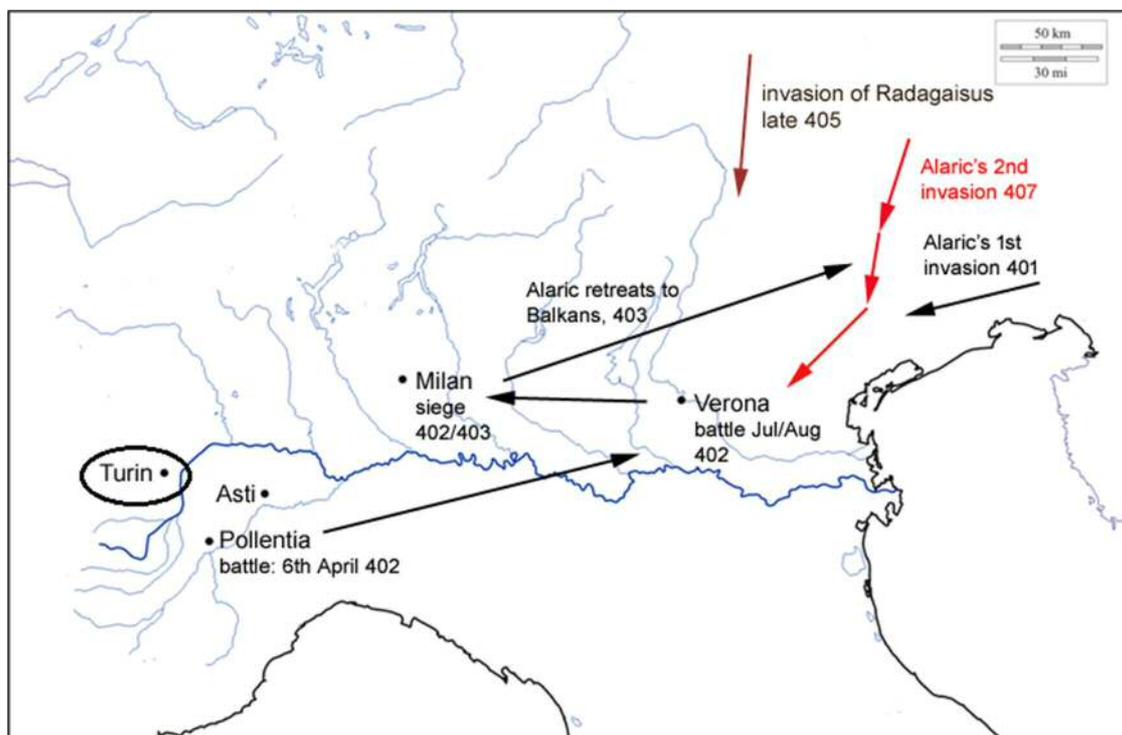
Map 2.1 Alaric and Radagaisus in North Italy, AD 401-407

It is not surprising that Maximus's preaching had to address these continuous violent conflicts in the region as well as the consequences of this unrest. In Sermon 18, he accuses Christians of stealing from each other in the wake of Gothic raids – indeed, in the aftermath of such events it was easy to snatch property that did not belong to the thief. 'An innocent rustic groans over his lost bullock, and you get ready to cultivate your fields with it, thinking that you can make a profit from others' groans,' Maximus criticises.[109] Further problems were caused by locals fleeing Turin in hopes of a better life in exile, and also by soldiers in Turin who plundered properties and extorted

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[107] Merrills and Miles, 2010, p. 34.

[108] Jeroen W. P. Wijnendaele, 'Stilicho, Radagaisus, and the So-Called Battle of Faesulae (406 CE)', *Journal of Late Antiquity* 9.1 (2016), pp. 267-84.

[109] Maximus, *Serm.* 18.2 (CCSL 23.0068): 'innocens rusticus perditum ingemescit iuuencum, et tu cum eo rus tuum excolere disponis, et fructus te putas posse capere de gemitibus alienis.'

widows to pay them for protection.[110] These were events taking place amidst societal breakdown.

Seen in this context, Maximus has been credited as 'rallying local opposition' against the Gothic forces, yet this praise, if intended as such, is misplaced.[111] Maximus's reaction to warfare was, admittedly in some ways, a call to action – but not physical, material or violent action. Instead, Maximus advocated for spiritual action, envisioning the Christian soul as the true battlefield that his congregation should be focused on:

> The city can be secured only if the gate of righteousness in ourselves is first made secure; otherwise it is of no help to secure the wall with bulwarks while rousing God's anger with sins. The one is built of iron, stones and spikes; let the other be armed with mercy, innocence, and chastity. The one is guarded with a large number of spears; let the other be defended with frequent prayers.[112]

Here Maximus evokes imagery of the inner Christian as a spiritual city that could be manned against enemies, alluding to Psalm 118's 'gates of righteousness' (118:19). Tellingly, this psalm is one of uproarious victory for the chosen people of God:

> Out of my distress I called on the Lord;
> the Lord answered me and set me in a broad place.
> With the Lord on my side I do not fear.
> What can mortals do to me?
> The Lord is on my side to help me;
> I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.
> It is better to take refuge in the Lord
> than to put confidence in mortals. (Ps. 118:5-8)

This notion that malevolent mortals (barbarians) cannot hurt men of God (Maximus's congregation) is a notion that Maximus echoes elsewhere in his wartime sermons. Sermon 83 argues that those who feared God could not fear the barbarians as a dutiful fear of God enabled God's favour, which in turn would translate to eventual victory over barbarians – this is exactly the idea that the psalm above discusses.[113] Maximus

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[110] Maximus, *Serm.* 82.1-2; 26.1-2.

[111] David Hunt, 'The Church as a Public Institution', in *CAH* 13, pp. 238-76, at p. 270.

[112] Maximus, *Serm.* 85.2 (CCSL 23.0348-349): 'Tunc autem civitatis porta munita esse poterit, si prius in nobis porta iustitiae muniatur; – ceterum nihil prodest muros munire propugnaculis et deum provocare peccatis. Illa enim construitur ferro saxis et sudibus, haec armetur misericordia innocentia castitate; illa telorum multitudine custoditur, haec orationum frequentia defendatur.'

[113] Maximus, *Serm.* 83 (CCSL 23.339-341).

alluded to this scripture to encourage his congregation, arguing that they were on the victorious side of the warfare that was taking place: active virtue had active results.

However, Maximus did not merely wish to discuss scripture: in the context of his preaching, he also discussed the gates of Turin itself. Christian virtue, he argued, could overcome Gothic troops – indeed, it was a prerequisite for overcoming them, and as such the starting point for combatting enemies. The idea that piety could overcome the enemy was popular amongst the clerics in areas of Northern Italy affected by warfare in the first decade of the fifth century,[114] and when we read these sermons in a context of fear and uncertainty, we see Maximus attempting to manage and control fears by reinforcing people's faith in God. In this, proper piousness and good moral behaviour were key. It is not therefore surprising that Maximus's sermons have been described as attempts to change the behaviour of his congregation, the moral standards of which Maximus perceived to be too low.[115] Military crisis only exposed how low they truly were.

In his fight against the barbarians, therefore, Maximus focuses on the active performance of Christian virtues: mercy, innocence and, notably, chastity. A focus on these was important as they could overdo anything done by secular weaponry:

> Fasting is a surer protection than a rampart, mercy saves more easily than pillage, and prayer wounds from a greater distance than an arrow, for an arrow only strikes the person of the adversary at close range, while a prayer even wounds an enemy who is far away.[116]

Here, not only was Maximus echoing scriptural ideas of a militant God or a militarily active Christian through virtue, but he also echoed ideas of Roman religious piety in

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[114] For instance, Chromatius of Aquileia had Eusebius's *Historia Ecclesiastica* translated to Latin so that its examples could encourage local Christians. However, bearing in mind levels of literacy at this time and the time it would take to translate *HE* to Latin, this method would not have been as accessible or immediate as a form of encouragement and advice as Maximus's weekly sermons. For Chromatius, see Mark Humphries, *Communities of the Blessed: social environment and religious change in Northern Italy, AD 200-400* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 216.

[115] Chaffin, 1970, p. 391.

[116] Maximus, *Serm.* 83.1: 'Ieiunium enim melius quam murus tuetur, misericordia facilius liberat quam rapina, oratio longius vulnerat quam sagitta. Sagitta enim nonnisi proxime conspectum percutit adversarium, oratio autem etiam longe positum vulnerat inimicum.'

battling one's enemy.[117] Of great pagan thinkers, Cicero had explored the idea that *pietas* translated into divine favour in battle, thus accounting for Roman military victories – this notion was also echoed by imperial laws in the mid-fourth century.[118] A link existed between religion and military action, be it victory or loss. Maximus only had the latter of the two, and in rationalising defeat, the sinfulness of Christians became central to his argumentation.

Maximus's war-focused sermons – sermons 18, 26, 72, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86 – show consideration to the role of sexual morality in this militarily aggressive context, but, admittedly, this is a brief consideration. In numerous other sermons, we see Maximus express concerns over sexual affairs such as adultery, concubinage, and prostitution, and as such, we know that these vices were common in Turin and that Maximus found these habits problematic.[119] Furthermore, while in early Christian writings it is common to find a certain degree of disappointment in one's congregation, Maximus certainly was not happy with his, rebuking them frequently and complaining that no one listened to his words of advice or corrected their sinful ways.[120] He also made the point that wars preceded the second coming and that the end of the world was imminent.[121] This eschatological stance is not an overriding approach, however, and Maximus's sermons do not carry a sense of any kind of universal doom – rather his focus is much more local and even confident in victory, if only they all adhered to God's wishes more. This active nature of sin and vice in religious thought will be explored in length in Chapter 3, but scriptural backing on divine punishment as well as late antique cultural traditions on

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[117] See Maijastina Kahlos, 'Divine Wrath and Divine Favour: Transformations in Roman Thought Pattern in Late Antiquity', in *Der Fall Roms und seine Wiederauferstehungen in Antike und Mittealter*, ed. by Karla Pollmann and Henriette Harich-Schwarzbauer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), pp. 177-93.

[118] Cicero, *De Nat.* 2.7-8, 3.94; *C.Th.* 16.2.16.

[119] For Maximus's comments on these topics, see Sections 3.2 and 4.1 below.

[120] Suggestive of Maximus's frustrated efforts are: 'When I see that, despite so many warnings of mine, you have made no progress, my labour gives me reason not to rejoice but to blush' (*Serm.* 30.1); 'I have often thought to myself, brethren, that I should deprive you of the Sunday sermon and not dispense so frequently the sacraments of the heavenly words; for it is of no profit to offer food to someone who refuses it and to proffer a drink to someone who is not thirsty' (*Serm.* 42.1); 'I am amazed that you have made no progress for all my admonitions' (*Serm.* 79.1); 'I see that the clerics are more negligent than you' (*Serm.* 79.2); 'It upsets me that these same sermons of mine charm your ears and do not penetrate your hearts; they warm you outwardly but do not nourish you inwardly, because if they moved your inmost being your zeal would in fact anticipate my sermon' (*Serm.* 91.1).

[121] Maximus, *Serm.* 91.

the active nature of god(s) – pagan or Christian – supported a link between morality and warfare.

The frequency of rebukes does not speak of the utter depravity of Maximus's congregation, but rather of a society under immense pressure. Warfare has been identified as the most fully developed theme in his sermons, again implying the extent to which Maximus was concerned with the matter.[122] Maximus's envisioned role in this situation was as the corrector of sins who could stop the ongoing warfare through correction. In this way, Maximus's flock were the masters of their own fate: they had to choose between obeying and disobeying God. Furthermore, wartime sanctioned more bad behaviour than was usual in peacetime as the mentions of plundering, blackmailing and stealing show – hence Maximus's despair: he called for less sinning and was rewarded with not a decrease, but an increase. Appropriate Christian performativity was thus key in a military crisis: mercy was crucial and abstinence key – and we should note that Maximus's call to prayer, fasting and church attendance was enjoined with abstinence: this included abstaining from sexual intercourse. Such austere measures were familiar from Lent, but Maximus called for his congregation to adhere to these measures when crisis was upon them. Although he does not explicitly state so, he asked for the congregation to refrain from sex, too.

Yet in these war-focused sermons where pious behaviour is central, sex does not take priority, although Maximus lists chastity as an expectation of good, Christian living that can counterweigh the threat of barbarians. When we compare this to Maximus's contemporaries, we will see that other clerics of this era made more of chaste behaviour in a context of warfare. One may, therefore, postulate whether discussing sexual behaviour as a cause of war and chastity as a cure became more common as the fifth century progressed. Nevertheless, the sermons that survive from Turin are suggestive of a Christian community living in a state of chaos in which locals turned against one another in ensuring their own survival, and one in which the local bishop struggled to control his flock, whilst forcefully attempting to correct their behaviour.

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[122] Conroy, 1965, p. 224. While Conroy acknowledges moral behaviour to be highly significant for Maximus, she fails to link or discuss it in conjunction with contemporary warfare. I hope to have corrected this oversight.

So far, we have not seen much of sexual morality in explicit terms. Maximus, however, has been discussed at length as he is the most explicit example of a wartime sermonist that we find in western sources at this time. He provides a valuable contrast to other writers, especially as clerics after him emphasised the role of sex and chastity more than he did. Maximus further demonstrates how he envisioned a military conflict to invite inner correction amongst lay Christians – a theme that is to be repeated and echoed. Finally, on a note of sexual habits, Maximus's congregation would have known that calls for fasting and abstinence excluded sexual relations and would have seen, in Maximus's spiritual call to arms, also a call to refrain from sexual intercourse while these measures in managing a crisis were being employed. Therefore, while sex remains on the fringes of Maximus's wartime sermons, Maximus envisioned a more austere future that included a reduced sexual licence. Other clerics, however, considered sexual *mores* to be more central to contemporary warfare, and I will now turn to such figures.

AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

A more famous figure to incorporate warfare into his works was Augustine, who died in 430 while Hippo was under siege by the Vandals and who, during the final stages of his life, witnessed the advancement of Vandals in Africa.[123] Prior to these events, Augustine had often commented on contemporary conflicts and their relationship with the Christian faith: *De civitate Dei*, inspired by the sack of Rome by Alaric's men in 410, is the most notable example, while numerous letters and sermons take into account the troubled times. Our focus here will be the perception and rationalisation of war in Augustine in relation to moral/immoral behaviour. Such a task is difficult: the estimated number of sermons delivered by Augustine ranges between four and eight thousand with some 950 sermons surviving, and of those around 565 are considered authentic – perhaps obviously, I will only discuss a few of these. A problem here, however, is dating: in order to argue that Augustine's sermons reflect some pressure felt by contemporary conflict, being able to link a sermon with such conflicts is essential. Augustine's sermons, however, are often hard to date to specific years – mostly we can only suggest *termini ante quem* and *termini post quem*, leaving a wide span of years on

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[123] For the final stages of his life, see Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: a biography* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 408-433.

either side.[124] I will keep these limitations of dating in mind, focusing on the evidence which we have been able to link with contemporary conflicts more confidently.

Augustine as a preacher, and the contents of his sermons, have recently gained renewed attention: the discoveries of the Dolbeau sermons and the Erfurt sermons have given impetus to the study of Augustinian sermon-giving.[125] Some consideration to his sermons was given before these discoveries, too: Roy Deferrari already examined Augustine's sermons in the 1920s, determining that Augustine was a lively preacher, who interacted with his congregation during sermons, moulding the content in response to the reactions of his listeners.[126] Augustine wanted to make his points explicit through repetition and through highlighting important sections by calls to pay close attention or silence from the lively flock gathered.[127] In pastoral terms, therefore, Augustine was conscientious, diligent, and actively engaged with the local community. In this context, he likewise discussed warfare.

Firstly, I wish to briefly discuss Augustine's commentary on war after the 406 advancement of barbarians into Gaul and Spain, and the Gothic campaigns in Italy culminating in the sack of Rome in 410. Augustine perceived these events in moralistic terms. Most illustrative of this is not a sermon, but rather *Ep.* 111, written to clergyman Victorianus. In this letter, written in 409, Augustine discusses his perception of horrors spreading throughout the Western Empire:

> The whole world, indeed, is afflicted with such portentous misfortunes, that there is scarcely any place where such things as you describe are not being committed and complained of. … I suppose, moreover, that the outrages which the [barbarians] have perpetrated in the regions of Italy and Gaul are known to you also; and now similar events begin to be announced to us

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[124] On the problems of dating Augustine's sermons, see Hubertus Rudolf Drobner, 'The Chronology of St. Augustine's *Sermones ad populum* II: Sermons 5 to 8', *Augustinian Studies* 34 (2003), pp. 49-66.

[125] See for instance William Harmless, 'The Voice and the Word: Augustine's catechumenate in light of the Dolbeau Sermons', *Augustinian Studies* 35 (2004), pp. 17-42; Stanley P. Rosenberg, 'Beside Books: Approaching Augustine's Sermons in the Oral and Textual Cultures of Late Antiquity', in *Tractio Scripturarum: Philological, Exegetical, Rhetorical and Theological Studies on Augustine's Sermons*, ed. by Anthony Dupont and others (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), pp. 405-42.

[126] Roy J. Deferrari, 'St. Augustine's Method of Composing and Delivering Sermons', *The American Journal of Philology* 43.3 (1922), pp. 193-219.

[127] Ibid., pp. 206-7.

from many provinces of Spain, which for long seemed exempt from these evils.[128]

Augustine's response to Victorianus and this fear of war is that Donatists in Africa are as evil as, if not worse than, barbarians.[129] However, Augustine then moves on to record the disbelief that many felt when the western provinces came under attack – if barbarians were attacking because Christians were sinful, why were even the presumably sinless clergy and holy virgins slaughtered or snatched away? Augustine moved on to cite and summarise the Book of Daniel in length, recounting Daniel's suffering at the hand of enemies and his eventual escape thanks to God, before he answers the question that he set. Daniel was saved because his miraculous salvation sought to convince the oppressing king of God's power. In the fifth century context, however, God did not need to convert kings and as such God was not intervening or saving Christians in 409. 'What matters it whether it is by sickness or by sword that they have been set free from the body?' Augustine asked of Christians killed by barbarians. 'The Lord is careful as to the character with which his servants go from this world.'[130]

Augustine attempted to bring reason into what, for many, was mindless slaughter, not only of lay Christians, but clergy and holy virgins too. However, God was aware and involved in current events, and no Christian was killed without it being God's design. This sought to comfort, but Augustine's reasoning is problematic. Using Daniel to argue that Daniel was saved to convert kings, one cannot help but wonder why God did not wish to perform miraculous interventions in 409 in order to convert Arians and pagans, which most of the barbarians were. *Ep.* 111 is nevertheless significant as it shows the fear and anxiety that the murder of and attacks on Christians – and especially clerics and holy virgins – was causing in the western provinces at the beginning of the fifth century.

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[128] Augustine, *Ep.* 111.1 (CSEL 34:2.0643): 'Totus quippe mundus tantis affligitur cladibus, ut paene pars nulla terrarum sit, ubi non talia, qualia scripsisti, committantur atque plangantur. … Iam vero quae modo in regionibus Italiae, quae in Galliis nefaria perpetrata sint, etiam vos latere non arbitror; de Hispanis quoque tot provinciis, quae ab his malis diu videbantur intactae, coeperunt iam talia nuntiari.'

[129] Augustine, *Ep.* 111.1.

[130] Ibid., 111.6 (CSEL 34:2.0653): 'quales ad se exeant, deus adtendit in servis suis.'

This letter was composed in 409, but the sack of Rome in 410 refuelled Augustine's thinking on contemporary warfare. His preaching on the sack of Rome has received individual attention, and as such I will not go into great detail here, but rather will comment on the moralising aspects of this discourse.[131] Importantly, Theodore De Bruyn has argued that Augustine's preaching on the sack of Rome attempted 'to deal with the stresses that emerged in the aftermath of the sack.' It is my interpretation that these 'stresses' were traumas inflicted upon the idealised concept of Rome and the divine protection enjoyed by God's people. Furthermore, W. H. C. Frend has argued that Augustine was able to discuss the sack, and barbarian warfare in general, with a sense of detachment as the ongoing warfare had not affected Augustine directly, and indeed it would be another twenty years before the Vandals would reach North Africa.[132] Augustine's sense of detachment is visible in *Ep.* 111, too.

One of the responses to crisis that Augustine puts forth around this time is that crisis separates the truly devout from those less so. Sermon 113A, delivered at Bizerta in the direct aftermath of the 410 sack, recorded that people were now complaining about atrocities that happened in a Christian world.[133] In response, Augustine painted a picture of the congregation as an olive press, and the pressure felt by recent events was like the pressure that separates the oil and the dregs: separating the pious from the less pious.[134] Augustine had used the same imagery in *Ep.* 111 discussed above, when addressing barbarian movements elsewhere in the West.[135] Some of this detachment, however, may have diminished as barbarians got closer to Augustine.

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[131] The sermons on the sack of Rome are *Serm.* 15A = 21 (CCSL 41.0202-0211); *Serm.* 25 (CCSL 41.0334-0339); *Serm.* 33A = 23 (CCSL 41.0417-0422); *Serm.* 81 (PL 38.0499-506); *Serm.* 105 (PL 38.0618-0625); *Serm.* 113A = 24 (*Miscellanea Agostiniana* 1.0141-0155); *Serm.* 296 (*Miscellanea Agostiniana* 1.0401-0412); and *De excidio Urbis Romae sermo* (CCSL 46.0243-0262), translated in Marie Vianney O'Reilly, ed., *De excidio urbis Romae sermo: a critical text and translation with introduction and commentary* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1955). See the studies by Rudolf Arbesmann, 'The Idea of Rome in the Sermons of St. Augustine', *Augustiniana* 4 (1954), pp. 305-24; Theodore Sybren De Bruyn, 'Ambivalence Within a "Totalizing Discourse": Augustine's Sermons on the Sack of Rome', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1.4 (1993), pp. 405-21.

[132] Frend, 1994. Reprinted in W. H. C. Frend, *Orthodoxy, Paganism and Dissent in the Early Christian Centuries* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

[133] This was exactly the kind of thinking that Orosius of Braga sought to correct as will be discussed in Section 2.3 below. See also Salvian in Chapter 5.

[134] Augustine, *Serm.* 113A.11.

[135] Augustine, *Ep.* 111.2.

Sermon 344, tentatively dated to 428 and preached most likely at Hippo if the date is correct, captures some of the sense of dread that barbarians and fear of death had invoked in North Africa at a later stage. The sermon emphasised that one should love God above all else, including one's family and kin, and then moves onto explain that there are two deaths: the one in this world, and a second death for those who do not ascend to heaven when we are resurrected, that is the unbelievers who die again.[136] Christians should not therefore fear the first death in this world, but the second death that may follow God's final judgement. He then discusses barbarians: 'You can, perhaps, ransom yourself from the barbarians and so save yourself from being killed.'[137] This behaviour, however, is pointless as one never knows when death comes. His congregation should not be so attached to this life that they pay barbarians money to save themselves.

Augustine glorified the second death over the first: 'What ransomed you from the barbarians was your silver, what redeemed you from the first deaths was your money; what has ransomed you from the second death is the blood of your Lord.'[138] Religious teaching aside, the sermon is suggestive of kidnapping and ransoming as a common interaction between barbarians and Christians. If the sermon is dated to 428, Augustine may be referring to Moorish tribes in North Africa – the Vandals would not arrive there until the following year. Even in this context, however, Augustine records fear of death and criticises what, to him, are extreme measures to prevent death at the hands of barbarians. 'I know, you love being alive, you don't want to die,' he conceded, but this rather natural wish to stay alive is dressed in negative terms.[139] This sermon attests to fear of death as felt by North Africans in relation to barbarian presence and aggression. If preached in 428, Augustine would have been around seventy-four years of age and rather infirm himself. Such words of not fearing death coming from a man who, clearly, could not be too far from his own may have been impressive in a church setting.

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[136] Augustine, *Serm.* 344.3-4.

[137] Ibid., 344.4 (PL 39.1514): 'Redimis te forte a barbaris, ne occidaris.'

[138] Ibid.: 'Redemit te a barbaris argentum tuum, redemit te a prima morte pecunia tua; redemit te a secunda morte sanguis Domini tui.'

[139] Ibid.: 'Scio, vivere amas, mori non vis.'

There are further instances of war in Augustine's works. One of his newly discovered sermons, Erfurt 1 (= s. 282), employs, in a context of martyrdom, militant language and performative Christianity as a type of battle that we are familiar with from Maximus's preaching. Augustine says: 'With these weapons the army of our king is undefeated, girded with these weapons the soldiers of Christ triumphed.'[140] Augustine romanticises a past age of martyrdom in North Africa, but the militant language links the ideology of war with Christian piousness. As martyrs of old fearlessly faced death and went into battle armed by God, so should his own congregation. The sermon, preached in Carthage on the feast day of Perpetua and Felicity, cannot unfortunately be fixed to an exact year – however, it is likely to have evoked thoughts of contemporary troubles from the audience.

It is important to include Augustine's remarks on war here as Augustine will feature throughout this thesis. However, we must conclude that for the most part Augustine was an observer of warfare: he did not come into contact with it directly until the very end of his life, at which point he did not have to endure it for long. This is a distinct contrast to Maximus, whose time as bishop was marked by numerous war campaigns in his region, and it will be in contrast to figures we will examine shortly, such as Valerian of Cimiez, Leo the Great, Quodvultdeus of Carthage, Sidonius Apollinaris, and so forth. Indeed, W. H. C. Frend has argued that Augustine's unconcerned response to the violence between 406 and after 410 stemmed from his position as an outsider, who was not affected by this violence personally.[141] Hippo was famously under siege by Vandals when Augustine died in 430, yet we do not know what Augustine's views on war and its relation to his contemporaries were in these final stages of his life. Indeed, one wonders if he would have approached warfare differently when it at last directly affected him and his congregation – such a shift in dynamics would have been likely.

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[140] Augustine, *Serm.* 282.3: 'His armis exercitus nostri regis invictus est, his armis accincti milites Christi … triumpharunt.' Translation own. Text in Isabella Schiller *et al.*, 'Sechs neue Augustinuspredigten. Teil 1 mit Edition dreier Sermones Teil 1 mit Edition dreier Sermones', *Wiener Studien* 121 (2008), pp. 227-84.

[141] Frend, 1994.

We now turn to Valerian of Cimiez, a rather obscure figure, but whose experience of war was intricately mixed with his ideas of sex and chastity. Again, we will see how an experience of war and violence caused a heightened demand for upright moral behaviour by clerical figures: uncertainty and trauma mixed to create a new rhetoric of salvation, in which sexual behaviour played a central role.

VALERIAN OF CIMIEZ

Cimiez today is a suburb of Nice in the French Riviera, but in the first century AD, Cimiez (Cemenelum) was a key settlement of Alpis Maritimae: it was the administrative centre of the region with its own amphitheatre, circus and baths, situated along the Via Aurelia.[142] A man named Pontius was martyred there in 258 and is indicative of a Christian community there from, at least, mid-third century.[143] It is probable that Cimiez became a bishopric in the late fourth century, when the baptistery was built, but these are the only scraps of information we have of the early stages of Christian communities there. This changes in the first half of the fifth century when Valerian served as bishop there in the 430s and 440s.[144] Only a few of Valerian's writings survive, their scarcity perhaps explaining why they have not received much scholarly attention.[145] However, as a source on morality during wartime, they are invaluable and revealing. Since 418, Cimiez had been at the border of the Visigothic kingdom of Toulouse, but the region was far from peacetime. Military conflicts were still taking place in the region, especially around the power centres of Arles and Narbonne.[146] Valerian, as a bishop situated near this turbulent frontier and as the bishop of a city crucially located on the main Roman road through the region, had to deal with

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[142] Georgette Laguerre, *Fouilles de Cemenelum: Inscriptions antiques de Nice-Cimiez (Cemenelum, Ager Cemenelensis)* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1975).

[143] George E. Ganss, ed., *Saint Peter Chrysologus: Selected sermons; and Saint Valerian: Homilies* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1965), p. 291.

[144] For the limited biographical details, see *PCBE* 4.2, Valerianus 3, pp. 1905-1908, and Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*. Vol. 4: *the Golden Age of Latin patristic literature from the Council of Nicea to the Council of Chalcedon* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1986), pp. 543-544.

[145] His surviving homilies and one letter have been collected in PL 52 and translated in Ganss, ed., 1965. Modern studies on Valerian are practically non-existent: only one French scholar, Jean-Pierre Weiss, has taken in-depth interest. See Jean-Pierre Weiss, *La personnalité de Valérien de Cimiez* (Paris: Lettres modernes, 1970).

[146] Frank Riess, *Narbonne and Its Territory in Late Antiquity: from the Visigoths to the Arabs* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 57-58.

violence, kidnappings and a fractured local community that emerged in response to the realities of warfare.

Twenty homilies by Valerian survive, and while it is impossible to say how many have been lost, out of these twenty a significant number – roughly a third – discuss contemporary warfare and other disturbances.[147] Even writings that initially seem more generic end up discussing contemporary pressures, such as Homily 7 on the virtue of mercy, which at the very end of the sermon turns into a collection for ransoms. Ransoming kidnapped locals is a situation that is not unheard of – this was a popular way of amassing military funds in Gaul all the way through to the sixth century.[148] The culprits behind the kidnappings are unnamed, although barbarians and pirates have both been suggested.[149] Comments made by Valerian such as these are demonstrative of a community that was enduring hardships and had its communal infrastructure damaged by ongoing conflicts. Valerian also preached on mercy and touched on topics of humility and honesty, all of which he revered.[150] Yet, the fear and anxiety that war and its by-products placed on the local populace is demonstrated by Valerian's frequent discussion of death.

A fifth of Valerian's homilies, 15 to 18, discuss martyrdom and the need to be ready to die for one's faith. As a recurring theme, death was clearly on the mind of the bishop – and on the minds of his flock. Homily 17 in particular is important to the current study. The homily focuses on praising early Christian saints for having been crowned with martyrdom and for having given up this life to attain holy glory. Sermons recalling the deaths of martyr saints were a liturgical norm at this time, especially for feast days, but Valerian's homily links violence of the past with contemporary conflict. Valerian points out that Jesus was the first martyr and describes how Jesus died as a part of 'heavenly

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[147] These are homilies 7, 9, 10, 15-18.

[148] See the discussion in William Klingshirn, 'Charity and Power: Caesarius of Arles and the Ransoming of Captives in Sub-Roman Gaul', *Journal of Roman Studies* 75 (1985), pp. 183-203.

[149] Ganss, ed., 1965, p. 350, n. 17. However, it seems likelier that warring factions settled in the area were to blame as Valerian states in *Hom.* 9.4.7: 'What is worse, we often see a group of captives wandering about with bodies scarcely clad.' cf. Peter Chrysologus, *Serm.* 103.7 on captives in Ravenna around the same time.

[150] See *Hom.* 8 on mercy and *Hom.* 14 on humility.

warfare.'[151] The language of the homily is graphic with mentions of blood, mangled bodies and wounds. Not only does he evoke the story of Jesus's crucifixion, but he also provides the audience a parallel for violence in their own world: 'May [Jesus] show us how to expose our breast in this warfare, and sustain every onset of injury.'[152] Valerian moves from heavenly warfare to secular warfare, and to the real threat of living in 430s/440s Southern Gaul. Valerian's audience was supposed to take comfort in the message of holy martyrdom – whether they did or not, the message reflects fear and terror within the community.

Valerian's war imagery, however, goes further, and the end of the homily focuses on desire, lust and sex. 'The desire of your eyes is constantly rapping at our doors,' he complains.[153] This is a battle of virtues versus vices – we have moved from heavenly warfare amongst Jesus and early Christians, to secular warfare in his own day, and finally to spiritual warfare within the members of his own flock. Valerian states the aim of this shift: 'to extinguish desires of the flesh, and to reduce lasciviousness of life by pursuing disciplinary control.'[154] He says that his congregation is being tempted by excessive ornamentation and good physical form – even during wartime. It is slightly unclear as to whom Valerian is referring – perhaps attractive women in general if, indeed, he had anyone specific in mind. These 'allurements of *luxuria*'[155] are to be defeated. How? 'If you wish to overcome all that, you must fight by practising chastity.'[156] This is his conclusion to a homily on warfare of different kinds: heavenly, spiritual and factual.

Valerian's preaching on avoiding sexual sin is not in itself unique, but the context in which he discusses it is crucial here. Morality and warfare are strongly linked, and in this discussion sexual misdemeanours – lust and desire for sex, and making oneself look desirable for sex – are at the forefront of sinful acts done by his congregation that he condemns. Even as one reads the homily, these complaints on lack of chastity first

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[151] Valerian, *Hom*. 17.2.3 (PL 52.0745A): 'coelestis pugnae.'

[152] *Hom.* 17.4.3: 'ostendat adversum bellis pectus opponere atque omnam conflictum injuriae sustinere.'

[153] *Hom.* 17.5.3: 'cupiditas oculorum nostrorum portas jugiter pulsat.'

[154] *Hom.* 17.6.1: 'desideria carnis exstinguere, et disciplinae studio vitae lasciviam deprimere.'

[155] *Hom.* 17.6.2.

[156] *Hom.* 17.6.2: 'Si vis ut ista superes, pugnandum est studio castitatis.'

seem like an unusual move away from the grotesque death of Jesus and the battlefield imagery with which the homily began, but in Valerian's mind they are intertwined. The homily is a reflection of Valerian's priorities during war: sex mattered. Valerian wished chastity to be utilised as a tool that would enable the people of his congregation to die good, Christian deaths that were imminent due to the circumstances. This may be bleak, but it becomes clear that Valerian picks out controlling desire and practising chastity as a main virtue to be employed in the face of warfare as he viewed unchastity to be an obstacle in reaching the martyrdom achieved by earlier Christians.

This criticism of unchaste thoughts is an extension of Valerian's rejection of worldly matters, which in his view were making people shy away from death. 'Let us prefer the heavenly goods to the earthly ones, to be able to obtain those promised benefits of eternal life,' he beckons.[157] He also draws clear contrasts between non-Christian behaviours and Christian ones, as in *Hom.* 16, in which he warns: 'You know how effective looks are to excite desire, how quick are glances of the eyes […] We should prepare ourselves to carry on the fight of the Cross against these vices.'[158] This remark, too, is made in the context of looming death. Valerian perceives chastity and Christian piousness as an ongoing battle that he parallels with warfare in his own time: 'If the occasion thus comes [for martyrdom], let no one flee from the noise of the chains.'[159] The continuous use of imagined persecution also suggests that Valerian did not merely perceive contemporary military conflicts as violence, but as religious persecution likewise, although the religious beliefs of barbarians are unmentioned. All of these comments are representative of anxiety and fear, which formed the context in which sexual behaviour became heightened.

It is worthwhile to compare Valerian here with Maximus and Augustine. Maximus did not give sexual habits this same priority or emphasis in his own idea of engaged, Christian warfare, although fasting and chastity were included as expectations of pious behaviour. The difference between Maximus and Valerian can certainly be different

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[157] *Hom.* 15.2 (PL 52.0739): 'Praeponamus terrenis coelestia, ut possimus illa aeternae vitae promissa contingere.'

[158] *Hom.* 16.4 (PL 52.0743): 'Scitis quam gravis aspectus ad excitanda desideria, quam sint veloces jactus oculorum … Adversus haec ergo paranda nobis est crucis pugna.'

[159] *Hom.* 16.3: 'Nemo ergo diffugiat, si ita usus fuerit, sonitus catenarum.'

personalities as the men's contexts are both stages for Romano-barbarian conflicts and military activity. Perhaps, however, in Valerian's case his slightly later dating is significant: from his writings shines an acceptance of war, which may reflect his later episcopate in the 430s/440s. Nowhere in his surviving homilies does he suggest that piousness can stop warfare – piousness can, however, ensure holy martyrdom. Valerian does not appear to entertain the notion that virtue can bring peacetime, like Maximus believed. At this later stage of conflict, a bishop like Valerian may no longer have believed that warfare could be prevented by a change of morality, whereas Maximus had been more optimistic during the first stages of Gothic advancement into the Western Empire. This, however, ultimately has to be more speculation than fact.

In contrast to Augustine, Valerian shows no sense of detachment but rather is at the heart of military conflict, as indeed is the rest of the local populace. Both men, however, idealise and encourage martyrdom for their congregations when a dread of death penetrates the locality. Both men also have to persuade reluctant audiences to embrace future martyrdom and idealise past Christian heroes who did not show such reluctance. Such is the difference between hagiography and reality. Moralistic behaviour and war are also linked for both men, but Valerian again discussed sex and sexual lust in conjunction with war, whereas Augustine and Maximus focused on other kinds of moral behaviour. Limited as Valerian's writings therefore are in contrast to bishops from whom more written material survives, he is important in articulating a sex/war interconnectedness that contemporaries refer to, but do not develop as its own individual strand. Indeed, the most significant figure apart from Valerian to draw such a parallel is Salvian of Marseilles, nearly a contemporary of Valerian's, writing some 120 miles west of him, perhaps even around the same time. Salvian is examined at length in Chapter 5, but for now it is vital to note that at the time, linking contemporary warfare and sex was a feature of clerical discourses on moralistic behaviours.

Valerian is suggestive of trauma: the praise of chastity and the criticism of desire and lust is interlaced with warfare, death and martyrdom. Those who die with impure thoughts would not receive the crown of martyrdom, and as such chastity served as a prerequisite of martyrdom. In other words, Valerian criticised unchastity in order to prepare his congregation for death. This reflects the emotional trauma that ongoing

conflict had caused to the local community, but also highlights how sex and war were connected in the writings of Valerian. Sexual behaviour gained a heightened importance in a pressurised environment, such as the kind created by enduring military conflicts. Valerian's glorification of martyrdom in the past and in his own day suggests that the one true escape from war that he still believed in was death. In this context, sexual desire was denounced as chastity was promoted. 'Look,' Valerian said, 'the field is ready for you.'[160]

LEO THE GREAT

When discussing interpretations of contemporary military conflict at this time, one must give due consideration to Leo the Great, bishop of Rome from 440 to 461. Not only did he live during war and invasion, he actively engaged with it: his encounters with Attila the Hun and Geiseric the Vandal were legendary already in his own lifetime.[161] However, when we examine Leo as the figurehead of the Roman Church and its Christian community in a context of war and wartime morality, his sermons – and, indeed, his letters likewise – are puzzling. Where men like Maximus, Augustine and Valerian warned and advised against warfare, or evoked martyrdom, the Western bishop most famous for dealing with militant barbarians never in his sermons or letters discussed this. What can we make of this omission – or indeed can we even call it such, and how is morality then presented?

The fact that no liturgical reference to war survives, of course, does not mean that Leo did not talk to the Christians of Rome about it. News of warfare in the West and East reached the city, and the citizens of Rome at times saw the destruction caused by war for themselves, as they did when an influx of refugees from Vandal Africa settled in the city during Leo's episcopate.[162] Rome itself was sacked in 455 by Vandal forces, and the early 450s had the Hunnic army led by Attila marching on Rome. There may

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[160] Valerian, *Hom.* 17.6.2: 'paratus tibi est ecce campus.'

[161] Prosper of Aquitaine, *Chronicon*, s.a. 424 (= 451), s.a. 428 (= 455) (MGH AA 9.0481-0484). For criticism of Prosper's account, see Gillett, 2003, pp. 114-115. For Leo in general, see Trevor Jalland, *The Life and Times of St. Leo the Great* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1941); Susan Wessel, *Leo the Great and the Spiritual Rebuilding of a Universal Rome* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Bronwen Neil, *Leo the Great* (London: Routledge, 2009).

[162] Wickham, 2005, p. 33.

not have been notable battles at Rome itself, but it would be naïve to think that the two-week sack of 455 was bloodless.[163] Even if Rome was, for the most part, spared the worst disturbances of the 440s and 450s, the threat of war, not to mention Leo's active engagement as a legate, negotiator and advisor during war, would suggest that warfare ultimately was a considerable preoccupation for the bishop of Rome. Yet in the texts that survive, Leo barely refers to ongoing warfare.

Omitting warfare and violent military conflicts from one's communications has been seen as typical of Roman bishops in particular as Leo's predecessors also avoided the topic of war at home: 'The bishops of Rome especially did not like to admit to security breaches,' Allen and Neil concluded in their study of episcopal letters from the fifth and sixth centuries.[164] They have interpreted this silence as an attempt at containing information at a time of crisis. Likewise, Leo's overflowing confidence in the Church of Rome has been accused of misconstruing the true state of the Roman church in the fifth century.[165] It becomes clear, therefore, that Leo is a difficult author to analyse in terms of war. He intentionally leaves out discussions of war and appears to exaggerate the strength and virility of the Roman congregation, which served to perpetuate his personal conviction that Rome was the holiest and most significant of all churches, following in the footsteps of Peter, who had been given power as the head of the church by Jesus himself.[166] Leo's conviction of the inviolability of Rome was great – so great, in fact, that we ought to proceed with caution.

War, however, is not completely absent in Leo's writings. In his letters, we find references to difficult communication during wartime, on top of which Leo twice mentions problems that have risen from warfare with barbarians.[167] A third time he

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[163] Courtois, 1955, pp. 194-6; Merrills and Miles, 2010, pp. 116-119.

[164] Allen and Neil, 2013, p. 197.

[165] Neil B. McLynn, 'Crying Wolf: The Pope and the Lupercalia', *Journal of Roman Studies* 98 (2008), pp. 161-75, at p. 161.

[166] On Leo's Petrine ideology and its promotion to his contemporaries, see Wessel, 2008, pp. 285-297. Slightly outdated but still valuable is Walter Ullmann, 'Leo I and the Theme of Papal Primacy', *Journal of Theological Studies* 11.1 (1960), pp. 25-51.

[167] In *Ep.* 102 Leo complains about the difficulty of frequent correspondence during wartime, and *Ep.* 12 discusses the rape of women in Mauritania by barbarians (this letter is discussed at length in Section 2.3 below), and a third reference to barbarians is in *Ep.* 159 and is discussed in Section 4.2 on polygyny.

appears to infer to the Hunnic invasion.[168] Even so, this is not a particularly remarkable commentary on the military conflict occurring at this time. However, while Leo does not explicitly discuss the warfare that was taking place in Italy during his episcopacy, the language that he employs in some of his sermons seems strikingly similar to what we have seen thus far. Sermon 39, delivered in 441, notes that 'we are [situated] among many struggles and battles,'[169] and beckons:

> See, dearly beloved, with what mighty weapons, with what impregnable defences we are armed by our Leader, who is famous for His many triumphs, the unconquered Master of the Christian warfare. He has girt our loins with the belt of chastity, He has shod our feet with the bonds of peace: because the unbelted soldier is quickly vanquished by the suggester of immodesty, and he that is unshod is easily bitten by the serpent. He has given the shield of faith for the protection of our whole body; on our head has He set the helmet of salvation; our right hand has He furnished with a sword, that is with the word of truth: that the spiritual warrior may not only be safe from wounds, but also may have strength to wound his assailant.[170]

The use of military imagery is striking: weapons, defences, shield, helmet, sword, wounds. In contrast to the heavily clad soldier are hints of immodest nudity: unbelted and unshod, an unprepared Christian is an easy target for improper temptations. There is a sexual aura to Leo's words here, suggested by nudity: unchastity comes before the fall, just as it does for a soldier ill-equipped for battle. As Leo covers the body in virtuous Christian armour, the immodestly dressed soldier becomes safe once more. That Leo is discussing contemporary warfare, furthermore, is evidenced by his depiction of God as a Christian *magister militum* – the late Roman term for the leader of the army. The actual *magister militum* of the Roman army in 441 was Aëtius, which mattered to Leo little here. The image of God as the head of spiritual warfare in contrast to the warfare his congregation knew from their own world was striking enough.

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[168] *Epp.* 82-83, written to the Eastern Emperor Marcian in AD 451, ask the impending council of Chalcedon be postponed due to 'the times', which may refer to the Hunnic invasion of Italy in the same year.

[169] Leo, *Serm.* 39.1.2 (CCSL 138A.0211): 'inter multas adversitates et proelia.'

[170] Leo, *Serm.* 39.4: 'Videte, dilectissimi, quam potentibus nos telis, quam insuperabilibus munimentis dux multis insignis triumphis, et invictus Christianae militiae magister armaverit. Succinxit lumbos baltheo castitatis, calciavit pedes vinculis pacis: quia et discinctus miles cito, ab impudicitiae incentore vincitur, et non calceatus facile a serpente mordetur. Scutum fidei ad protectionem totius corporis dedit, capiti galeam salutis imposuit, dexteram gladio, id est verbo veritatis, instruxit: ut spiritalis praeliator non solum sit tutus a vulnere, sed et repugnantem valeat vulnerare.'

Leo describes action taken against immoral temptations as war elsewhere, too. In Sermon 78, Leo recalls the Apostles:

> And so those teachers, who have instructed all the Church's sons by their examples and their traditions, began the rudiments of the Christian warfare with holy fasts, that, having to fight against spiritual wickedness, they might take the armour of abstinence, wherewith to slay the incentives of vice. For invisible foes and incorporeal enemies will have no strength against us, if we be not entangled in any lusts of the flesh.[171]

Again, sexual lust and its temptations are described as a hindrance to a more Christian way of life: one must not just fight, but engage in Christian warfare against this, as Leo argued in this sermon dated around 441. Valerian of Cimiez had articulated similar ideas to his congregation. The dangers of (sexual) temptations are also visible in the only surviving sermon by Leo in which barbarians are explicitly mentioned, again contrasting warfare and improper Christian behaviour.

Sermon 84, given in an undated year, is a rebuke to the people of Rome on their poor attendance at a commemoration service for the 410 sack of Rome.[172] Leo complained that the Christians of the city no longer came to these commemoration services as they once had. As far as such admonishments go in Leo's sermons, this one is unique as it contains the only sermonic reference to barbarians. Leo calls out to his flock to 'return to the Lord … who has deigned to soften the hearts of raging barbarians.'[173] He appears to be referring to Alaric's men having destroyed Rome relatively mildly in 410. What made the poor attendance worse, however, was that the service had coincided with public amusements, and many Christians had chosen the latter. 'One is ashamed to say it, but one must not keep silence: more is spent upon demons than upon the Apostles,

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[171] Leo, *Serm.* 78.2 (CCSL 138A.0495): 'Hi itaque doctores, qui exemplis et traditionibus suis omnes Ecclesiae filios inbuerunt, tirocinia militae christianae sanctis ieiuniis inchoarunt, ut contra spiritales nequitias bellaturi, abstinentiae arma caperent, quibus vitiorum incentiva truncarent. Invisibiles enim adversarii et incorporales hostes non erunt contra nos validi, si nullis carnalibus desideriis fuerimus inmersi.'

[172] There is some confusion as to which sack and what barbarians this sermon refers to, although the consensus is that Leo is talking of 410. The NPNF series, however, dates the work to post-455 and as referring to the Vandal sack of 455, see NPNF 2nd series, Vol. 12, p. 322, n. 1173, and cf. FCNT 92, p. 360. Perhaps behind the NPNF dating is the present participle 'furentium' – 'of raging' – that suggests an ongoing presence. However, while Leo may be acknowledging that barbarians are raging currently in Italy as well, the sermon dates to a commemoration of AD 410.

[173] Leo, *Serm*. 84.2 (CCSL 138A.0526): 'revertimini ad Dominum … qui corda furentium barbarorum mitigare dignatus est.'

and mad spectacles draw greater crowds than blessed martyrdoms,' Leo lamented.[174] Christians continued to attend shows and, as Leo seems to suggest, those with money continued to sponsor the games as indeed had been an important part of civic duty in pre-Christian times.[175]

Behind this dialogue may be a real, sporadic sense of rivalry in attendance. As noted by Richard Lim, at this time many urban centres had new church buildings that could hold great capacities – having them seem empty when the theatre or circus was bustling was an embarrassment, and this competition may have been motivating in explorations of the games' immorality.[176] 'There is much danger in men becoming ungrateful to God,' Leo warned his congregation, asking who had saved the city in 410: circus-goers or saints?[177] Here Leo used past warfare and devastation that still should be fresh on people's minds to condemn frivolities and loose moral behaviour. Had people forgotten past horrors so fast? It appears so.

The uneasy fit of threat of war and pious Christian living in battling this comes across in the sporadic mentions of war in the Leonine corpus. Sexual lust and temptation was a danger against which one needed weaponry and shields – it was a battlefield, and Leo referred to this fight in his sermons as detailed above. Contemporary warfare, on the other hand, was discussed very little, and barbarians are discussed only in conjunction to delays or in reference to past warfare. Yet Leo hints at the disturbances every now and then. He expects modest and chaste behaviour from Christians, such as keeping oneself spiritually dressed, attending services piously, and keeping clear of immoral *spectacula*.[178] Leo appears to combine several features discussed above: he uses

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[174] Leo, *Serm.* 84.1 (CCSL 138A.0525): 'pudet dicere, sed necesse est non tacere: plus impenditur daemoniis quam apostolis, et maiorem obtinent frequentiam insana spectacula quam beata martyria.'

[175] On sponsoring games and their venues in Rome, see the studies in Kathryn Lomas and Tim Cornell, eds., *Bread and Circuses: euergetism and municipal patronage in Roman Italy* (London: Routledge, 2003).

[176] Richard Lim, 'Augustine and Roman Public Spectacles', in Vessey, ed., 2012, pp. 138-51, at p. 146.

[177] Leo, *Serm.* 84.1: 'magnum enim periculum est esse homines ingratos Deo.'

[178] For Christan receptions of Roman games, see for instance Werner Weismann, *Kirche und Schauspiele; die Schauspiele im Urteil der lateinischen Kirchenväter unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Augustin* (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1972); Richard F. DeVoe, *Christianity and the Roman games: the paganization of Christians by gladiators, charioteers, actors and actresses from the first through the fifth centuries A.D.* (Philadelphia, PA: Xlibris Corp., 2002); Leonardo Lugaresi, *Il teatro di Dio: il problema degli spettacoli nel cristianesimo antico (II-IV secolo)* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2008);

Maximus's idea of metaphorical Christian weaponry as superior to real helmets, shields and swords, and then, like Valerian, mixes the idea of warfare with sexual morality and considers that one must make war against loose morals, albeit he expressed this more subtly than Valerian. From Augustine, we get a shared sense of detachment as an outsider to real conflict. Leo, although involved as a negotiator and diplomat, for the most part was an outsider likewise, apart from the sack of 455, which goes unmentioned.

Leo is taciturn about war, therefore, and the above sermons are the closest we get to a link between warfare and the Roman congregation. In his letters and sermons, Leo's primary interests are always spiritual, which may explain the lack of discussion on war – yet, as we have seen, others found ways to combine secular warfare with spiritual concerns. This appears not to have appealed to Leo, although he viewed sexual temptations as a fight in which one needed weaponry, describing it as Christian warfare. Leo's nearest contemporary here discussed is Valerian, who feared for his own life and for the lives of those in Cimiez, and who did not see any way of diffusing the Romano-barbarian conflicts for good. I would argue that neither did Leo: for him, these conflicts were non-exemplary and continuous, which may be why he never considered them worthy of extensive discussion. They are matter of fact. But, as has been shown, warfare did affect his rhetoric with the bishop incorporating militant imagery to his sermons. As such, Leo, too, was a man of his time.

Finally, in terms of morality, Leo's brief mentions of warfare make it difficult to assess if he considered a better moral standard during a crisis as crucial to Christian survival. For instance, Leo must have said *something* to his congregation after the 455 sack – certainly he could not have appeared before his flock without in some way commenting on the stripped off city or the Vandals that were roaming about. What these words were, however, we do not know. As most clerics, he certainly considered that moral standards needed improving, yet the extent to which he linked this with war is uncertain. Yet, I believe, Sermon 84 is telling: he reminded people not to anger God as the consequences of such an act would make them sorry. If he preached this sermon before 455, then

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Ruth Webb, *Demons and Dancers: performance in late antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

perhaps the Roman congregation was indeed soon to be sorry. Moral standards and being the victim of violent conflict was a difficult situation for Christians – Leo focused on enduring these times and strengthening the church, rather than explaining divine intent in conflict that had been ongoing for decades by the time he became the bishop of Rome.

AD 460 TO AD 520

Thus far, I have examined four bishops and how war and wartime morality were discussed in their sermons, reflecting on the circumstances in which they were composed. In the writings of Maximus and Augustine, certainly Valerian, and somewhat vaguely Leo, chastity was considered of importance when facing one's enemy. These examples have come from Italy, North Africa and Gaul between 400 and 460 – areas that underwent substantial changes in this sixty-year span and witnessed significant war campaigns. Discussions of warfare ranged from prevention to endurance, and in this context appropriate morality was perceived to be a preventive check on war. However, I will now consider two figures from the second half of the fifth century whose lifetimes date more to periods of consolidations of power than active and unexpected conflict: Gelasius I, who strongly links warfare and moral behaviour, and Sidonius Apollinaris, who sees plenty of armed conflict, but never perceives this in moral terms.

Gelasius, Bishop of Rome from 492 to 496, carried on the intertwined theme of war and morality that we have explored thus far.[179] The evidence comes from 494, in a letter to Andromachus regarding the celebration of the Lupercalia.[180] This festival, which involved some kind of public racing in the nude near the Roman forum, followed by playful flogging of Roman matrons to boost their fertility, is already attested by Livy as an ancient tradition, as indeed Gelasius knew.[181] By Gelasius's time people hired for the purpose, rather than the Roman aristocrats themselves, participated in the festival.[182]

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[179] For Gelasius's episcopacy, see Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen, eds., *The Letters of Gelasius I (492-496): pastor and micro-manager of the Church of Rome* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014).

[180] For a good discussion on this letter, see McLynn, 2008.

[181] Livy 1.5.1; Gelasius, *Adversus Andromachum* 11.

[182] Gelasius, *Adv. Adro.* 25b.

The letter is Gelasius's condemnation of the running of the festival, which, as argued by Neil McLynn, may have been enjoying a revival in the 490s after briefly having ceased in the 480s.[183] Furthermore, in 494 the celebration fell on a Sunday, making participation in it all the more condemnable.

In his letter on this festival, and before bringing up warfare, Gelasius dismissed this pagan celebration through the mirror of sex. The entire opening discussion on the Lupercalia is dressed in terms of adultery: 'There is not only a sin of carnal adultery which should be both examined and duly punished, but there is a kind of fornication and adultery that is far worse … a kind of spiritual adultery.'[184] Gelasius complains that Christians readily accuse adulterers amongst themselves – and indeed those amongst the Roman clergy – but do not recognise that participating in pagan rites is spiritual adultery, which requires punishment likewise. This comparison appears inspired by a current embarrassment of an adulterous Roman cleric that Gelasius, according to his critics, had not punished swiftly enough.[185] By reminding his critics of their adulterous natures, too, Gelasius was attempting to save face. This connection was easily made as the sexual nature of the festival could not be ignored: Gelasius points out the hypocrisy of its organisers for not taking part themselves, but rather observing obscenities instead, and he makes note of 'bawdy songs' and 'obscene cries' – sexualised singing and chanting, therefore, was also involved. However, not only is this letter a surprising proof of the survival of sexualised pagan rites at the end of the fifth century and, indeed, of continued Christian participation in them, but a study of Gelasius's reasoning also reveals how he connected this immoral behaviour with warfare.

In order to devaluate the Lupercalia, Gelasius criticises its ineffectiveness in battling crises, including war. In reference to Livy's discussion of the Lupercalia, Gelasius points out that celebrating the festival did not stop war or famine in Livy's time.[186] The

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[183] McLynn, 2008, pp. 171-172.

[184] Gelasius, *Adv. Andro.* 2 (PL 59.0111A-0111B): 'non tantum corporalis adulterii esse peccatum, quod et discuti debeat, et iure puniri, sed esse longe maius fornicariis et adulteris genus … spiritalis adulterii.'

[185] For an interpretation of Gelasius as a bishop with restricted local influence in the face of Roman aristocracy, see George Demacopoulos, 'Are All Universalist Politics Local?: Pope Gelasius I's International Ambition as a Tonic for Local Humiliation', in *The Bishop of Rome in Late Antiquity*, ed. by G. D. Dunn (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 141-53.

[186] Gelasius, *Adv. Andro*. 11.

performance of any religious rite should have concrete benefits, which the Lupercalia did not have. Thus, it was considered ineffectual to celebrate it. Gelasius asked,

> What are you to say about the plague, about the infertility, about the incessant calamity of wars? … What difference did the stumbling block of Lupercalia make to the annihilation of Tuscany, what difference to Emilia and the rest of the provinces in which there is hardly a human being left, consumed as they were by the severities of war?[187]

Here Gelasius refers to Theoderic's invasion of Italy, which began in 489.[188] Clearly, the Lupercalia had not stopped war and devastation in Italy in their own time: the regions of Tuscany and Emilia in Northern Italy had been the main stages of Theoderic's war campaigns as Gelasius and his audience knew. Therefore, by bringing in warfare, Gelasius attempted to expose the futility of the Lupercalia to his readers. He was working on the premise that a religious rite, if performed correctly and for the correct faith, should have concrete benefits. These benefits included stopping war, which Gelasius criticised the Lupercalia as having failed in. This is reminiscent of Maximus of Turin's evocations in the early 400s that better Christian living could stop the barbarian forces, as by implying that the Lupercalia could not do this, Gelasius suggested that Christian rites could.

However, the previous sections have suggested that a sense of acceptance is visible in mid-fifth century rhetoric regarding warfare and, in this light, Gelasius's optimism in Christian practice in combatting war seems unexpected. Yet it should be noted that nowhere does Gelasius explicitly state the real benefits of Christian performativity – it is implied, not stated, and this may be because Gelasius did not wish to dwell too much on a topic in which his argument was not at its strongest after ninety years of conflict in the Italian peninsula. While we do not know when Gelasius was born, he undoubtedly was born to a world where barbarian presence was *de facto*, rather than a matter of debate – he would have been unfamiliar, therefore, with a world where barbarian

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[187] Gelasius, *Adv. Andro.* 13 (PL 59.0113): 'Quid dicturi estis de peste, de sterilitate, de bellorum tempestate continua; nunquid et haec propter sublata Lupercalia contigerunt? … quid Tuscia, quid Aemilia, caeteraeque provinciae, in quibus hominum prope nullus existit, ut bellica necessitate consumeretur, Lupercaliorum fecit offensio, quae longe ante vastatae sunt quam Lupercalia tollerentur?'

[188] For Theoderic, see John Moorhead, *Theoderic in Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 23-31; Collins, 2000, pp. 126-127.

peoples were not a fact of everyday life.[189] Yet Gelasius is recycling rhetoric from earlier authors with whom he would have been familiar – Maximus's claims that good *mores* benefited in wartime, and Augustine's criticisms of *spectacula* in particular are relevant here in stating that pagan festivals are futile and lewd.[190] Importantly, the connection between warfare and moralistic behaviour continued to be linked until the end of the era here examined, even by those who had born into a world where such conflict was no longer new: a pressurised community was consistently asked to consider its own moralistic and sexual behaviour and the role of this in causing calamities.

There are exceptions to this rule, however, as shown by Sidonius Apollinaris (c. 430 – 489), the most significant Gallic literary figure in the second half of the fifth century.[191] Compared to Valerian, who was expecting death in the 430s/440s, Sidonius's experience of barbarians in Gaul was vastly different. Sidonius was an aristocrat whose father-in-law, Avitus, had been the Western Emperor, and Sidonius's ascension to the bishopric of Clermont in 470 was preceded by a long political career. The secularity of Sidonius has not gone unnoticed by scholars who have studied him.[192] While disturbances and conflicts remained in this era, Sidonius visited the courts of barbarian kings, composed panegyrics for them, and although his city of Clermont was seized by the Gothic king Euric in 474, Sidonius resumed his role as bishop there after he was released from captivity. We do not find the kind of moralising attempts in the works of Sidonius as with the men discussed above: Sidonius is not remembered as a writer of great sermons, although he must have preached as a bishop. However, no sermons have survived down to us. Instead Sidonius is known for his letters to numerous friends, some of whom were fellow clergymen, but many of whom were secular acquaintances. These letters reveal some attitudes to ongoing violence at a later stage of barbarian presence in Gaul.

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[189] There is some debate regarding Gelasius's place of birth. *Liber Pontificalis* 51 says he was an African, while one of Gelasius's own letters, *Ep.* 12.1, suggests that he was born in Rome. For discussion of his place of birth and origin, see Neil and Allen, eds., 2014, pp. 5-7.

[190] See Lim, 2012.

[191] For Sidonius, see Jill Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome, AD 407-485* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); J. A. Van Waarden and Gavin Kelly, eds., *New Approaches to Sidonius Apollinaris* (Wassenaar: Peeters, 2013).

[192] For circumstances surrounding Sidonius's appointment as bishop, see Harries, 1994, pp. 169-180.

Once barbarian peoples had consolidated their power in Gaul more, there were changes in the problems that the presence of these people created. While there still were raids and destruction, we also see problems arising from living side by side. From Sidonius's letters, we find complaints that barbarians were snatching the slaves of the local population, suggesting a competition of workforce.[193] Converting the Goths to Catholicism also became important and attempts at conversion were applauded.[194] However, the ongoing battle over territory also meant that bishops helped in material ways. Sidonius praises his bishop friend who, during wartime, fed Christian communities in Gaul – even the ones that were far from his own bishopric.[195] Warfare still took up time from a bishop's duties, and it affected Sidonius's own experience as a bishop. In letters dated between 472 and 477, he further complains about the difficulty of travel and of sending letters during times of war, just as Leo the Great did in his own correspondence discussed above.[196] In one letter written in 474 Sidonius states that Goths decapitated all those who died in battle, including their own, to avoid knowing how many of their own had fallen, evoking ideas of a primitive, barbarian other, but this is the most detail on contemporary violent conflict that we get.[197]

As Sidonius' sermons do not survive, one cannot comment on how he represented warfare to his congregation. His letters, however, suggest that the violent conflict between Gallo-Romans and the Goths who had settled in the region post-418 was not perceived by him to have eschatological or moralising undertones. For discussion on sexual behaviour, furthermore, we find very little in his works: the most pressing concern for Sidonius was the behaviour of young people of marriable age, including badly behaving youths who 'scent' and 'retail' scandals, youths from good families who were too attached to their concubines, and a case of elopement amongst young servants.[198] Not only does Sidonius offer little commentary on war, neither does he

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[193] Sid.Apol., *Ep.* 3.9.2.

[194] Sid.Apol., *Ep.* 6.12.4.

[195] Sid.Apol., *Ep.* 6.12.5-8. The cities that had received such clemency were Arles, Riez, Avignon, Orange, Viviers, Valence and Trois Chateaux, all situated along the river Rhône, and Clermont received a special mention as it was not easily travelled to along the river.

[196] Sid.Apol., *Epp.* 5.3, 7.10, 9.3, 9.5.

[197] Sid.Apol., *Ep.* 3.2.

[198] Sid.Apol., *Epp.* 3.13, 5.19, 9.6.

discuss sex much either. There is no sense of divine wrath or punishment in his works, nor does he express any outrage over warfare, but rather the factual references to it suggest acceptance, though we should not misunderstand this to be proof of complacency either.

Sidonius, born c. 430, only had personal experience of a Romano-barbarian world. In this regard, it is not surprising that we find a suggestion of gradual adjustment in the face of warfare: from a panicked Maximus with advice for survival to Augustine's sermon campaigns that assured all was well, to Valerian's preparation for death, to Leo's minimal, yet practical, commentary on war, we end with Sidonius Apollinaris's life of leisure and politics; and, finally, with Gelasius's accusations that pagan festivals could not prevent warfare. These later reactions, therefore, reflect different attitudes: Gelasius demonstrates how powerful the idea of war as punishment and Christians' role in appeasing or angering God in this regard was around a hundred years after Maximus's initial sermons on war. In the 490s, morality and war thus remained linked, and when searching for inadequate moralistic behaviour, sex, lust and lewdness were never far away. On the other hand, Sidonius never links war and sex, but he is overall less moralising as a bishop, based on the evidence that survives.

The above discussion has emphasised that the reality of warfare permeated the consciousness of Christian clerics living through troubled times – indeed, it permeated the consciousness of people at large. The violence shines in sermons through graphic and military imagery, and bishops employed Christian/heavenly/spiritual warfare as a contrast to secular warfare. In the midst of this exchange, we see chastity being raised as a weapon with which to fight back, not invariably, but often enough to attest that many clerics formed a firm link between the two. Certainly, the connection between warfare and poor sexual morality is rooted in Christian concepts that sought to limit sexual licence. However, from these texts we also see that Christian leaders were displeased with sexual habits at large and that during wartime these habits became more inexcusable. The unrest provided a contrast against which this discussion on insufficient sexual behaviour could be held. Laxity became increasingly unacceptable when the basic structures of the community were threatened, and the heightening of sexual orthodoxy in contexts of war in Christian texts between 390 and 520 reflects

this. To discuss the connection between conflict in the West and ideas of sexual *mores* further, I now turn to the first of two topics in which this influence of war can explicitly be seen: in regulations on secular marriages.

2.2 CHANGES TO LAY MARRIAGES

By many clerics and some laity alike, war was seen as a reflection of the local populace's poor morality, and often sexual morality was criticised by linking it with ongoing conflict – either directly or through insinuation. However, when examining how warfare affected ideas of morally approved or disapproved behaviour, we see changes in practice, and not merely in rhetoric or words preached in church. Regulations on lay marriages changed at this time and became more flexible to accommodate circumstances caused by warfare. A relaxation of regulations is a reflection of communal crisis, during which religious leaders had to encourage inclusiveness amongst the local Christians, rather than cast people out. Furthermore, the destruction of families, to which these marriage regulations responded, was traumatic to these communities, further explaining why exceptions had to be made. In other words, warfare left its mark, too, on something as common and ordinary as the marriage of lay people.

Marriage in the late Roman world determined the legitimacy of children, outlining heirs and inheritance rights, and rules regarding marriages were renewed and revised in imperial laws as well as canon laws.[199] For third century conflicts, a link between the brutality of warfare and a reduced rate in childbirth in the western provinces has been made, with fear and food shortages having been cited as factors in this development.[200] For the era we are concerned with here, a similar situation can be found. The displacement of people due to warfare, such as kidnappings, deaths and disappearances, had an effect on community structures, and in response, I will argue, regulations on marriage were adapted. This is a significant example of military conflict influencing

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[199] See especially Judith Evans-Grubbs, *Law and Family in Late Antiquity: the Emperor Constantine's marriage legislation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[200] Neil Christie, 'Wars within the Frontiers: archaeologies of rebellion, revolt and civil war', in Sarantis and Christie, eds., 2013, pp. 927-68, at p. 952.

Christian policies, emphasising the importance of contextualisation when discussing the development of moralistic ideas in the past.

SECOND MARRIAGES

We start, therefore, with a discussion on how church rulings on marriage changed in circumstances that followed barbarian warfare. The key figure here is Innocent I, Bishop of Rome 401-417, who departed from secular legislation on marriages by contrary rulings of his own. Geoffrey D. Dunn has demonstrated how Innocent went against Roman legal legislation in cases of kidnapping and enslavement.[201] To summarise, sometime between 410 and 417, Innocent wrote *Ep.* 36, which stipulated what ought to be done in a case where a spouse who had been kidnapped by barbarians had returned alive to find his/her legal spouse remarried.[202] Which marriage was legitimate – the first or the second? Had the husband who had been left alone been free to remarry or was he committing adultery – a mortal offense? Innocent was dealing with a specific situation and the names of the parties are given, with the wife who had been snatched having come to Innocent with a plea to be reunited with her husband, who had a new wife. This mix-up in spouses had occurred, according to the letter, in the middle of confusion caused by barbarians.[203]

Where Innocent broke precedent was in stating that the first marriage remained legitimate. According to Roman law, the enslavement of a spouse dissolved marriage as slaves could not marry or be married.[204] Dunn states that the barbarian conflicts had 'introduced an emergency' in which Innocent consciously went against secular law in favour of preserving the Christian idea of the endurance of marriage.[205] Dunn emphasises Innocent's bold move of challenging secular law,[206] but I find the circumstances of Innocent's decision highly significant. This is not only a flexing of episcopal powers on the part of Innocent, but a direct response to circumstances created

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[201] Geoffrey D. Dunn, 'Validity of Marriages in Cases of Captivity: Letter of Innocent I to Probus', *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovaniensis* 93 (2007), pp. 107-21.

[202] Dunn gives the letter the tentative dating of AD 416 in ibid., p. 110.

[203] Innocent I, *Ep.* 36.1 (PL 20.0602): 'conturbatio procellae barbaricae.'

[204] cf. *Digest* 24.2.1.

[205] Dunn, 2007, p. 115.

[206] Ibid., pp. 119-120.

by warfare. Furthermore, this kind of displacement and destruction of family units was relatively common as a consequence of war throughout this era, with several other preachers commenting on locals being snatched away or being enslaved.[207] This happened throughout the social spectrum: peasants and farmers were snatched, but so were members of the imperial family. The most famous examples are the kidnaps of Galla Placidia during the events that concluded in the sack of Rome in 410 and again in 455 when the Vandals sacked Rome, taking with them Empress Licinia Eudoxia and her daughters Eudocia and Placidia. As these incidents were highly politically motivated and as such served different purposes than the snatching of non-elite men and women, I will not discuss them here, except to further emphasise that snatching people was a common feature of late antique warfare.[208]

Further sources demonstrate a later reception of Innocent's ruling. Leo the Great, who we have noted as a reluctant figure to discuss his experiences or involvement in war, did, when required, discuss warfare taking place outside Rome. His letter to Nicetas, Bishop of Aquileia,[209] dates from the years succeeding the Hunnic war campaign to Italy, from 458. Aquileia had been sacked in 452, and Nicetas had been in exile from the town for a number of years. Upon returning, he needed Leo's help with pressing problems in his congregation.[210] Wherever a major campaign was in motion, as indeed the Hunnic campaign into Italy in the 450s had been during Nicetas's episcopate, damaged family units appeared. As such, the issue at hand was remarriage in the absence of a snatched/kidnapped spouse who had since returned. It is, perhaps, not surprising that in this matter Leo, as a strong supporter of Roman episcopal power, followed the ruling of his Roman predecessor.

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[207] See Section 2.1 for Valerian of Cimiez, also see n. 148 and 149 for Peter Chrysologus and Caesarius of Arles. See also the discussion in 2.3 on kidnap in both Augustine and Leo the Great.

[208] On Galla Placidia's kidnap, see Hagith Sivan, 'From Athanaric to Ataulf: The Shifting Horizons of 'Gothicness' in Late Antiquity', in *Humana Sapit. Etudes d'Antiquité Tardive offertes à Lellia Cracco-Ruggini*, ed. by J.-M. Carrié and R.L. Testa (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), pp. 75-82. For the kidnap of Eudoxia and her daughters, and the political motivations behind this, see Merrills, ed., 2004, pp. 112-113, 117 and *PLRE* 2, Eudoxia 2, pp. 441-442.

[209] *PCBE* 2.2, Nicetas, p. 1539.

[210] For context, see Wessel, 2008, p. 135; A. D. Lee, *War in Late Antiquity: a social history* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), p. 138.

Leo regards Nicetas's inquiry as touching topics 'which seem hard to decide.' These problems derive from 'the necessities of the time' and furthermore Leo offers advice so that 'the wounds which have been inflicted by the attacks of the enemy may be healed.'[211] Clearly, these issues are perceived in contemporary terms, and Leo's concern here is to heal the community damaged by war – this is a theme we will see repeated. Leo describes the circumstances based on Nicetas's initial letter:

> As then you say that through the disasters of war and through the grievous inroads of the enemy families have in certain cases been so broken up that the husbands have been carried off into captivity and their wives remain forsaken, and these latter thinking their own husbands either dead or never likely to be freed from their masters, have contracted another marriage under the stress of loneliness, and as, now that the state of things has improved through the Lord's help, some of those who were thought to have perished have returned, you seem, dear brother, naturally to be in doubt about what ought to be settled.[212]

Nicetas, clearly, did not know what to do in this situation. This uncertainty over rulings intended for lay Christian conduct will repeat itself in other sources, demonstrating that it was difficult for clerics to ensure that their judgement on complex ecclesiastical matters was correct. In this case, the pre-eminence of Rome could settle matters for a North Italian bishop, and Leo followed Innocent's rulings. Again, under Roman law enslaved people had their marriages dissolved, but Leo makes it clear that the first husband is the lawful spouse and that the remarried wife must return to him.[213] Some forty years earlier, Innocent had argued the same, though in his case the roles of the wife and husband were reversed, with the wife having been kidnapped. The difference between the two rulings, however, is that whereas Innocent nowhere mentions what should happen if the people involved refused the episcopal ruling, Leo explicitly says:

> They are deservedly to be branded: so that they be even deprived of the Church's communion; for in a pardonable matter they have chosen to taint

[211] Leo, *Ep.* 159.1 (PL 54.1136): 'Regressus ad nos filius meus Adeodatus sedis nostrae diaconus, dilectionem tuam poposcisse memoravit, ut de his a nobis auctoritatem apostolicae sedis acciperes, quae quidem magnam difficultatem dijudicationis videntur afferre. Sed pro inspectione temporalium necessitatum adhibenda curatio est, ut vulnera quae hostilitatis adversitate illata sunt, religionis maxime ratione sanentur.'

[212] Leo, *Ep.* 159.2: 'Cum ergo per bellicam cladem et per gravissimos hostilitatis incursus, ita quaedam dicatis divisa esse conjugia, ut abductis in captivitatem viris feminae eorum remanserint destitutae, quae cum viros proprios aut interemptos putarent, aut numquam a dominatione crederent liberandos, ad aliorum conjugium, solitudine cogente, transierint. Cumque nunc statu rerum, auxiliante Domino, in meliora converso, nonnulli eorum qui putabantur periisse, remeaverint, merito charitas tua videtur ambigere quid de mulieribus, quae aliis junctae sunt viris, a nobis debeat ordinari.'

[213] Leo, *Ep.* 159.2-5.

themselves with crime, showing that they have sought their own pleasure in their incontinence.[214]

Leo's departure from Innocent's ruling is significant and worthy of attention. At the beginning of the letter, women had remarried 'under the stress of loneliness', but only a little later they are accused of pleasure seeking and incontinence, should they disobey episcopal rulings. Did Leo, therefore, interpret these second marriages as proof of innate lustfulness or a pardonable need for marital companionship? Furthermore, Leo articulates threat of exclusion from the Christian community, whereas Innocent never did. Indeed, Innocent does not go into detail what ought to be done should the people involved disobey his ruling. This difference may simply be down to approaches: Innocent did not entertain the thought of being disobeyed, whereas Leo wanted to be more far-sighted. Indeed, he had had his authority challenged several times as a bishop, so enforcing his authority with threat of punishment is not wholly surprising.[215]

Leo's threat of exclusion and punishment suggests that post-war inclusion had to be stipulated, even as one sought to heal the community. This follows from the argument already put forth that poor morality was linked with warfare. Post-conflict morality had to be an improvement of before, even if relaxations to some rules were made in the aftermath. The strain placed by circumstances of war on marriage relations, in other words, required leading figures of the Christian faith to redefine, or re-narrate, its rules on marriage and its attitudes to congregational inclusion and exclusion. To ensure stability of Christian marriages, Innocent had developed a new strand of thought that his successors followed with even more episcopal authority put behind the sentiment than he had placed. Innocent sought inclusion and in particular wished to emphasise the permanent nature of Christian marriage, and Leo followed this ideology even more strongly. In terms of cultural trauma, it was beneficial to emphasise the longevity and permanence of marriage as this supported communal structures that war had damaged.

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[214] Leo, *Ep.* 159.5: 'merito sunt notandae; ita ut etiam ecclesiastica communione priventur: quae de re excusabili contaminationem criminis elegerunt, ostendentes sibimet pro sua incontinentia placuisse.'

[215] Most notable of his conflicts were with Hilary of Arles and his conflicts with Eastern churches. See Wessel, 2008, pp. 57-96, 259-283.

However, accidental bigamy is not the only consequence that warfare had on lay marital relations at this time. Apart from people being snatched away, the era in question is also one of significant re-settlement, and we see concern over the lures of new migrants assimilating with local populations. In his treatise *De gratia*, Faustus of Riez, writing in late fifth century Gaul, complained that the disruptions caused by battles and the movements of new people allowed local women to have more sexual partners than before.[216] We will further explore this concern over women in Section 2.3 below. As we have seen above, the displacement of people caused multiple marriages, which led to unintentional adultery. But Faustus seems to be irked by the appearance of men whom the local women did not intend to marry, but wished to sexually engage with. One might compare this dynamic to other such instances of military forces mixing with civilian populations, such as Republican armies and the relationships that sprung up between male soldiers and local women as, indeed, they invariably did.[217] Faustus is criticising local women for using these shifting socio-political circumstances to form non-permanent relationships with men passing through. Marriages between Romans and barbarians likewise occurred, but Faustus does not mention these.[218] Disrupted communal structures continued to be a problem throughout this era, at times willingly as with Faustus's women, but also unwillingly as Sidonius Apollinaris's complaints of abducted women during raids also show.[219]

It is understandable why a bishop supporting Christian marriage would disapprove of anything less than a legitimate marriage.[220] However, there is much debate on exactly how positive patristic writings were on the subject of marriage at this time: views varied from active endorsement to a matter of concession. The Pauline exaltation of 'it is better to marry than to burn' (1 Cor. 7:9) defined much of church thinking. In 393, Jerome said: 'If marriage in itself be good, do not compare it with fire, but simply say: "It is good to marry". I suspect the goodness of that thing which is forced into the position of

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[216] Faustus, *De gratia* 1.16 (CSEL 21.0050-0051).

[217] See, for instance, Julius Caesar, *De bello civili* 3.110; Tacitus, *Historiae* 2.80 on Roman soldiers in Syria and Germany.

[218] For marriages in Gaul between Romans and barbarians at this time, see Ralph W. Mathisen, 'Provinciales, Gentiles, and Marriages between Romans and Barbarians in the Late Roman Empire', *Journal of Roman Studies* 99 (2009), pp. 140-55.

[219] Sid.Apol., *Ep.* 6.4.

[220] For the development of marriage at this time, see Evans-Grubbs, 1995.

being only the lesser of two evils.'[221] Patristic attitudes to marriage were, therefore, not always very positive.[222] In this light, the attitudes of men like Innocent and Leo are notably supportive even when potential adultery – a crime in Roman law and a mortal sin in Christian eyes – has been unwittingly committed, not to mention the legal stipulation that enslavement dissolved marriages.[223] The influence of wartime realities should be seen in this lenience, and in the wilful re-interpretation of both secular and ecclesiastical stances. However, I also wish to consider warfare as a socially disruptive experience, which would have influenced the communal structures and the composition of western communities.

POTENTIAL STRUCTURAL IMPLICATIONS

As I have argued, warfare necessitated changes to church regulations on marriages, and I have interpreted wartime as a motivating factor for a need of inclusion and lenience. However, beyond Christian attitudes on communal inclusion and its importance during times of crisis, I would also like to consider the demographic implications of warfare and how these may also be relevant in explaining adjustment. Ancient and modern societies alike build systems of social connections that are most beneficial for the sustainability of that society. In this process, one key element around which social paradigms are built is sex: 'sexual reproduction is the strongest evolutionary driver of human social arrangements.'[224] For late Roman society, these human social arrangements took the form of (serial) monogamy with effective polygyny enabled by chattel slavery and altrilocal concubinage.[225] Political instability and being the victim

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[221] Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.9 (PL 23.0223A): 'Si per se nuptiae sunt bonae, noli illas incendio comparare; sed dic simpliciter: *bonum est nubere.* Suspecta est mihi bonitas eius rei, quam magnitudo alterius mali, malum esse cogit inferius.'

[222] Jerome serves to be illustrative of these views. For more on the topic, see Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: sexual abstinence in medieval wedlock* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Philip Lydon Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church: the Christianisation of marriage during the patristic and early medieval periods* (Leiden: Brill, 1994); David G. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: the Jovinianist controversy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[223] For adultery laws and Christian interpretations, see Section 4.2.

[224] Valerie M. Hudson and Andrea M. den Boer, 'A Feminist Evolutionary Analysis of the Relationship Between Violence Against and Inequitable Treatment of Women, and Conflict Within and Between Human Collectives, Including Nation-States', in *The Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Perspectives on Violence, Homicide, and War*, ed. by Todd K. Shackelford and Viviana A. Weekes-Shackelford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 301-23, at p. 302.

[225] Walter Scheidel, 'A Peculiar Institution? Greco-Roman monogamy in global context', *The History of the Family* 14.3 (2009), pp. 280-91, at pp. 288-289. For more on this, see Section 4.2 on polygyny.

of a military attack could affect this monogamy-polygyny network in which people operated. Ancient demographics are a debated topic, and we remain in the dark over exact population figures in the West at this time.[226] The degree of decline in Western populations in the post-Roman era also remains uncertain. However, the above discussion has repeatedly highlighted the anxiety and fear experienced by many in the fifth century, and as likewise already noted above, third century population decline has been linked with uncertainty and material losses caused by wars. Here I would like to consider how fifth century warfare may have affected demographical patterns by considering some comparative history on the impact of violent conflict on rates of marriage and fertility.

Comparative evidence shows that military crises and conflicts negatively impact population growth. A period of uncertainty damages confidence in planning one's future, of which reproduction is a central part. Decline in reproduction, therefore, follows conflicts. This has been the case for conflicts for which population data exists, such as the English Civil War, American Civil War, and the Communist Revolution in Russia. The same trend marks also more recent conflicts in Ethiopia and Rwanda.[227] John Caldwell has noted: 'What dominates most situations is a feeling of personal and family insecurity and a fear of being committed to new demographic acts before it is clear what the world will be like when those acts are consummated.'[228] We have seen similar anxiety and insecurity over the future repeatedly in fifth century reactions to warfare, in calls of correction and in attempts at reassurance and consolation, and in policies regarding sexual norms.

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[226] Bryan Ward-Perkins, 'Land, Labour and Settlement', in *CAH* 14, pp. 315-45, at pp. 320-327. See also Walter Scheidel, *Measuring Sex, Age and Death in the Roman Empire: explorations in ancient demography* (Ann Arbor, MI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1996); Walter Scheidel, ed., *Debating Roman Demography* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

[227] John Caldwell, 'Social Upheaval and Fertility Decline', *Journal of Family History* 29.4 (2004), pp. 382-406; D.P. Lindstrom and B. Berhanu, 'The Impact of War, Famine, and Economic Decline on Marital Fertility in Ethiopia', *Demography* 36.2 (1999), pp. 247-61; Pierre Rutayisire *et al.*, 'Role of Conflict in Shaping Fertility Preferences in Rwanda', *African Population Studies* 27.2 (2013), pp. 105-17. Military conflict does not, however, appear to affect divorce rates, while it hinders rates of marriage and fertility. See David Lester, 'The Effect of War on Marriage, Divorce and Birth Rates', *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage* 19.1-2 (1993), pp. 229-31.

[228] Caldwell, 2004, p. 401.

If the above examples on lowered rates of marriage and child births bear any relation to much earlier contexts, then the demographic implications of warfare can account for, at least partially, why regulations surrounding second marriages were relaxed at this time, apart from the trauma felt by these communities and the need for inclusion in the aftermath of traumatic events. Kidnappings, relocation, bereavements and loss of material goods and property examined in Section 2.1 all damaged marriage prospects and thus may have influenced people's willingness and financial ability to raise children. Data on fertility and marriages from the late Roman West is unattainable, but the late Roman/early medieval period has been interpreted as a period of population decline, suggesting that factors were in place to diminish or prevent a sustained rate of growth.

Yet, even in the case that warfare did not affect population growth – and indeed immigration in this period may have made up for decline elsewhere – contemporary warfare may have affected short-term fertility. Decline in financial resources would make it more difficult for late Roman men to have, visit or maintain slaves, prostitutes and concubines. This, in turn, would limit the practice of polygyny with the overall effect of reducing birth rates. Material losses and shortages of income, in particular, may limit access to the resources required in maintaining extra-marital relationships. However, this is completely dependent on the scale of destruction. Moreover, monogamy too was threatened by bereavements and kidnappings: if a community finds itself with sparse numbers of childbearing aged women, competition amongst males will increase, resulting in increased internal conflict and strife.[229] If, on the other hand, there are not many men available, female competition increases as do the chances that polygyny will rise or that the legitimacy of children becomes less important. Both imbalances are harmful for Christian ideologies: internal strife, conflict, and the possibility of polygyny and bastardry. These considerations may have played into the continued importance placed on monogynous marriages at this time, but also these realities may account for the lenience shown in rules that reinforced first marriages and forgave accidental bigamy.

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[229] On male competitiveness and the influence of war on competition, see Walter Scheidel, 'Sex and Empire: a Darwinian Perspective', in *The Dynamics of Ancient Empires: state power from Assyria to Byzantium*, ed. by Ian Morris and Walter Scheidel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 255-324, especially pp. 257-267.

It is unusual for church leaders of this time to *relax* rules regarding sexual behaviour, and I have here suggested that trauma can help us understand why accidental bigamy was forgiven, and that the trauma experienced by ordinary people can further be highlighted by probable lowered rates of marriage and fertility. Such a link is supported further when we consider the considerable displacement and bereavement recorded in the sources: social structures were disrupted or terminated by warfare occurring in the West in the fifth century. Though speculative, we may wish to consider that rules regarding lay marriages were in part relaxed in response to these challenges faced, and we may surmise that these actions served two purposes: firstly, relaxation of rules widened the level of access to church approved monogamy and thus a relaxation helped spread and sustain this church endorsed institution during a difficult era. Secondly, lenience helped sustain endangered marriages at a time when fertility rates most likely were jeopardised.

Christian concerns over moral behaviour during warfare can benefit from this reading. Calls to monogamy and the importance of chaste sexual habits were deeply fundamental in Christian ideologies. However, as we have seen, rules surrounding these could be and were changed. From this follows that marital rulings may have been approached with some flexibility not only when trauma was felt, but when sustainable levels of marriage and fertility were threatened. Ideas of appropriate and inappropriate sexual and marital behaviour, then, were mitigated by contemporary concerns, and not only because chastity could appease a potentially angered god. This serves as a reminder of the contextual circumstances in which clerics were more accommodating than we might expect, and we should not only see this as an ideological discussion, or even one responding to traumatic experiences alone, but a factual reaction to the challenges and consequences of warfare. Enabling people to maintain pre-existing marriages, rather than charging them for adultery, would have enabled monogamous stability. Further research into the decline of populations in the West at this time, however, would be needed to establish this link more firmly. Nevertheless, we may observe further attempts to *include* rather than exclude sexually compromised Christians in a time of crisis when we turn our discussion to rape.

2.3 RAPE

In our examination of how warfare influenced Christian conceptions of morality, clear evidence of adaptation and change in attitudes can be found when we turn our attention to sexual violence and rape. Throughout the West, women were raped as a consequence of warfare. We especially find evidence of the rape of consecrated virgins, and it becomes clear that these rapes damaged the local Christian hierarchy directly. In recent works on late Roman and early medieval warfare and violence, the issue of rape has been largely overlooked,[230] although the topic of rape has been examined as individual cases, as will be discussed below. The most important work done on reinstating sexual violence into traditional historiographies of war has been conducted by Kathy L. Gaca, who has concluded that 'sexually specific, and largely female-targeting, violence on the part of warriors has historically been central to warfare.'[231] Perhaps the most thoughtful reflection for the late Roman era on this topic comes from Michael Gaddis, who has made the valuable point that the rape of a holy virgin symbolised the rape of the entire Christian community.[232] A. D. Lee in his *War in Late Antiquity* discusses the difficulty of concrete evidence of wartime rape, but concludes that 'it must nevertheless have been common practice on the part of both Roman and non-Roman soldiers.'[233] Common it was, to the extent that wartime rape between 390 and 520 brought about a complete re-examination of the Christian idea of 'the raped woman', providing us with a unique example of sexual violence altering a pre-established Christian ideology.

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[230] Rape is mentioned once in Guy Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West: 450-900* (London: Routledge, 2005), and without any reflection or analysis, p. 152; in Shaw, 2011 rape is mentioned a handful of times, but never is discussed as a separate issue, see pp. 33, 147, 215, 729-730. The studies in Sarantis and Christie, eds., 2013 also fail to discuss the significance of wartime rape, although its traumatic effect on a community is acknowledged once, p. 952.

[231] Kathy L. Gaca, 'Girls, Women, and the Significance of Sexual Violence in Ancient Warfare', in *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights*, ed. by Elizabeth D. Heineman (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), pp. 73-88, at p. 80. See also Kathy L. Gaca, 'Telling the Girls from Boys and Children: Interpreting Παῖδες in the Sexual Violence of Populace-Ravaging Ancient Warfare', *Illinois Classical Studies* 35 (2010), pp. 85-109; Kathy L. Gaca, 'Martial Rape, Pulsating Fear, and the Sexual Maltreatment of Girls (παῖδες), Virgins (παρθένοι), and Women (γυναῖκες) in Antiquity', *American Journal of Philology* 135.3 (2014), pp. 303-57; Kathy L. Gaca, 'Continuities in Rape and Tyranny in Martial Societies from Antiquity Onward', in *Women in Antiquity: Real Women Across the Ancient World*, ed. by S. Lynn Budin and J. MacIntosh Turfa (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 1041-56.

[232] Gaddis, 2005, pp. 85-86.

[233] Lee, 2007, p. 145.

The scale of war-rape, conquest-rape, pillage-rape – whatever form it took – cannot be estimated for the period here studied, yet its consequences are visible in our sources. In the works and letters of figures such as Augustine, Leo and Avitus of Vienne, we find discussions on the rape of Christian women by Goths, Moorish tribes or Vandals, and Gallo-Roman Burgundians, respectively. This should not lead us into thinking that rape occurred only when barbarian peoples engaged in warfare, but rather that rape committed by non-Romans was more visible to the community and its leaders than other kinds of rape. Raping members of a conquered community symbolises defeat for the raped and victory for the rapists, which establishes relationships of power and control between the two groups.

That rapes should occur in a violently charged ethos of military conflict in itself is not surprising: sexual violence was a typical feature of ancient warfare as indeed it is a feature of war today. There are psychological and anthropological reasons for this unsettling connection: a 2010 report on modern warfare stated that 'history has shown that the female body is treated as an extension of the battlefield, where victories and defeats can be made manifest in different modes of sexual gratification by the male soldier.'[234] Recent discussions on war-rape have called into question the assumption that rape is an inevitability of war,[235] yet the sources from the fifth century attest that at least during these conflicts, rape occurred throughout the western provinces. Wartime rape has been described as an organised, integral element of already Classical Greek warfare, and not as an accidental by-product but a conscious, premeditated part of war.[236] Of the Republican mentality, Sara Elise Phang has remarked that 'sexual

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[234] Inger Skjelsbæk, 'The Elephant in the Room: an overview of how sexual violence came to be seen as a weapon of war' (Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2010), p. 6.

[235] Raphaëlle Branche and Fabrice Virgili, *Rape in Wartime* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). For a cohesive summary on current approaches to the topic, see Jonathan Gottschall, 'Explaining Wartime Rape', *Journal of Sex Research* 41.2 (2004), pp. 129-36. It should be noted, however, that evidence of rape during wartime is not synonymous with endorsement or open acceptance of rape during wartime. For instance, Appian mentions the execution of an entire cohort due to one soldier's attempt at rape: 'In this siege [of Lauro] a woman tore out with her fingers the eyes of a soldier who had insulted her and was trying to commit an outrage upon her. When Sertorius heard of this he put to death the whole cohort that was supposed to be addicted to such brutality, although it was composed of Romans.' (Appian, *Bella civilia* 1.13.109). Appian, however, appears to be criticising the lack of self-control in the masculine and discipline orientated setting of the Roman army rather than condemning sexual violence against women.

[236] Gaca, 2014, p. 306.

domination was associated with imperialism.'[237] The various militant forces throughout fifth-century West likewise incorporated rape into acts committed, through which they asserted their dominance. Whether the conquerors then stayed or left the region, the victims nevertheless had to process what had happened to them.

The value placed on a woman's sexual status depended on her position in late Roman patriarchal society. At the bottom end of the social spectrum, a woman's sexual modesty had little value if any, while at the top end sexual purity was a woman's most valued commodity and the loss of it disastrous. Women at any point of the spectrum could become victims of rape, although the consequences of sexual assault were not necessarily the same. In contrast to these Roman ideas – and in theory, according to scripture – the sexual status of all Christian women, whether rich or poor, was important, but even in this context those vowed to chastity had an elevated sexual status. During the era in question here, the consequences of rape for holy virgins had not yet been articulated when such victims began to appear. Before proceeding to study these women, however, it is worth pausing to consider what, exactly, constitutes 'rape'.

No single, comprehensive study on rape in the late Roman or early Christian world has been produced to date, but the work done on the topic reflects the complexity of sexual violence in the past.[238] Our word designating this sexual crime derives from the Latin *raptus*, which was a Roman legal concept that is not synonymous with rape. The word derives from *rapere* – to seize or capture, and there is a vast conceptual difference between our word 'rape' and the Latin *raptus*, which was an abduction marriage. The Theodosian Code distinguishes between these elopements and seductions, but considers both punishable by law.[239] Snatching a young woman in order to marry her did not

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[237] Sara Elise Phang, *Roman Military Service: ideologies of discipline in the late Republic and early Principate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 93.

[238] The most focused study for ancient societies remains Susan Deacy and Karen F. Pierce, eds., *Rape in Antiquity* (London: Duckworth, 1997). See also Angeliki E. Laiou, ed., *Consent and Coercion to Sex and Marriage in Ancient and Medieval Societies* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1993).

[239] *C.Th.* 9.24. See also Judith Evans-Grubbs, 'Abduction Marriage in Antiquity: A Law of Constantine (*CTh* IX. 24. I) and Its Social Context', *Journal of Roman Studies* 79 (1989), pp. 59-83. Antti Arjava, *Women and Law in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), tellingly discusses rape only in relation to abduction in pp. 37-41.

necessarily involve sex, although it certainly could include it. In either case, the girl's reputation was tarnished by the act, and laws called for her punishment likewise.

Here, I will dismiss cases of *raptus* from the current study due to their ambiguous nature. As discussed, *raptus may* have contained an act of rape but did not necessarily have to do so. Most illustrative of this for our era is a letter dated to 472 from the corpus of Sidonius Apollinaris, who records one such *raptus*, demonstrating how *raptus* did not signify that a rape had necessarily occurred.[240] In the case recorded by Sidonius, the goal clearly was marriage, not sex or rape, and the elopement was planned by the man and the woman together. In this sense, *raptus* is more complex than cases of sexual violence: not every *raptus* would have contained an act of rape, and some *rapti* were elopements. It is therefore impossible to use discussions of *raptus* as evidence for rape unless the particulars of the case are known, and in order to ensure that our discussion centres on rape, elopements will not be considered.

A way to approach rape is to consider the crime as we would understand it today, which in a simple form may be defined as 'a sexual interaction to which one party does not consent.'[241] This act most often involves a man forcing himself on a woman or man who does not wish to engage in the encounter.[242] However, here we have a problem with ancient and past conceptions of 'rape' – Roman law is indicative of this as it focuses on the sexual violation of women of notable status. There is a sense, both in imperial enactments and Christian repetitions of these, that sexual violence inflicted upon holy women was a particular and persistent concern. Imperial laws thus

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[240] Sid.Apol., *Ep.* 5.19. The letter details the legal inconvenience of having the nurse's daughter disappear with the nurse's son of the neighbouring estate. The legal dimensions of such a *raptus* have been studied in Cam Grey, 'Two Young Lovers: An Abduction Marriage and Its Consequences in Fifth-Century Gaul', *The Classical Quarterly* 58.1 (2008), pp. 286-302.

[241] Rosanna Omitowoju, 'Regulating Rape: soap operas and self-interest in the Athenian courts', in Susan Deacy and Karen F. Pierce, eds., 1997, pp. 1-24, at p.1. While this is a workable definition, consent is prolematic and will be discussed below.

[242] While much of the discussion here focuses on women, men too were raped by barbarians during the time period in question – however, our sources do not speak of this. This is not surprising: a man being raped, be that orally or anally, was the most taboo of sexual acts that late Romans and Christians could think of. In light of this, one may expect silence from victims in fear of being ostracised, whereas church writers could not stretch their styli to record acts that made men so sexually vulnerable. As far as sexual violence against men was concerned, Augustine thought it preferable that women be raped in their stead (*De mendacio* 10). Women are victims of rape: a raped man was an ideological paradox and thus an invisible reality. A study into the rape of men in late antiquity would be a very challenging, but a much-needed study that could develop our knowledge of this issue further.

distinguish between the rape of non-holy and holy women, and as such there is legal awareness of the elevated sexual status of holy virgins who were vowed to chastity.[243] Widows vowed to chastity, however, were not recognised by imperial laws until 533.[244] Furthermore, the collection of ecclesiastical laws known as the Sirmondian Constitutions further repeat a law enacted by Honorius and Theodosius II at Ravenna in 420, that anyone who rapes a holy virgin is to lose all their property and be exiled.[245] However, as with many punishments laid out in the Theodosian Code, it is unlikely that the harsh punishments, such as the exile of the parents of an abducted girl, were consistently enforced.[246]

The laws discussed above condemned rape for women of status, but women without legal protection could not, in the eyes of the law, be raped. One further concept, therefore, is what in a modern context would be considered rape, but is not so in our sources: the sexual use of women who had to submit sexually to men they were subordinate to, whether they personally wished it or not. The most notable example of this is, of course, slaves (male slaves, too), but this also includes the rape of wives or concubines by their husbands/boyfriends. There was no such concept as 'raping' one's wife and, indeed, this kind of invisible violence also needs to be considered to the limited extent that it can.[247] Rape is, fundamentally, most easily visible in our sources

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[243] *C.Th.* 9.25 focuses on the rape of holy virgins.

[244] See the highly important study by Kevin W. Wilkinson, 'Dedicated Widows in *Codex Theodosianus* 9.25?', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 20.1 (2012), pp. 141-66. Wilkinson has argued that there was no recognition of a 'holy widow' that separated such a woman from other widows until the beginning of the fifth century. The first canonical punishment for a widow who broke a vow of chastity comes from the Council of Orange in 441, Canon 26 (CCSL 148.0085) and it is not until Justinian's legislation in 533 (*C.J.* 1.3.53(54) and 9.13.1) that imperial laws state that holy widows are subject to different treatment from other widows. The late recognition of holy widows is reflected by the examination of rape here: church figures are concerned with the rape of holy *virgins*, and not of holy widows, who were not recognised to have the same unique status that holy virgins possessed. See the discussion on Leo the Great below, who places raped holy virgins above widows, thus further illustrating this point.

[245] *Sirm.* 10.

[246] On the severity of punishments in the Theodosian Code, see Jill Harries and I. N. Wood, *The Theodosian Code* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

[247] Spousal rape is a new legal concept even now, originating in the 1980s. In England and Wales, spousal rape did not exist until 1991. It is a long-held assumption that marriage implies 'a special agreement to sexual intimacy' that may not be revoked or exercised illegally. See Julie A. Allison and Lawrence S. Wrightsman, *Rape: the misunderstood crime* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993), pp. 85-97. We should not, however, think that Roman women could not negotiate sex within marriage. Roman comedy found much amusement in husbands whose wives refused sex and in husbands living in cuckoldry, indicating that some Roman matrons were able to stop their husbands' advances when they so wished. Furthermore, Christian hagiographies and martyrologies of the third and fourth centuries include stories in which one spouse receives a call for asceticism (and thus sexual renunciation) and

when women whose sexual statuses were especially valued were raped, violently, by hostile outside forces. For the purposes of the current study, fifth century warfare provided these conditions, changing pre-established ideas of 'the raped woman'. This will be our focus here, but I will consider non-holy women, too, at the end of this section.

RAPE LEGEND IN CHRISTIAN DISCOURSE

Prior to the havoc caused by groups of Goths, Suevi and Vandals in the provinces of Gaul, Hispania and North Africa, the Christian discourse on rape victims was not based on real victims in contemporary Christian communities – at least, the sources do not reflect this. Rather the sexual assault of women was to be found in legends, be these legends pagan or Christian in origin. Such stories were often hybrid interpretations of mythology and Christian idealism as shown by Orosius of Braga, whose 418 work *Historiae adversus paganos* was a re-telling of the history of the world through a Christian lens. In this work, Orosius recalled the origins of Rome and how the Sabine women 'had been seized and bound in shameless wedlock', after which Orosius gave a highly negative account of Romulus as a deceitful leader and ruler.[248] Orosius used the participle *raptas* to describe the Sabines, an act which had been done with *crudelitas* – savagery. Certainly unions stemming from such an unrestrained desire for women were 'shameless' from a Christian perspective, underlying the brutish nature of their pagan ancestors. Even so, the legend of the Sabines ends in a harmonised union with their newly acquired Roman husbands,[249] demonstrating that this was a case of *raptus* and not simply rape. These stories of ancient rape were still well known, too: plays depicting the rape of the Sabines continued to be popular in Rome well into the fourth century, where scenes depicting the abduction – *raptus* – could be bought as souvenir coins.[250]

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successfully convinces his/her spouse to a marriage without sex. Likewise there are stories where such a request is not received well, usually ending in the martyrdom of the spouse requesting marital abstinence. See Elliott, 1993. For an overview of early Christian examples, see Rousselle, 1988, pp. 185-193.

[248] Orosius, *Historiae adversus paganos* (hereafter *HAP*) 2.4.2 (CSEL 5.0088): 'parique successu crudelitatis sine more raptas Sabinas, improvis nupiis confoederatas.'

[249] Indeed, what could be better or more glorious, from the points of view of the legend's hearers or readers, than being married to a Roman? For more, see Robert Brown, 'Livy's Sabine Women and the Ideal of *Concordia*', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 125 (1995), pp. 291-319.

[250] Antonia Holden, 'The Abduction of the Sabine Women in Context: The Iconography on Late Antique Contorniate Medallions', *American Journal of Archaeology* 112.1 (2008), pp. 121-42.

Such scenes were not Christian examples to live by, but they were an undeniable part of a shared late Roman culture that fed into the Christian dialogue of raped women.

Pagan legends also formed the background for the Christian idealisation of suicide as the ideal outcome of rape. This was especially admired in fourth century sources. The most famous woman to have taken her life after rape was Lucretia, whose story was a moral *exemplum* recorded most notably by Livy.[251] The rape of the ideal, chaste matron by the Roman tyrant's son, Tarquinius, symbolised a corrupt and inherently doomed era of Roman tyranny. Lucretia's male relatives promised to avenge her when she told them that she had been raped, but this was not good enough for her. She took out a hidden knife and committed suicide before them. Lucretia's message was a strong one: it is better to die than to live in disgrace.[252] Many early Christian thinkers embraced this message, especially as it promoted the importance of chastity. Already the earliest Western Christian writer, Tertullian, used Lucretia as an example to be followed by Christian women who wished to value their chastity.[253]

Many other Christian writers agreed, and one of the most concise and thorough vocalisations of the idealisation of post-rape suicide comes from Jerome in 393, in his vehement work against Jovinian, a monk in Rome who had begun to argue against Christian asceticism and the idealisation of virginity.[254] Rallying ancient legends to his side, Jerome sets one example after another to underline the universally acknowledged truth that death is always preferable to the loss of chastity, thus backing up his case that virginity should be esteemed above all else. Amongst many tales Jerome recalls, for instance, that:

> When the thirty tyrants of Athens had slain Phidon at the banquet, they commanded his virgin daughters to come to them … For a little while they hid their grief, and then when they saw the revellers were intoxicated, going

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[251] Livy, 1.58.1-11. Livy's version is the most comprehensive, but the story is also repeated in Ovid, *Fasti* 2.741-849. On the differences between the two versions, see Amy Richlin, 'Reading Ovid's Rapes' in Amy Richlin, ed., *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 158-179, at pp. 171-172.

[252] See Ian Donaldson, *The Rapes of Lucretia: a myth and its transformations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

[253] Tertullian, *Ad martyras* 4; *De monogamia* 17.

[254] That is to bluntly summarise a fascinating controversy that speaks of conflict between Christian ascetic ideals and the far more common marital life of most Christians. See Hunter, 2007.

out on the plea of easing nature, they embraced one another and threw themselves into a well, that by death they might save their virginity.[255]

As an *exemplum* of killing oneself after rape, Jerome says:

> How shall we sufficiently praise the daughters of Scedasus at Leuctra in Bœotia? It is related that in the absence of their father they hospitably entertained two youths who were passing by, and who having drunk to excess violated the virgins in the course of the night. Being unwilling to survive the loss of their virginity, the maidens inflicted deadly wounds on one another.[256]

Jerome's attack on Jovinian was not well received in Italy,[257] possibly because his views on marriage were so negative that their orthodoxy was dubious.[258] Nonetheless, Jerome depicted the potential rape victim or the woman who had been raped as a courageous hero who knew that life without chastity was simply not worth living. Death was a glorified act of courage, a sacrifice for chastity, and this ought to be both admired and striven for. Other prominent fourth century writers were less radical in their views, but nonetheless agreed with Jerome's basic sentiment. Ambrose of Milan related the story of Pelagia, who along with her female relatives chose to drown themselves rather than risk their persecutors sexually assaulting them. Again preserving one's virginity even to the point of death was idealised, as Ambrose puts the following words in the mouth of the fifteen-year-old maiden: 'I die willingly, no one will lay a hand on me, no one will harm my virginity with his shameless glance, I shall take with me my purity and my modesty unsullied.'[259] This letter is dated to after 386, while Jerome wrote in

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[255] Jerome, *Adv. Jov.* 1.41 (PL 23.0271): 'Triginta Atheniensium tyranni cum Phidonem in convivio necassent, filias ejus virgines ad se venire jusserunt, et scortorum more nudari; ac super pavimenta, patris sanguine cruentata, impudicis gestibus ludere: quae paulisper dissimulato dolore, cum temulentos convivas cernerent, quasi ad requisita naturae egredientes, invicem se complexae praecipitaverunt in puteum, ut virginitatem morte servarent.'

[256] Ibid. (PL 23.0272): 'Quo ore laudandae sunt Scedasi filiae in Leuctris Boeotiae, quas traditum est, absente patre, duos juvenes praetereuntes jure hospitii suscepisse. Qui multum indulgentes vino, vim per noctem intulere virgininus. Quae amissae pudicitiae nolentes supervivere, mutuis conciderunt vulneribus.'

[257] Jerome himself was reacting to the controversy from Bethlehem. He may have wished his extreme response to prove his orthodoxy as well as indirectly criticise the Roman clergy that had exiled him from Rome in 385. See David G. Hunter, 'Rereading the Jovinianist Controversy: Asceticism and Clerical Authority in Late Ancient Christianity', in *The Cultural Turn in Late Ancient Studies: gender, asceticism, and historiography*, ed. by Dale B. Martin and Patricia Cox Millar (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 119-35, at pp. 127-131.

[258] See David G. Hunter, 'Resistance to the Virginal Ideal in Late-Fourth-Century Rome: The Case of Jovinian', *Journal of Theological Studies* 48.1 (1987), pp. 45-64.

[259] Ambrose, *Ep.* 37 (PL 16.1093C): 'Volens morior, nemo me continget manu, nemo oculo protervo violabit virginem, mecum feram pudorem, mecum incolumem verecundiam.' Ambrose makes one other

393. In the decades leading up to the barbarian conflicts, prominent figureheads of the Church were upholding the ideal of suicide in the face of or as a consequence of rape.

The fates of raped women had drawn from the same pool of ideas for a long time, but when we turn from legends to women in congregations in the West, it becomes clear that one could not realistically expect raped women to kill themselves. Moreover, there was uncertainty over what one should do with these women when they did not take their own lives. Suicide legends offered their audiences definite proof that the women had been truly chaste and/or loyal to their husband/father/God until the end, ascertaining that these women were victims, perhaps even heroes, but certainly not seducers, whores or adulterers. There was no doubt of Lucretia's role in the original legend: she was the victim of rape, she had not indicated in any way to her violator that she desired him, and she did not take pleasure from the act. Yet when it came to rape victims in one's own community, the men who dealt with raped women could not be sure of the woman's role in the act: potential provocation, secretly wishing it or, god forbid, enjoying it were all potential points of worry. This was true for all rapes, including rapes that occurred during wartime. Any of these factors could, in the eyes of her peers, make an otherwise innocent woman culpable of the assault she had endured. It was one thing to discuss Roman matrons or Christian martyrs of legend, whose role in the rape or its avoidance was unproblematic, and quite another to espouse these ideals for ordinary women. Therefore, as we move onto evidence of rape between 390 and 520, we find that raped women were reinterpreted and redefined, in response to the anxiety and pressure conditioned by the war-troubled context in which these women were assaulted.

AUGUSTINE

The first significant move away from idealised rape to real rape was made by Augustine after warfare began in Gaul and Spain from 406 onwards, and especially after the 410 sack of Rome.[260] The trauma left by this three-day sack on the Roman world was 'as

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reference to Pelagia in his works, praising her in *De virginibus* 3.7 likewise. The legend used by Ambrose is entwined with that of Pelagia the Harlot, who was a popular saint in the East at this time and praised by figures such as John Chrysostom. See Section 3.2 on Prostitution for discussion on harlot legends.

[260] Augustine's *Ep.* 111 with its discussion on barbarians and divine punishment has been discussed in 2.1 above.

much psychological as physical,'[261] but it was the psychological shock that lingered longer.[262] In the aftermath of the sack, we find that the rape of women became a pressing pastoral concern.[263] Significantly for the current discussion, the sack prompted Augustine to write his *De civitate Dei*, and in this work Augustine re-assessed the issue of raped women, breaking away from the suicide tradition, as has been recognised by scholarship.[264] There are, however, further dimensions to and consequences of Augustine's discourse on rape than are currently recognised.

Augustine writes to 'the holy and religiously chaste women who were criminally attacked by an enemy in such a way as to grieve their modesty, although they lost nothing of their unshaken chastity.'[265] Books 1 to 3 of *De civitate Dei* were distributed before September 413, which is within three years of the sack.[266] Two aspects of this discussion should be identified immediately: firstly, that the women in question are holy virgins, who had vowed themselves to chastity, and that, secondly, Augustine is discussing pillage/war-rape. Augustine does state that married and unmarried women were captured and violated, too, and as Kathy L. Gaca's research on pillaging warfare has demonstrated, this was an integral (and conscious, premeditated) part of ancient military tactics.[267] Augustine, however, notes that '*even* consecrated virgins' were

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[261] Kulikowski, 2007, p. 178.

[262] While the sack shocked contemporaries (Rome had not been sacked since 387 BC) and many of the city's riches may have vanished with the Visigoths, the city recovered speedily and within a matter of years bore little proof of the sack. See Bertrand Lançon, *Rome in Late Antiquity: everyday life and urban change, AD 312-609* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 36-40; Kulikowski, 2007, pp. 178-179.

[263] Some historians of the sack, such as Orosius, downplay the sexual violence that occurred. He records a version where a Goth is awed by a pious virgin and does not harm her (*HAP* 7.39.3-9), but his retelling omits the initial attempt by the Goth to rape the virgin, which is recorded by Sozomen (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 9.11). Rape occurred during the sack as Augustine's response here discussed further reflects. On the immediate pastoral challenges as a result of the sack, see Dennis E. Trout, 'Re-Textualizing Lucretia: Cultural Subversion in the City of God', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2.1 (1994), pp. 53-70, at pp. 53-54. On Orosius's retelling of the sack, see Van Nuffelen, 2012, pp.178-185.

[264] The initial contribution was made by Trout, 1994. In this work, Trout demonstrated how Augustine reconstructed the story of Lucretia to suit the post-410 crisis. Augustine's take on raped women has been further discussed by Jennifer J. Thompson, '"Accept This Twofold Consolation, You Faint-Hearted Creatures": St. Augustine and Contemporary Definitions of Rape', *Studies in Media and Information Literacy Education* 4.3 (2004), pp. 1-14 and Melanie Webb, '"On Lucretia who slew herself": Rape and Consolation in Augustine's *De civitate Dei*', *Augustinian Studies* 44.1 (2013), pp. 37-58.

[265] *De civ. D.* 2.2 (CCSL 47.0036): 'sanctas feminas et pie castas, in quibus ab hoste aliquid perpetratum est quod intulit verecundiae dolorem, etsi non abstulit pudicitiae firmitatem.'

[266] On Augustine's reaction on the sack and the consequent timeline, see Brown, 1967, pp. 289-293.

[267] See the discussion in Gaca, 2016.

violated and proceeds to discuss these women solely.[268] The rape of non-holy women is ignored for the discussion that follows, showing Augustine's priorities and overriding concern for religious women alone. Augustine did not proceed to idealise suicide as a badge of chastity but instead separated the mind and the body of the victim, which offered absolution from rape.

In Chapter 16 of the first book, Augustine states:

> The body is made holy by the exercise of a holy will; and that, while this will remains unshaken and steadfast, nothing that another does with the body, or in the body, that the sufferer has no power to avert without sinning in turn, is the fault of the sufferer.[269]

The question of a violated body but a pure mind has its roots in the Lucretian myth where the raped matron makes this distinction herself,[270] and it is this battle between The Body and The Mind that Augustine likewise focused on in his readjustments. It is as if one has an out of body experience during assault when one is completely detached from what is happening. In an article by Melanie Webb, Augustine has been identified as the first figure, pagan or Christian, to interpret rape as an act for which the victims required rehabilitation and consolation.[271] She argues that Augustine perceived rape as a deed which did not require the woman to feel shame as she had unwillingly been subjected to the *libido* of someone else. However, this is complicated by the fact that even those unwilling can experience arousal during rape, which Augustine likewise acknowledged while maintaining that this had nothing to do with the victim's willingness.[272] If Webb's analysis of Augustine's sympathy for, and insight regarding, raped women is, indeed, correct, Augustine shows a high capacity for compassion and a profound understanding of female bodily response to forced sexual stimuli – a topic

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[268] *De civ. D.* 1.16 (CCSL 47.0017): 'sed etiam in quasdam sanctimoniales.' Emphasis own.

[269] *De civ. D.* 1.16 (CCSL 47.0018): 'sanctumque corpus usu fieri sanctae uoluntatis, qua inconcussa ac stabili permanente, quidquid alius de corpore vel in corpore fecerit, quod sine peccato proprio non ualeat evitari, praeter culpam esse patientis.'

[270] Livy, 1.58.7: 'My body only has been violated. My heart is innocent, and death will be my witness.'

[271] Webb, 2013, p. 57.

[272] This has been called 'a deeply pastoral insight into the dynamics of shame involved in rape.' See ibid., p. 52.

that even today is not well-understood.[273] Webb does not address, however, why Augustine would go to such great lengths in breaking precedent and in encouraging women to relocate themselves in Christian communities after their assault. The rapes that had happened in the wake of barbarian movements were not only statements about power or sex – they were statements about the divine and the very structure of Christian communities in the West. In other words, trauma theory can help us appreciate why inclusion was favoured over exclusion at this time.

Much has been written regarding virgins and their rise in Christian communities in Late Antiquity,[274] and prominent church figures of the period likewise mused on Christian virgins, offering them words of encouragement and caution. While many notable patristic figures wrote treatises on virginity, perhaps indicative of the continuous ink spilled over the topic of virgins is Gennadius's revised edition of Jerome's *De viris illustribus*. Reflecting back on the great Christian figures since Jerome's list a century prior, Gennadius listed several lesser-famed figures, including Evagrius, Heliodorus, Atticus, Fastidius and Salvian as having written treatises regarding Christian virgins.[275] He also records that Sabbatius's book on faith was written when a holy virgin prompted him to do so, reflecting the scholarly pursuits many virgins were interested in.[276] Many of these works do not survive, but *DVI* is a useful reminder of the significant literary discourse on the roles and functions of holy women that was by no means concluded at the end of the fourth century. Rather, the functions and powers of holy women continued to be debated and discussed. It is in this continuous redefinition that a raped holy woman should likewise be understood.

Some clerics were concerned by the attention that holy women drew to themselves, either through the pride that they felt because of their holiness or, in a worse case, through damaging the reputation of the church by sexual misdeeds. Therefore, even

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[273] Roy J. Levin and Willy van Berlo, 'Sexual Arousal and Orgasm in Subjects who Experience Forced or Non-Consensual Sexual Stimulation - a review', *Journal of Clinical Forensic Medicine* 11.2 (2004), pp. 82-88.

[274] Castelli, 1986; Elizabeth A. Clark, 'Ascetic Renunciation and Feminine Advancement: A Paradox of Late Ancient Christianity', *Anglican Theological Review* 63 (1981), pp. 240-57; Elizabeth A. Clark, 'Antifamilial Tendencies in Ancient Christianity', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5.3 (1995), pp. 356-80; Cooper, 1996; Burrus, 1994; Clark, 1993.

[275] Gennadius, *DVI* 11, 29, 53, 57, 68, respectively.

[276] *DVI* 25.

Augustine advised that raped holy virgins examine their own souls – could the rape have been divinely intended to stop them from becoming too arrogant?[277] But even if the occasional woman was puffed up by her own holiness, the Christian virgin was a staple icon of late antique religion by the time writings on war-rape began to appear. Her sexual violation upset the social and religious hierarchy of her community, in a way that is reminiscent of the Vestal Virgins of pagan Rome whose loss of chastity was interpreted as signalling the end of the empire.[278] The question that Augustine was reacting to in *De civitate Dei* addressed these same concerns. Was the violation of Christian women a sign of doom and did their abuse not undermine their religious identity and, in extension of this, the power of God? The themes of rehabilitation and continued inclusion in the Christian community suggest that, for Augustine, it was vital *not* to perceive rape as a sign of doom.[279] If Christians truly followed the one true faith, it was contradictory that such a religion's most pious supporters were defiled and expected to commit suicide while the one God they worshipped simply let such atrocities happen. Augustine understood this: the old approach to rape victims was damaging to the Christians of his own time, especially in a context of Christian uncertainty about the will and favour of God. A revision was necessary.

The background to this shift of accommodation and rehabilitation is the warfare we have been discussing thus far and the ways in which it challenged Christian communities. It is the influence of this context that has been overlooked in recent discussions on patristic views on rape, but further evidence from the Augustinian corpus exemplifies just how important the role of warfare was.[280] *Ep.* 111 has already been

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[277] *De civ. D.* 1.28.

[278] Christian authors recalled the impious Vestals. For Orosius's interpretation, see Victoria Leonard, 'Nefarious Acts and Sacrilegious Sacrifices: Live Burial in the *Historia adversus paganos*', in *Estudios de Literatura y de Religión en la Antigüedad Tardía*, ed. by Alberto J. Quiroga Puertas (Zaragoza: Libros Pórtico, 2011), pp. 395-410. See also Mary Beard, 'The Sexual Status of Vestal Virgins', *Journal of Roman Studies* 70 (1980), pp. 12-27.

[279] Compare to Vestal Virgins, where the only solution to their sexual impurity was to bury them alive. On this strange custom, see Tim Cornell, 'Some Observations on the «crimen incesti»', in *Le Délit religieux dans la cité antique. Acts de la table ronde de Rome* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1981), pp. 27-37.

[280] See for instance the discussion in Jennifer A. Glancy, 'Early Christianity, Slavery and Women's Bodies', in *Beyond Slavery: Overcoming Its Religious and Sexual Legacies*, ed. by Bernadette J. Brooten and Jacqueline L. Hazelton (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 143-58, at pp. 152-156. In Thompson the intended audience and context warrants one mention, see Thompson, 2004, p. 2. The importance of warfare for making rape a contemporary concern has been better taken into account by Trout, 1994, p. 69.

discussed above in reference to its views on barbarian warfare, but the letter also laments the capture of holy virgins. Augustine describes this as 'most calamitous, and much to be bewailed.'[281] He says that these women are to be comforted, and then details an incident closer to home, in Mauretania Sitifensis, where 'barbarians' had snatched women, including the local bishop's niece.[282] According to Augustine, the incident happened as follows:

> A few years ago, a nun, a grand-daughter of Bishop Severus, was carried off by barbarians from the neighbourhood of Sitifa, and was by the marvellous mercy of God restored with great honour to her parents. For at the very time when the maiden entered the house of her barbarian captors, it became the scene of much distress through the sudden illness of its owners, all the barbarians – three brothers, if I mistake not, or more – being attacked with most dangerous disease. Their mother observed that the maiden was dedicated to God, and believed that by her prayers her sons might be delivered from the danger of death, which was imminent. She begged her to intercede for them, promising that if they were healed she should be restored to her parents. She fasted and prayed, and straightaway was heard; for, as the result showed, the event had been appointed that this might take place. They, therefore, having recovered health by this unexpected favour from God, regarded her with admiration and respect, and fulfilled the promise which their mother had made.[283]

As discussed at the beginning, it is hard to tell from this description if the girl was subject to sexual violence. However, as Augustine gives this anecdote as part of his commentary on 'carried away' holy virgins, who he says are not guilty of any lust that their enemies inflict on them, we may suppose that Severus's niece was subject to some kind of physical and/or sexual harm. It is curious that the girl was then returned with great honour as contemporary lay views would most likely have considered the girl tainted by her kidnap, which had jeopardised her sexual honour. Perhaps her return was so unexpected that it was perceived to be miraculous, and Augustine's retelling contains

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[281] Augustine, *Ep.* 111.7 (CSEL 34.2:0653): 'Gravissima sane et multum dolenda est.' Rape of holy virgins in Africa is also recorded at the Council of Carthage in 411 (SC 224.1216-1218).

[282] Augustine, *Ep.* 111.7.

[283] Augustine, *Ep.* 111.7 (CSEL 34.2:0654): 'Nam de Sitifensi aute pancos annos Severi episcopi neptis sanctimonialis a barbaris ducta est et per mirabilem dei misericordiam cum honore magno suis parentibus restituta est. Domus enim illa barbarorum, ubi captiua ingressa est, subita coepit dominorum infirmitate iactari, ita ut omnes ipsi barbari, tres, nisi fallor, vel amplius fratres, periculosissima aegritudine laborarent. Quorum mater animadvertit puellam deo deditam et credidit, quod eius orationibus sui filii possent ab imminentis iam mortis periculo liberari; petivit, ut oraret pro eis, pollicens, quod, si salvi facti essent, eam suis parentibus redderent. Ieiunavit illa et oravit et exandita continuo est; ad hoc enim factum erat, quantum exitus docvit. Ita illi tam repentino dei beneficio salute percepta mirantes et honorantes, quod eorum mater promiserat, impleuerunt.'

several hagiographical elements that complicate getting a truthful sequence of events. However, the anecdote is a powerful reminder that holy virgins, snatched away or raped, could cause shock and dismay in a very public way. In this light, it was all the more important to find a way to neutralise the harm done to such women and re-imagine them as still part of their religious communities.

Augustine's comments on sexual violence inflicted upon holy virgins is exemplary of reactionary crisis management in the face of traumatic events that had undermined pre-existing ideas of holy women and their relationship with God and the Christian community. He had a long and well-established tradition to re-negotiate, in order to discourage shaming and suicide. His commentary on the matter is rooted in real cases, such as rape by barbarians in North Africa – perhaps by Berbers or Moorish tribes – and rapes in Gaul and Spain post-406 and in Italy post-sack in 410. The set-up of victimised holy virgins and aggressive barbarians also played a part in this exchange. A crisis of confidence required raped holy women to be included, not excluded. However, Augustine was not the only figure to contribute to the discourse on raped holy women in a revolutionary manner.

LEO THE GREAT

We have already discussed the way in which Leo the Great incorporated visions of war into his preaching, but he also had to discuss the fate of raped holy women in a more direct manner. In a letter that dates to 446, Leo advised Mauritanian clergy on how to treat rape victims. Towards the end of a lengthy letter that sought to resolve several issues in the region it was addressed to, Leo said:

> Now, on those handmaids of the Lord who lost their perfect virginity because they were violated by barbarians will be more praiseworthy in their humility and their feeling of shame if they do not dare to compare themselves with undefiled virgins. For, although all sin has its source in the will and a mind which did not yield could remain uncorrupted by the pollution of the flesh, it will hinder them less if they grieve over having lost even in their bodies what they could not lose in their minds.[284]

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[284] Leo, *Ep.* 12.8 (PL 54.0653B): 'Illae autem famulae Dei quae integritatem pudoris oppressione barbarica perdiderunt, laudabiliores erunt in humilitate ac verecundia sua, si se incontaminatis non audeant comparare virginibus. Quamvis enim omne peccatum ex voluntate nascatur, et potuerit corruptione carnis mens invicta non pollui, minus tamen hoc eis oberit, si quod potuerunt animo non amittere, doleant se vel corpere perdidisse.'

This advice is a short note in a list of many,[285] and the section on raped virgins is quite unprompted, suggesting that Leo's advice is a response to an enquiry included in the original letter.

When Leo wrote to Mauritania in 446, the province was under Roman control.[286] We cannot be sure if the *barbarici* rapists were plundering Vandals as Moorish kingdoms were likewise expanding at this time.[287] Whatever the scale of conflict in Mauritania, it was most likely tribal in nature. Under these circumstances rape had occurred. Leo states that a middle course ought to be employed regarding holy women who were raped:

> Let them not be lowered to the rank of widows, and yet let them not be considered among the number of holy virgins still undefiled. But if they persevere in the character of virginity and if they retain in their minds the resoluteness of chastity, then they are not to be denied participating in the sacraments. For it is unfair that they should be branded or accused for losing what hostile force took away, not something they lost of their own free will.[288]

Here Leo attempts to spell out the role and position of raped virgins: superior to widows, inferior to virgins, and members of the community who could continue to participate in the sacraments. He insists on a demonstration of shame and underlines that these women have lost something that may now never be regained. What Leo does that Augustine does not do is to rein these women back into their bodies: their chaste wills should do well to mourn the imperfection of their permanently ruined and stained physical forms. Leo's stance is problematic, but it too insists on a place for raped virgins in their community, where they may demonstrate new heights of their humility and shame. Leo thus presented rape as an unfortunate circumstance, which, while being a

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[285] The majority of the letter details what kind of men are suitable for clerical offices and admonishes the bishops of Caesarea Mauritania for having given into pressure from the populace when making appointments.

[286] The treaty of AD 442 between Geiseric and Valentinian III placed the western border of the Vandal kingdom at Numidia, lying to the east of Mauritania. See Merrills and Miles, 2010, pp. 61-66.

[287] Ibid., p. 66.

[288] Leo, *Ep.* 12.11: 'neque in viduarum dejiciantur gradum, nec in sacrarum et perseverantium virginum numero censeantur: quibus, si in moribus virginalibus perseverant, et castimoniae soliditatem mente custodiunt, sacramentorum non est neganda communion, quia injustum est illas in eo vel argui vel notari, quod non voluntas amisit, sed vis hostilis eripuit.'

demotion, was nonetheless an opportunity to express Christian *humilitas* in an unprecedented way. This exercise will permanently exclude these women from the realms of absolute chastity, but in doing so a new kind of Christian virgin is created: a tragic yet deeply pious figure, who as a rape victim has been torn away from the purity that she has sought to maintain and nourish. These women can go on living, but must adjust their behaviour according to their new status as a defiled virgin of God.

Leo's views may be influenced by his residence in Rome in the 440s. Over thirty years after the sack of 410, victims of Gothic rape would still have been a part of the Roman community. Had such women too boldly insisted on being just as good as undefiled virgins – a view that Leo did not feel comfortable with? In the absence of further evidence, we cannot say for sure. It is nonetheless clear that Leo placed more emphasis on the correct expression of inferiority than Augustine had, and the thirty years between the two stances would certainly have been enough time to see how Augustine's pardonist policy had taken root. Leo's stance both follows the Augustinian view of rehabilitation but simultaneously is drastically different. The rape of holy women was not a new phenomenon in the 440s, and as Leo is stricter on the victims, it is clear that attitudes to such women had changed.

The turbulence of the fifth century, therefore, required a reality check in late antique cultural idealisation of rape-suicide, and not only was this done in the 410s by Augustine, but it was revised by Leo in the 440s. This is demonstrative of the way in which the changed realities of daily life were affecting approaches to sexual status and sex crimes. Rape in its most obvious and visible form prompted these changes: war-rape and/or pillage-rape of high status women. However, what caused a problem for clerics of the time was not these acts themselves – we do not see Augustine or Leo pondering why men feel an urge to rape – but the position that the victims occupied in their communities after their ravishment.

Rape was a social and communal problem in a context where so much emphasis had been placed on the religiosity of the women in question. They served as living embodiments of faith and their rape was perceived as destructive and traumatic not only for them but for Christians at large. In fifth century discussions on rape, it is a 're-

narration of myths and beliefs'[289] that is in progress in order to process the trauma this created. And, indeed, Augustine and Leo are re-narrating rape to bring balance and order to Christian communities that had suffered blows to their structures of hierarchy because of ongoing violent conflict. This adjustment and revision should also remind us of changes made to lay marriage rulings at this time, which we have already discussed. War could be, and was, an influencing factor in formulating Christian ideas of sinful and immoral behaviour.

AVITUS OF VIENNE

I wish to discuss one final example of rape at this time, now from the beginning of the sixth century, in Southern Gaul. Thus far, missing from this discussion on rape and raped women is, of course, the rapist himself. Why is he so absent? In cases of war-rape, the perpetrator would not have been a permanent fixture of the community of the victim, as indeed was likely in the case of barbarian rapes thus far seen. However, the lack of rapists is also demonstrative of a further issue – invisible rape. Where we might see rape, neither pagans nor Christians of this time period did, such as the rape of one's spouse or one's slaves.[290] Only rarely, therefore, was a man who raped perceived as doing so – the exception being, for instance, a man raping someone else's wife during peacetime and within the same locality. Of such an affair we have one example, even if amended: the man has not raped another man's wife, but a consecrated virgin. Yet as sources have thus far demonstrated, the rape of a holy woman was religiously destructive and sparked episcopal involvement. Furthermore, this rape case also appears to involve a barbarian element.

This rape case comes from the letters of Avitus of Vienne (c. 470s – c. post-517), who in the late 510s found himself in the midst of a sex scandal.[291] The case recorded in *Ep.* 55 is useful here especially because it further explores sexual violence and relations between a Roman community and barbarians, but by this time the newcomers had

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[289] Eyerman, 2013, p. 49.

[290] For the possible exception of Salvian, see Chapter 5 below.

[291] For Avitus's life, see the introduction in Danuta Shanzer and I. N. Wood, eds., *Avitus of Vienne: letters and selected prose* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), pp. 7-10. See also Uta Heil, *Avitus von Vienne und die homöische Kirche der Burgunder* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011).

settled.[292] Our knowledge of the Burgundian kingdom is poor when compared to her barbarian contemporaries and neighbours, and Avitus is one of our best sources for Gallo-Burgundian relations in the early sixth century.[293] The Burgundian relations with local Catholics were amiable with royal conversion from Arianism marking the beginning of the sixth century. The kingdom also seems to have relied on cooperation from Gallo-Roman nobility in order to assert itself. Avitus's writings, however, convey political rivalry and tension between the local Gauls and the settled Burgundians, and these tensions are in the background of the rape of a local holy virgin.[294]

The events conveyed in the letter are as follows, as described by Avitus to the Burgundian *comes* to whom he was writing: a consecrated virgin had born a child as a consequence of rape by a local youth.[295] The letter does not identify the rapist as a Burgundian, and Avitus's commentary on him is inconclusive regarding his ethnicity.[296] If the raping youth was Burgundian, then the rape case may well have set the Burgundian elite (consisting of the noble youth and the Burgundian *comes*) against the Gallo-Roman religious elite (the local bishop and the holy virgin from a Gallo-Roman family). There is some reason to suppose that the youth was a Catholic, which may be deduced from the youth's threat to report Avitus to the bishop of Rome and Avitus lamenting that a child of his has died, spiritually,[297] referring to the young man who had fallen out with Avitus. We know Burgundians were converting at this time – was the youth a Gaul or perhaps a converted Burgundian? Or does Avitus refer to him as a child of his own to extend his own religious and moral judgement over someone he knew he had little jurisdiction over?

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[292] The editions of Avitus's letters here used are Shanzer and Wood, eds., 2002 and Elena Malaspina and Marc Reydellet, eds., *Avit de Vienne: Lettres* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2016). The latter will henceforth be shortened as Malaspina.

[293] For the Burgundian kingdom, see, for instance, Collins, 2000, pp. 114-116.

[294] Burgundians settled near Vienne in the 430s or 440s while the letter has been dated to c. AD 516/517. Though the Burgundian kingdom's boundaries shifted throughout the second half of the fifth century, the Burgundians had co-existed with local Gauls for well over half a century before Avitus's letter. It is, perhaps, the growth of Burgundian authority in the area that feeds into the conflict.

[295] Avitus, *Ep.* 55 (= Malaspina 52).

[296] The ethnicity of the rapist may be Burgundian because the letter is addressed to the Burgundian *comes* who is defending the youth. The introduction in Shanzer and Wood, eds., 2002, p. 291, discusses this.

[297] Avitus, *Ep.* 55.9 (= Malaspina 52.9).

In any case, the new father had claimed that the woman had not been a virgin when he had had sex with her, but rather that she was known for her multitude of lovers. The girl's Gallo-Roman family, on the other hand, wished to see the rapist punished. Avitus, as bishop-judge, was trying to solve the situation in favour of the defiled virgin. In response to this, the rapist was threatening to spread rumours that Avitus had fathered illegitimate children. Avitus was understandably disgruntled, recommending that the youth be imprisoned.[298] Reminiscent of a *telenovela*, this episode records a case where the rapist was publicly known, charges had been made against him,[299] yet he seemed to be protected by his high status, powerful friends and, furthermore, he did not appear to be in any way remorseful. On the contrary, he was aggressive when confronted and blamed the victim for being what Avitus calls a *meretrix* – a whore.[300]

Ancient literature does not often identify or speak of rapists, and the obstreperous youth in Avitus's letter is a rare find. With his refusal to acknowledge the consequences of having slept with the virgin, he paints a cruel, unfeeling picture of such men. Widening our scope considerably, we find some illustrative examples where rapists demonstrate an awareness that their acts have been wrong, yet even then outright remorse is not articulated. The story of Philomela, for instance, serves as one such example where her rapist Tereus cuts off her tongue to ensure her silence about the rape, as told in a lost play by Sophocles from the fifth century BC. Tereus clearly understands that the rape may tarnish his own reputation, but he responds to this with further violence done on the victim than any kind of self-inspection on his own viciousness – the story was repeated for Roman audiences by Ovid.[301] On the other hand, Menander's *Epitrepontes* from the third/second century BC offers a rare lamentation by a rapist who now both acknowledges the cruelty of his behaviour and regrets it too. Upon realising that prior to his marriage he had unwittingly raped his wife, Charisios cried out:

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[298] Highlights of the dispute include: 'Although [the youth] vomit many flames of terror against me, although he summon me to a hearing before the Roman church, and, if he still wants to, may say that I too have children, neither will I placate his threats by agreement, nor shrink from the tiring journey' = 'Quocirca, licet diversas in me terrorum flammas evomuerit, ad Romanae forsitan ecclesiae audientiam uocet et, si adhuc placet, etiam filios habere me dicat, nec minas suas assentatione placebo nec fatigationem itinerum verebor' (*Ep.* 55.9 (= Malaspina 52.9, pp. 129-130)).

[299] At least verbally – the letter does not indicate to what level these accusations had progressed.

[300] Avitus, *Ep.* 55.6 (= Malaspina 52.6).

[301] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 6.424-674.

I'm a criminal! That I could have done such a thing myself and become a father to a bastard child and not shown the slightest sympathy or forgiveness to her when she got in the same kind of trouble through no fault of her own. I'm a heartless barbarian![302]

However, Charisios's regret may not stem from him now viewing rape as an inherently cruel or violent crime, but rather over his concern for his own reputation. We may also note that rape was described as a barbarian act. It is important to remember likewise that these examples are from comedy – the confusion of paternity and misinformed sexual liaisons was amusing to audiences. Should Charisios's lamentation be therefore read as exaggerated melodrama for amusement's sake rather than a realistic depiction of a rapist's remorse?[303]

Returning to Avitus, therefore, it becomes clear that well-to-do rapists were likely to get away with their actions, provided they had victimised someone whose position was weaker than theirs. Avitus's youth was offended by the attention and accusations made against him. Avitus was writing to the *comes* because a final judgement fell into the realm of the secular authorities rather than his. The case demonstrates, therefore, that even when a local rape case arose, where an aggressor and a victim could be identified, rape continued to be trivialised and proof was difficult to attain beyond someone's word against someone else's. However, even if the rapist appears to be escaping without punishment, Avitus does display a more sympathetic approach to the victim. Indeed, nowhere in the letter is there a suggestion that the new mother should have killed herself when the rape first occurred. However, neither can we confirm the nature of the sexual encounter between the woman and the youth based on this letter alone.

Admittedly, Avitus's case does not stem from a military context, but it does reveal tensions between Romans and settled barbarians towards the end of the period here studied. It also demonstrates that there was success, on some level at least, in removing

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[302] Menander, *Epitrepontes* 895-900 (LCL Vol. 132, Menander 1.0488): "'ἐγὼ' γὰρ 'ἀλιτήριοσ' πυκνὸν πάνυ ἔλεγεν," τοιοῦτον ἔργον ἐξειργασμένος αὐτὸς γεγονώς τε παιδίον νόθου πατὴρ οὐκ ἔσχον οὐδ' ἔδωκα συγγνώμης μέρος οὔθὲν ἀτυχούσῃ ταῦτ' ἐκείνῃ, βάρβαρος ἀνηλεής τε.'" The line is quoted by Charisios's slave. LCL translates 'βάρβαρος' as 'brute', but I have adapted this for 'barbarian'.

[303] See H. H. Gardner, 'Ventriloquizing Rape in Menander's *Epitrepontes*', *Helios* 39.2 (2012), pp. 121-44; Karen F. Pierce, 'The Portrayal of Rape in New Comedy', in Deacy and Pierce, eds., 1997, pp. 163-84, at pp. 165-166.

death as a natural response to rape. No longer a matter of life or death, the questions were instead under whose authority such matters should be handled. In this specific case, there may also have been some tension and competition between Roman and Burgundian authorities. The visibility that military conflict had given to rape in the fifth century was perhaps needed in order to account for the type of situation that we encounter in Avitus's correspondence. Even Avitus's defiled virgin continued to be under his protection and a member of his congregation – far from death, she was not to be cast out any longer.

RAPE REDEFINED?

It should be evident that Christian clerics were concerned over the social, religious and sexual status of raped holy women, but these attitudes on rape should be considered with two reservations: firstly, the rape of non-holy women was not considered as worthy of commentary, although we must acknowledge that such rapes happened, and most likely in much higher numbers.[304] Secondly, it is worth asking whether it is plausible that some members of invading armies and soldiers targeted holy women in some conscious manner as victims of sexual violence. Crisis theory supports the findings that Christian ideology on raped women was changed in response to undermined and attacked pillars of Christian communities. This combined with psychological studies of wartime rape may explain why these women could become targets, even when we allow that regular women were also raped more frequently.

Nicola Henry *et al.*, in their work on behavioural models of wartime rapists, have considered the multiple factors that may cause a man who would not rape in peacetime to rape in wartime. While they have considered these aspects in modern conflicts, such as the mass rape of women in the Bosnian War between 1992 and 1995, some of their findings can be applied to more ancient conflicts as well. Firstly, women can be perceived as symbolising the enemy, and as such are targeted by soldiers who rape.[305] In a late antique context, Catholic holy women could represent local communities to

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[304] On Christian awareness of rape of slaves, see Carolyn Osiek, 'Female Slaves, *Porneia*, and the Limits of Obedience', in *Early Christian Families in Context: an interdisciplinary dialogue*, ed. by David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), pp. 255-74.

[305] Nicola Henry *et al.*, 'A Multifactorial Model of Wartime Rape', *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 9.5 (2004), pp. 535-62, at p. 555.

invading forces – this may not necessarily be a pagan/Christian or Arian/Catholic conflict, but rather a much simpler recognition of holy virgins' special status in their own locality that made them attractive targets. Secondly, 'societies where wars, intertribal violence, and the ideology of male dominance are prevalent, the rates of rape are significantly higher than in societies without these characteristics.'[306] We do not have enough evidence from within barbarian societies to attest to all of these attributes with certainty – levels of intertribal violence, for instance, are hard to estimate. However, subjecting outside women – Roman women – to rape appears to have been a typical feature of violent conflict as here attested, and Roman authors certainly wished to depict barbarian peoples as aggressive warrior-led groups at war with others and each other.[307] Lastly, contexts of war are loaded with notions of virility and hyper masculinity, both of which can be demonstrated through sexual aggression towards women.[308] The disadvantaged status of women overall explains some of the conditions that were conducive to wartime rape at this time, while the high status enjoyed by holy virgins explains why these women may have been targeted: to maximise the humiliation, demoralisation and damage inflicted upon the local community.

Kathy L. Gaca has demonstrated that rapes that occurred as part of Classical Greek ravage warfare targeted females between the ages of twelve to late teens in particular, in response to Greek ideas of a woman's most fertile and desirable age.[309] However, while the attractiveness of virgin women may be shared in classical and late antique contexts, the argument that victims were chosen based on age is problematic and does not necessarily explain why holy virgins may have been popular victims. The raped women in our sources must have been older than prepubescent and teenage girls: church councils had stipulated that women could not become consecrated holy virgins until an older age; the Council of Carthage in 419 gave the age of twenty years.[310] On the other

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[306] Ibid., p. 554.

[307] Benjamin Isaac's work on ancient racial thinking is of relevance here. See Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2013). For views on barbarians during our time period, revealing is Ammianus Marcellinus's depiction of the Huns, for instance. See the discussion in Charles King, 'The Veracity of Ammianus Marcellinus' Description of the Huns', *The American Journal of Ancient History* 12 (1987), pp. 77-95.

[308] Henry *et al.*, 2004, p. 541.

[309] Gaca, 2014, pp. 347-348.

[310] *Canones in Causa Apiarii*, Canon 16 (CCSL 149.0139).

hand, such a canon may indicate that prior to this teenage girls were consecrated – age, therefore, may have played a role after all. More significant than age, however, would have been the virginity of these women. Their sexual purity may have played into making them desirable objects of sexual violence. The men who raped holy virgins, if aware that they were holy virgins, must have known that this act of sexual violence was not the same as raping a non-holy woman. These dynamics should be born in mind.

The above helps us appreciate why figures such as Augustine and Leo led discussions of rape to new areas. As both Augustine and Leo have demonstrated, there was liminality in these women's sexual status that troubled bishops, making them holy and unholy, pure and tainted – they were simultaneously in opposing realms and could not be ostracised. These writers were not being mindful of the victim *per se*, but of the community of which she was part. As preaching on war has shown, communities were anguished and fearful, and that same tension should be seen in discussions of sexual violence likewise. Although Avitus is involved with a very different kind of rape, he is demonstrative of the public outcry that a holy virgin's rape could cause – especially if her family was distinguished as many virgins' were. This communal aspect of sexual violence was to be central of much early medieval thinking in the West, where such acts 'were presented as events social in character.'[311] A woman's rape never affected her alone.

I have argued here that holy women were undermined by sexual violence throughout the western provinces during this period. This attack on women who played prominent roles in the expression of the Christian faith was damaging to the established religious order, and the patristic response to virgin-rape sought to sooth and placate. Furthermore, it is clear that these rapes were not traumatic only for the women, but also to the Christian communities they belonged to. While pre-Christian Romans and early Christians thought suicide as the fitting end of a violated woman, especially as this ultimately proved her innocence in the act, Christian writers of the fifth century promoted rehabilitation as the preferred alternative. This was not in any way an obvious development as shown by third and fourth century sources perpetuating the Roman

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[311] Przemyslaw Tyszka, 'Sexual Violence in the Early Medieval West', *Acta Poloniae Historica* 104 (2011), pp. 5-30, at p. 30.

suicide ideal. Yet we have seen how Augustine instigated a new policy that was too lenient, perhaps because it was an immediate response to the violence that occurred between the years 406 and 410. While Leo followed Augustine's example in the mid-fifth century, the church attitude against raped women became less forgiving as warfare and migration continued. These women were not as pure as they had been before – however, to lose or exclude them completely would bring new hardships to an already difficult situation.

We, however, do not know how wives, widows, and other women – that is women who were not consecrated virgins – were treated after their rapes. The clerical interest here presented is exclusively inward looking, which in itself is telling of perception of rape: the socio-religious position of a woman defined whether her rape mattered to clerics or the community to begin with. Status-shaped conceptions of sexual violence were not new, but there was a shift from elite women of the Republic and early empire to holy women in particular.[312] The effect that warfare had on Christian ideas of raped holy women is undeniable, and the texts here examined offer a sense of palpable unease that these men felt when raped women attempted to resume their lives as before.

2.4 CHAPTER CONCLUSIONS

Warfare and military conflicts put pressure on people who endured them, but this pressure was especially tangible for people in roles of leadership, such as clerics. While Christian communities always had, to various extents, been surrounded by violence, the circumstances that arose in the western provinces in the fifth century undermined the validity of the Christian faith in the face of barbarian victories. In this sense of threat and competition, moral behaviour became a topic of discussion, and within this discourse, sexual behaviour was a multi-layered tool: wrongful sexual acts could explain the dire circumstances, while correct sexual behaviour could improve them. Furthermore, in order to facilitate a sense of togetherness and unity, clerics changed rulings on secular marriages and attitudes to raped women. The interconnectedness between the pressures of war and the development of Christian attitudes and ideas on

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[312] On social conventions on legitimate and illegitimate violence (sexual or otherwise) inflicted upon women in earlier periods, see Serena S. Witzke, 'Violence Against Women in Ancient Rome: ideology versus reality', in *The Typography of Violence in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. by Werner Riess and Garrett G. Fagan (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2016), pp. 248-74.

sex has been demonstrated here, and I have shown how important this is to our understanding of moralising texts of this time.

However, was the warfare that was taking place exceptional enough to cause these exceptional reactions? In other words, if warfare was commonplace or no different from the general violence of the age, does it seem likely that it would prompt changes in Christian doctrine and literature? Michael Kulikowski has chastised historians studying this era with the helpful reminder that 'not everything in the fifth century is about the barbarians.'[313] Nor was warfare necessarily drastically more violent or more frequent than before. Yet the above discussion shows that some aspects of Christian moralistic discourse were influenced by a new perception of the threat of war and its consequences on Christian communities. Bereavements, kidnaps, rapes, and other horrors, caused reactions in the local community and that community's religious elite, and aspects of this reaction have here been shown to be reactionary and transformative. Overall, one may draw the conclusion that these events were perceived to be traumatic, especially within communities where people were kidnapped, killed, raped, or in some other way threatened.

In a sense, therefore, Kulikowski is right in his statement that not everything is about the barbarians *per se*. These discourses centre around community structures, internal confusion and strife, and the fluctuating strength of faith and belief in the fifth century West. I have noted an absence of barbarians in some key sources as clerics were more engaged with the consequences of military activity, and not necessarily interested in the warring factions themselves. Instead, clerics turned to the many communities of the Western Church, viewing them to be imperfect. Humans were bound to sin, but these people were not just any sinners – they were sinners that were, to varying degrees, being punished by God, or were living in the end times, or were questioning the validity of the still relatively new imperial religion, or in some cases all of the above. This was a highly self-interested discussion, and the examination of oneself and of one's own community during times of war shines through the sources repeatedly. In this self-examination, sexual morality was discussed and preached. Attitudes to rape and

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[313] Kulikowski, 2013, p. 697.

regulations on lay marriages were both likewise perceived in a new light due to damaged communities.

The context of military conflict is a vital part of our understanding of sexually moralising discourses of this era. This context is important for interpretations of the ideal Christian, of sex, and of approved sexual behaviour. Furthermore, I have shown that ideas of sexual propriety were in flux and reactionary and, indeed, capable of being changed from a long-standing tradition, legal or ideological, to suit more contemporary needs. The Christianisation of sexual *mores* was not a unified transition or movement, but rather it was characterised by localised elements and concerns. It could furthermore be a response to cultural trauma, as clearly was the case with raped holy women. An appreciation of this helps us see the complex paradigms in which ideas of sexual behaviour operated in late antique Christian thought, navigating idealism, realism, and demonstrating accommodation when necessary.

The above discussion, however, has not yet answered why in times of crisis sexual habits or encounters were viewed as particularly problematic, beyond their obvious contradiction with the chastity emphasised in scripture. The next chapter will expand on this discussion by considering the ideology of pollution, and the tainting effects of prostitution, incest, and their perceived consequences on communities. This will illuminate the active nature that sexual sin was perceived to possess during the era between 390 and 520, enhancing our understanding of why immoral sexual acts were seen as collectively and communally dangerous.

3. NEGOTIATING IMPURITY: CONTAGIOUSNESS AND THE COLLECTIVE

In order to receive benevolence from the divine, a religious collective had to act in ways that satisfied that divine: through religious performativity that created obedience and spiritual and moral purity. Yet not always did all believers act in such ways, but rather committed acts that created impurity or a danger of impurity, damaging the person's and the collective's religious merit. As such, in the early 420s, Augustine sent a letter to a religious community of holy women, advising them on what to do with a troublemaker in their midst:

> If she refuses to submit and does not leave on her own accord, she is to be expelled from your community. This is not an act of cruelty, but of kindness – to prevent her from destroying many companions by her deadly contagion.[314]

Such a woman's faults, Augustine surmised, would have been many: a wandering gaze, a desire for ornamentation, too keen an interest in her virginal peers. She was a ticking time bomb and a source of *contagio*. In this letter, sin is depicted as spreading like a disease, and contagious sickness imagery was common in scripture to describe dangers to the religious community.[315] A community could be pure and healthy, or it could be impure and struck by diseases that plagued not the individual, but the collective itself. It is in this context of one sinful person's effect on others and, indeed, the entire community, that the importance of correct sexual behaviour was also perceived in the period between AD 390 and AD 520.

Yet, these impurities could be negotiable. Section 3.1 examines, firstly, ideas of sexual purity and impurity in the sources, demonstrating that a vision of purity as a communal exercise was a recurring theme. This discussion will demonstrate the active role that sexual behaviour was thought to play in communal life: sexual behaviour was a potent catalyst in determining a locality's future success or destruction. However, it was not

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[314] Augustine, *Ep*. 211.11 (CSEL 57.0365): 'quam si ferre recusaverit et si ipsa non abcesserit, de vestra societate proiciatur. Non enim et hoc crudeliter fit, sed misericorditer, ne contagione pestifera plurimas perdat.'

[315] For instance, yeast symbolised the idea of heretical contagion and its spread in 1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9. In Isaiah 1:4-6, the people of Judah are wrought with disease and wounds due to their sinfulness. See also Michel-Yves Perrin, 'The Limits of the Heresiological Ethos in Late Antiquity', in *Religious Diversity in Late Antiquity*, ed. by David M. Gwynn and Susanne Bangert (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 201-27.

enough for the odd few to engage in such performativity, or for even the majority to do so; everyone had to take part, or it was all for naught. The Christian community as a whole, in other words, had to engage in good moral behaviour collectively. In this sense, moral behaviour was able to reward believers or to bring them punishment. By a fuller appreciation of this active nature of morality and the consequences of impurity, we are able to understand religious writings on sexual *mores* better. This will also highlight why in times of socio-political instability, and military conflict linked to this instability, sexual *mores* were placed under scrutiny.

However, clergymen's ideas of collective purity were more idealistic goals than reality, of which they were fully aware. Sections 3.2 and 3.3 examine two polluting sexual acts, incest and prostitution respectively. Incest was always abhorred as unclean, but simultaneously it was an ill-defined and confusing concept. When faced with real cases of incest, negotiation and leeway both occur. Liaisons with prostitutes, on the other hand, had no place within Christian communities, but Section 3.2 shows that despite its polluted nature, prostitution was not tackled in any serious way at this time. Indeed, I will examine Maximus of Turin's manipulation of scripture at length to show that bishops approached such impurities on an individual basis. While we see calls for collective purity, therefore, at ground level the picture is much more mixed, and bishops adjusted their views and even scripture to negotiate desired outcomes: a decrease in incest or prostitution. Neither was as abhorred amongst lay Christians as clerical texts suggest. A complete abolishment, in particular, never appears to be a goal that is seriously considered.

Before proceeding, it is important to note that not all sexual matters that pollute will be discussed: nocturnal emissions and masturbation have been left out of the current study, although semen was considered to be a source of pollution. John Cassian and Augustine both discussed spilled semen at this time, but this has been carefully examined elsewhere.[316] From this it can be drawn that sex and sexual fluids were intricately connected with religious pollution, as Augustine discussed semen in conjunction with the worst kind of defilement: heretical practices. In this discourse, the Manicheans'

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[316] David Brakke, 'The Problematization of Nocturnal Emissions in Early Christian Syria, Egypt, and Gaul', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3.4 (1995), pp. 419-60.

heretical pollution transforms into the consumption of animal and human semen, and female menses.[317] Anyone who read or heard Augustine's words would have been in no doubt over how polluted these heretics were and how polluting their company could be. Masturbation, on the other hand, has scant evidence for the era in question, but it should be noted that worry over self-pleasure also appears in Christian writings of this time.[318] However, the concern over self-pleasure is overshadowed by the discussions on prostitutes and incest, and, as such, I have chosen the latter two to discuss how pollution could be negotiated.

The importance of the discussion here is to show sexual morality in action. The previous chapter already demonstrated that ideas could be and were reactionary, and here we see more of this. However, despite a sense of consensus that certain acts caused impurity, sexually immoral acts could initially be negotiated at a local level. Consequences of impure sexual contamination formed no unified doctrine at this time, but there is evidence of struggles to produce unified ideas, especially in the case of incest. The discussion here does not aim to produce new assessments on ideas of purity and impurity in Christian thought as a whole, but rather I wish to show that when clerics confronted impure sexual practices in their congregations, they were able to negotiate the consequences. One *made* the rules for Christian sexual *mores* – they could not materialise out of a void. This process of negotiating impure sexual vice is vital to our assessment on sexual morality at this time as it reveals the interaction between bishops and lay people. This discussion will support the hypothesis that the formulation of a more 'Christian' morality was reactionary and gradual, and that these developments were, initially, regional in character and possessed flexibility and negotiation.

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[317] Nicholas Baker-Brian, 'Women in Augustine's Anti-Manichean Writings: Rumour, Rhetoric, and Ritual', *Studia Patristica* 70 (2011), pp. 499-520; Johannes Van Oort, ''Human Semen Eucharist' Among the Manichaeans? The Testimony of Augustine Reconsidered in Context', *Vigiliae Christianae* 70.2 (2016), pp. 193-216. See also Johannes Van Oort, 'Another Case of Human Semen Eucharist Among the Manichaeans? Notes on the 'Ceremony of the Fig' in Cyril of Jerusalem's *Catechesis* vi', *Vigiliae Christianae* 70.4 (2016), pp. 430-40.

[318] Not much has been written on this issue in recent years. The most thorough study on masturbation and patristics is Giovanni Cappelli, *Autoerotismo: un problema morale nei primi secoli cristiani?* (Bologna: EDB, 1986), especially pp. 188-197, 209-222. See also M. S. Patton, 'Masturbation from Judaism to Victorianism', *Journal of Religion and Health* 24.2 (1985), pp. 133-46, although there are clear issues with the article's scholarship – it is nevertheless of some use for generic commentary. The most thoughtful work done on the overarching history of masturbation is Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: a cultural history of masturbation* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 2003), for a discussion on Greco-Roman attitudes to masturbation, see pp. 96-112, for the Hebrew tradition, pp. 112-124, and finally for patristic views, mainly Augustine and Cassian, pp. 124-26, 130-134.

3.1 IMPORTANCE OF PURITY IN CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

An understanding of sexual impurity as an active force that could spread through communities is central to Christian thinking on sexual deviance. Various acts could be impure, such as murder, magic, idolatry and other pagan practices, but here I will focus on how sexual vice was thought to create pollution and be a source of pollution. In making this connection, ancient Christians were by no means unique, but followed a deeply engrained connection that many earlier societies had likewise made, by attempting to separate religious performance and sexual practices.[319] In a valuable study on pollution in Roman religious thought, Jack Lennon has observed that 'the separation of sex from religion seems to have persisted as an idea which was clearly meant to be recognised by contemporary audiences.'[320] The exclusion of sex from the religious sphere is visible in various incidents from the Republican era: in the live burials of defiled Vestal Virgins as well as in the scandal of the Bacchanalia cult in the second century BC.[321] The fifth century historian Orosius included these scandals in his history of the world, noting that one Vestal Virgin, along with her partners in crime, had become polluted (*polluit*) by her seducer.[322] With regard to the Bacchanalia cult, Livy reported that the cult 'spread like an infection,'[323] and this idea of infectious (sexual) contamination was a relied upon motif in Christian writings likewise.

However, there is one fundamental difference between a Roman separation of sex and religion and the Christian one: Christian thought sought to root out any excessive sex from the behaviour of every believer, and not only those with special functions within the religious community, although for such people the correct practice of sex was more important than for others. The all-inclusive expectation of correct practices is clear already in the Pauline approach on sex and the Christian flock as Paul's ideas of sexual moral conduct were to be applied to Christian communities as a whole – no exceptions

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[319] For Classical Greece, see Robert Parker, *Miasma: pollution and purification in early Greek religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983); for Judaic ideas of pollution, see Douglas, 1984, pp. 41-57; and more recently Mira D. R. S. Balberg, *Purity, Body, and Self in Early Rabbinic Literature* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014).

[320] Jack Lennon, *Pollution and Religion in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 63.

[321] Ibid., pp. 64-73.

[322] Orosius, *HAP* 5.15.22 (CSEL 5.0313): 'Paruo post hoc intercessu temporis L. Veturius eques Romanus Aemiliam uirginem Vestalem furtiuo stupro polluit.'

[323] Livy 39.9: 'veluti contagione morbi penetravit.'

were allowed and no connections with sexually deviant people should be made. This bore reminding: 'I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral persons (πόρνοις) …' (1 Cor. 5:9) Someone, however, had forgotten such rules, and the community at Corinth was thus reminded to exclude such people: 'God will judge those outside. "Drive out the wicked person among you."' (1 Cor. 5:13) When faced with impurity, Paul's course of action was exclusion of πόρνοι – their presence threatened the community as a whole.[324] Examples of such negotiations of who could be included in the Christian community are familiar to us from the previous chapter, and here we will continue examining the process of defining what kind of people, with what kind of sexual behaviour, could be part of the Christian community, and who had to be driven out. In this discussion, ideas of polluting acts were crucial.

Due to the very basics of Christian sexual moral thought, notably marital monogyny and the idealisation of chastity, all leaders from Paul onwards faced an impossible task. After all, if controlling the sexual behaviour of a Pauline community in the first century AD was difficult, then controlling the sexual behaviour of late fourth and fifth century congregations, much larger and varied in composition and degrees of devoutness, was impossible. Already Cyprian of Carthage in the mid-third century had stated that when it came to the private matters of sex, the episcopal eye was peering in but left frustrated by the efforts:

> Oh, if placed on that lofty watchtower you could gaze into the secret places – if you could open the closed doors of sleeping chambers, and recall their dark recesses to the perception of sight – you would behold things done by immodest persons which no chaste eye could look upon.[325]

Cyprian was fully aware of the limitations of episcopal control: the task of seeing into the sleeping chambers of all was not feasible, and became even less so as Christian numbers increased. Furthermore, many people continued to be *incerti* in their religious practices and beliefs, limiting clerical control of their habits further. Nevertheless, clerics spoke to their communities about what was expected of them, articulating what damaging affects their improper sexual conduct could have not only on themselves, but

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[324] See the discussion in Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 168-174.

[325] Cyprian, *Ep.* 1.9 (PL 4.0212A): 'O si possis, in illa sublimi specula constitutus, oculos tuos inserere secretis, recludere cubiculorum obductas fores, et ad conscientiam luminum penetralia occulta reserare! aspicias ab impudicis geri quod nec possit aspicere frons pudica.'

on the Christian community as a whole. Sexual vices were active, polluting forces, creating intra-dependant religious networks, where the tainted nature of one could taint the religious collective. Furthermore, for Christian clerics of the fifth century West, polluting ideology was applied in response to contemporary pressures.

DEFINING PURITY

In the early sixth century, sometime between the years 515 and 523, the African bishop Fulgentius of Ruspe (462/467 – 527/533) wrote a letter to a Christian layman, stating that:

> The business of begetting children ought to be done in such a way by the spouses, that with the help of the sense of shame, when the faithful spirit brings itself to the work of fecundity, with God's help, it keeps the modesty of natural decency. Especially, Christian spouses must be careful to flee those works, which the divine severity both forbids to be done, and condemns when they are done.[326]

This guidance is euphemistic on the 'works' that Christians must flee: sex purely for pleasure and excessive sex, certainly, but the vagueness allows us to perhaps include oral sex, creative sexual positions, anal sex, mutual or solitary masturbation and so forth. These attempts at confining sex to a moderate, reproductive activity are not in themselves unique, and the dating of Fulgentius's letter is indicative that at the end of the period under examination, clerics were in no way confident that the chaste behaviour described above was the norm amongst married Christians. Conversely, it is indicative of clerical awareness that sex was not conducted in such a fashion.

Fulgentius's description is, for him, the definition of approved sexual behaviour – a description of how one could have acceptable sex that was not sinful and did not taint the people involved. This definition is narrow as it is idealistic, but not everything left outside of this concept was equally sinful. Immoral acts formed a hierarchy, which could be ranked in terms of sinfulness and their potential harm. These ranged from

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[326] Fulgentius, *Ep.* 1.19 (CCSL 91.0195): 'Negotium namque substituendae prolis ita debet a conjugibus peragi, ut subserviente verecundia dum se ad opus fecunditatis animus fidelis inclinat, modestiam simul naturalis honestatis, Deo adjuvante, custodiat. Praecipue autem observandum est fidelibus conjugibus ut illa fugiant opera quae divina severitas, et facienda prohibet, et facta condemnat.' cf. Augustine, *De bon. conj.* 11.12 that marital sex should be for procreation only, but that some 'natural' (vaginal) sex for pleasure may be pardoned.

commonplace encounters to the more scandalous, as imagined by Augustine in his 401 treatise *De bono coniugali*:

> Even fornication will be a good because adultery is worse – since violation of another's marriage is worse than associating with a prostitute. Or adultery will be a good because incest is worse since intercourse with one's mother is worse than living with another's wife is worse – and so on, until we come to those things about which, as the Apostle says, "It is shameful to even speak." (Eph. 5:12)[327]

These degrees of sinful behaviour reflect some of the complicated thought that went into immoral sexual vice. Augustine quotes Ephesians 5 to indicate that there are things worse than incest – his audience would fill in this gap by what they would associate as being 'worse'. Yet when we look at Ephesians 5 in context – and Augustine would have been well aware of this context[328] –, the passage does not indicate of whom one should not even speak. In the passage, Paul listed idolaters, fornicators and impure persons (ἀκάθαρτος) as those who may taint the community and as those who should be left outside the Christian community.[329] Augustine seems not to have interpreted 'impure persons' to mean adulterers or practitioners of incest (certainly impure!) as both of these are mentioned separately in the passage. What, then, is even worse? The final and most depraved kind of act may have been male/male sex, as in other works Augustine discussed homosexual sex by inferring to it with euphemisms, rather than stating it clearly, undoubtedly to mark how depraved he considered such unions.[330] Augustine's rhetoric on hierarchical sexual vice reflects the ideology here examined: not all sinning was equal in levels of sin or pollution as some types were more serious and damning than others.

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[327] Augustine, *De bon. conj.* 8 (CSEL 41.0198): 'aut bonum erit et fornicatio, quia est peius adulterium – peius est enim alienum matrimonium uiolare quam meretrici adhaerere – et bonum adulterium, quia est peior incestus – peius est enim cum matre quam cum aliena uxore concumbere – et donec ad ea peruenicatur, quae, sicut ait apostolus, turpe est etiam dicere.'

[328] Augustine references Eph. 5:12 in *Ps. c. Don.* 71.7 and *Io. Ev. tr.* 96.5.

[329] 'Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be associated with them. For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light— for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light' (Eph. 5:3-14).

[330] See Section 4.2.

One could define purity, therefore, by trying to give definitions of the sanctioned, or by creating a hierarchy of sin. Yet such attempts at giving guidance to the Christian crowds could backfire. Writing in the 390s, Pacian of Barcelona[331] lamented over the difficulties that he had faced when preaching about sexual vice: 'All that censuring of abominable behaviour, so clearly stated and often repeated as it was, seems not to have repressed, but rather to have taught licentiousness (*luxuria*).'[332] If a cleric was unlucky, he might even find himself the source of inspiration! The other downside was that no cleric wished to come across as overly keen, as Salvian of Marseilles explained when elaborating on fornication in Africa: 'I shall not discuss the individual cities nor mention all the different localities, for fear of seeming to search out examples too curiously.'[333]

Moreover, while digressions amongst the laity were a source of frustration, such behaviour amongst the clerical ranks was even more troubling. Religious leaders, as the mouthpieces of divine intent and ideology, were expected to demonstrate chaste behaviour in their own lives, which was not a novel idea. The Roman rhetorician of the first century AD Quintilian already noted that a priest committing adultery was worse than adultery committed by others;[334] a notion that was echoed by later Christian church councils that restricted the sexual practices of clergymen.[335] This idea that Christian clerics were sexually pure was so ingrained in Christian thought that by the time Maximus of Turin was preaching in the 390s and 400s, he was able to say that, like bees, bishops also innately demonstrated chastity.[336] This was not, however, necessarily as innate as Maximus supposed: in 408, Bishop Proculus of Marseilles accused bishop

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[331] The most comprehensive study is Angel Anglada Anfruns and Lisardo Rubio Fernández, eds., *In Paciani episcopi Barcinonensis: opera silva studiorum* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012). See pp. 457-462 for historiography.

[332] Pacian, *De paenitentia* 1.3 (CCSL 69B.0010): 'tota illa reprehensio dedecoris expressi ac saepe repetiti non compressisse uideatur, sed erudisse luxuriam.'

[333] Salvian, *De gub.* 7.16.2 (CSEL 8.0177): 'Nec discurram per loca singula, aut cunctas discutiam civitates; ne studiose videar quaerere atque investigare quae dicam.'

[334] Quintilian, *Decamationes Minores* 284.

[335] See, for instance, Charles A. Frazee, 'The Origins of Clerical Celibacy in the Western Church', *Church History* 41.2 (1972); J.E. Lynch, 'Marriage and Celibacy of the Clergy: the Discipline of the Western Church, an historical-canonical synopsis', *Jurist* 32 (1972), pp. 14-38; Teresa Sardella, 'Controversy and Debate over Sexual Matters in the Western Church (IV Century)', in *The Role of the Bishop in Late Antiquity: conflict and compromise*, ed. by Andrew Fear and others (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 83-104.

[336] Maximus, *Serm.* 89.1.

Remigius, whose bishopric is unknown, of adultery – this incident was scandalous enough to be recorded in the *Chronica Gallica* of 452, amidst notes on warfare and the passing and crowning of emperors.[337] Nevertheless, the assumed commitment to chastity or moderation in sexual matters gave clerics the authority to rebuke and criticise the laity on their perceived lack of it. It was one thing for a member of the laity to perform acts of sinning, but far worse for a priest to do so.

The effects and consequences of sexual sinning, therefore, were hierarchical and dependent on who was the sinner and what sexual misdeed they had committed. Despite a Christian notion of universal chastity, the sexual behaviour of the elite still mattered more, just as it had in pre-Christian contexts: clergymen, monks, and holy women had to check their actions carefully.[338] Enforcing ideas of sexual behaviour relied on a paradox: everyone's sexual behaviour mattered, but the actions of some were more important than others' in this regard. On top of this, the type of act committed determined its sinfulness, impurity and potential danger of polluting others. Much has been said about the holiness of the ascetic elite at this time, and it has become clear that their chastity was key in building their religious persona.[339] The laity were also placed under pressure on their sexual habits, yet the consequences of these could range from vital for the community to trivial. Let us consider, then, how impurity was thought to function and what consequences it was perceived to have.

CONSEQUENCES OF IMPURITY

In the 440s, writing in Southern Gaul, presbyter Salvian of Marseilles mused: 'The church of God is like an eye. If even a little mote fall into the eye, it blinds the whole sight; so, if even a few men in the body of the church act indecently, it darkens the

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[337] *Chron. Gall.* 452, s.a. 408 (MGH AA 9.0652). An argument has been made that the accused was the bishop of Aix. See S. T. Loseby, 'Marseille in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages' (University of Oxford, 1993), p. 101.

[338] We have seen this especially in the discussion on rape in Section 2.3.

[339] Lisa Kaaren Bailey, 'Monks and Lay Communities in Late Antique Gaul: the evidence of the *Eusebius Gallicanus* sermons', *Journal of Medieval History* 32.4 (2006), pp. 315-32; Hagith Sivan, 'On Hymens and Holiness in Late Antiquity: Opposition to Aristocratic Female Asceticism at Rome', *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 36 (1993), pp. 81-93.

whole light of the church.'[340] Salvian applies disease imagery of blindness, turning the Christian community into a living physical body with its own physiognomy. Such physical and medicinal allusions had been popular in scripture as well as in the writings of Salvian's predecessors.[341] Salvian's treatise *De gubernatione Dei*, from which the quote derives, will be examined at length in Chapter 5. He was not alone, however, in expounding the notion that the immoral behaviour of one severely affected the whole church. This rhetoric of contagiousness is repeated elsewhere in corrective admonitions on sexual vice and highlights how clerics both perceived and rationalised the consequences of impure acts.

Indecent, tainting behaviour could never happen in isolation: it could spread, contaminate and/or affect others. The idea of bad habits spreading was not unheard of, however, as, for instance, some Roman authors thought that the influx of luxurious (and thus unmanly) lifestyles popular in the first and second centuries BC had arrived from the 'effeminate' Greeks.[342] Often sexual digression was seen as originating from someone, somewhere or something, and it always had some kind of a material consequence. We find, therefore, exhortations to be mindful of one's own behaviour and its potential influence within the Christian community. Valerian of Cimiez noted: 'You ought to take care lest someone else sin as a result of your easy-going ways, in such a manner that his sin falls back upon yourself.'[343] Moreover, acquaintance with a sinful person could be bad for you, as Maximus of Turin observed: 'I grieve because, even if your own sins did not hurt you, still the crimes of your household will bind you

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[340] Salvian, *De gub.* 7.19.1 (CSEL 8.0182): 'Ita est enim Dei Ecclesia quasi oculus. Nam ut in oculum etiamsi parva sordes incidat, totum lumen obcaecat, sic in ecclesiastico corpore etiamsi pauci sordida faciant, prope totum ecclesiastici splendoris lumen obfuscant.'

[341] For Augustine, see Rudolph Arbesmann, 'The Concept of "Christus medicus" in St. Augustine', *Traditio* 10 (1954), pp. 1-28, and for Jerome, see Arthur Stanley Pease, 'Medical Allusions in the Works of St. Jerome', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 25 (1914), pp. 73-86. Maximus of Turin also likened sin to disease, which could be cured by a divine doctor. See Conroy, 1965, pp. 190-193.

[342] See Ramsay MacMullen, 'Roman Attitudes to Greek Love', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 31.4 (1982), pp. 484-502, for Roman sources discussing a Greek influence on Roman men and their sexual behaviour. MacMullen's conclusions, however, are problematic: he asserts that homosexual behaviour was a Greek import for the Roman elite and that homosexual practices were restricted to the Roman upper classes. The article is important for early studies on Roman homosexual practices, but more recent work disproves many of its assumptions – see especially Williams, 1999. MacMullen's interpretation, however, that homosexual practices *spread* through Roman society is, conveniently, reminiscent of Christian thinking on the contaminating nature of sexual vice that should be regarded as rhetorical rather than realistic. For a fuller discussion on homosexual acts, see Section 4.1.

[343] Valerian, *Hom.* 1.8.1 (PL 52.0696): 'providendum est, ne facilitate tua alter peccet, et alienum peccatum in te redundet.'

fast.'[344] Paul would have agreed with this insistence on collective purity, but shutting a sinner out of the Christian community was much harder to do in fifth century Gaul or Italy than in a first century Jewish Greek sect.

Not only was this discussion tied to the idea of contagiousness from one person to the next, or to one's Christian community, but alongside this discussion is the idea of the *corpus Christi*, of which the church was part. Sexual contamination of one man was contaminating to the body of Christ himself, and thus needed to be nipped in the bud. In the opinion of Augustine, fornication of any kind was forbidden precisely because of this: each Christian body was a holy vessel, which did not belong to the Christian him or herself. No part of these bodies should be polluted, Augustine preached in Milevis in 408/9:

> Let no one say in his heart, 'God cares not for sins of the flesh.' 'Know you not,' said the Apostle, 'that you are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy.' (1. Cor. 3:16-17) […] 'Know ye not,' the Apostle says, 'that your bodies' – and this the Apostle spoke touching fornication, that they might not think lightly of sins of the body – 'are the temples of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own?' (1. Cor. 6:19)[345]

Augustine sought to assert that God cared deeply about matters of the flesh and of acts that one did with one's flesh to the point where the body of the Christian belonged to God and its defilement was a punishable act. This served as an attempt to discourage Christians from engaging in impure sexual acts, but also was one way of rationalising why these acts could be as damaging as clerics thought they were. Here, Augustine emphasised individual responsibility in matters of sexual sinning. Vice could spread, but one always had to be mindful of one's own behaviour first and foremost.

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[344] Maximus, *Serm.* 91.2 (CCSL 23.0369): 'Unde doleo quia, etsi uestra uos peccata non laeserint, uestrorum tamen uos scelera retinebunt.'

[345] Augustine, *Serm.* 82.13 (PL 38.0512): 'Non dicat in corde suo, Peccata carnis non curat Deus. Nescitis, inquit Apostolus, quia templum Dei estis, et Spiritus Dei habitat in vobis? Quisquis templum Dei violaverit, disperdet illum Deus. [...] Nescitis, inquit, quia corpora vestra (et hoc de fornicatione loquebatur Apostolus, ne contemnerent corporalia peccata) templum in vobis est Spiritus sancti, quem habetis a Deo, et non estis vestri?'

From the defilement of one's body, we return to the concept of an active, angered God that we have examined in the preceding chapter. Indeed, Orosius gloomily stated in his 418 history that he had recorded the fall of Babylon for one specific purpose:

> I thought that these things deserved recording in order that, above all, those who bicker foolishly about these Christian times might learn from this partial revelation of the great mystery of the ineffable judgments of God that the One God has ordained these events – for the Babylonians at the beginning of the cycle and now for the Romans at its end – and might learn that it is through His clemency that we are alive and that our life is wretched through our own excesses.[346]

The context of misery for Orosius was the ongoing political and military unrest in the Western Empire, and he turns this context on its head: instead of complaining about atrocities, his readers should be grateful that God has let them live at all. The fall of Babylon had shown that God punished for sins severely, and comparatively Orosius and his contemporaries were suffering much less. Their sufferings, however, were caused by their *intemperantiae* – immoderation or licences taken in luxury and desire – to which God had responded with barbarian forces. Consequences of impurity, therefore, could reach beyond the contamination of a fellow Christian or the holy body of the church, and create wide scale devastation to many more. My analysis of wartime preaching has already touched upon this topic, but the evaluation here on the animated nature of vice further adds to the cause/effect formula of vice.

Divine wrath could, of course, manifest in numerous ways, and not just as barbarian threat. At the end of the fifth century, for instance, Gelasius I of Rome bemoaned that low standards of morality had affected the weather: 'What will you say about drought, hail, whirlwind, storms, and various disasters that come about as a result of the nature of our morals?'[347] The power that the divine had over matters affecting the agricultural year was not to be taken lightly.[348] These ideas, however, again demonstrate the active

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[346] Orosius, *HAP* 2.3.5 (CSEL 5.0086-87): 'Itaque haec ob hoc praecipue commemoranda credidi, ut tanto ineffabilium iudiciorum Dei ex parte patefacto intellegant hi, qui insipienter utique de temporibus Christianis murmurant, unum Deum disposuisse tempora et in principio Babyloniis et in fine Romanis, illius clementiae esse, quod uiuimus, quod autem misere uiuimus, intemperantiae nostrae.'

[347] Gelasius, *Adv. Andro.* 21 (PL 59.0114C): 'quid dicturi estis de siccitate, de grandine, de turbine, de tempestatibus, variisque cladibus, quae pro morum nostrorum qualitate preveniunt?'

[348] Gelasius seeks to be demonstrative, cf. Orosius, *HAP* 7.27 where he lists the plagues God inflicted on Egypt during the time of Moses, and how these plagues occurred again when Romans persecuted Christians. Divine wrath caused plagues, droughts, deaths of animals, civil wars, and so forth.

nature of vice, underlining why clerics were concerned about adultery, incest and so forth to begin with. Better morality could improve living standards as a whole, and this was not a force to be mocked when warfare and plundering, or some other crisis, began to occur. Such ideas spring up throughout the era examined, from 390 all the way to the end of the fifth century – and beyond.[349]

Lastly, one bishop faced with barbarian warfare in particular incorporated these ideas of active vice and communal purity into his works. Quodvultdeus, bishop of Carthage in the 430s, embodies the discussion above.[350] He asked,

> Have we not exhibited weakness and sloth; has not the din of obscene spectacles, of banquetings most base, and other wanton wickedness that we are ashamed to mention but evil men are not ashamed to do, has not the din of all this been such that rightly and justly God has turned his face from those who have turned their faces from him?[351]

Such behaviour was why Quodvultdeus thought he and his contemporaries were living in *tempore barbarico*. He mentions spectacles and banquets, and alludes to shameful sexual acts. Conveniently, he reminds us of the link between morality and warfare we have already discussed: a perceived lack of morality, for Quodvultdeus, had disappointed and angered God, and the warfare and advancement of barbarians in North Africa was a consequence of this. Quodvultdeus thus reminded his community of the collective nature of morality:

> What such a good thing, dearly beloved, have we done; or rather, on the contrary, what evils have we not done? There are those who, while being accosted by neither threats nor torments, have sacrificed to evil spirits. […] This was no work of an enemy, of barbarians, rather of each man himself; every man inwardly, within his soul, has slain himself by his seeing, consenting, and not saying no; we all are guilty.[352]

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[349] cf. Justinian's legislation on homosexual acts, *Nov.* 77 (AD 538), which claimed that same-sex relations caused famines, earthquakes and pestilence.

[350] Quodvultdeus remains poorly studied, especially on his own terms. Nevertheless, two works have examined select writings in greater detail, in Daniel Van Slyke, *Quodvultdeus of Carthage: the apocalyptic theology of a Roman African in exile* (Strathfield: St. Pauls, 2003); Thomas M. Finn, *Quodvultdeus of Carthage. The Creedal Homilies: conversion in fifth-century North Africa* (New York, NY: Newman Press, 2004). See also Quasten, 1986, p. 503 for further bibliography.

[351] Quodvultdeus, *De tempore barbarico* (henceforth *De temp.*) 2.2.6 (CCSL 60.0474): 'Nonne tunc fluxus atque desidia, obscena spectacula, turpissima convivia, aliaque licentiosa nequitia, quae nos pudet dicere, sed malos non pudet agere, ita perstrepuerunt, ut iure iusteque averterit deus faciem ab eis, qui ab eo averterunt facies suas?'

[352] Quodvultdeus, *De temp.* 1.4.11-13 (CCSL 60.0429): 'Quid tale, dilectissimi, fecimus, immo e contrario quae mala non fecimus? Illi nec tormentis nec minis conventi daemoniis sacrificaverunt. …

Quodvultdeus is not focusing on sex, but rather practices of sacrificing to pagan gods and attending games – yet this behaviour, as the sexual excesses he discussed elsewhere in the work, was a sin with a communal effect. The sinning of one or a few was thought to taint and spread within the community.

From an ideological point of view, Christian authors continued a long-held religious outlook that sex had a contagious power that could be disastrous for an entire community of believers: the Christian community was composed of domino pieces, and when one lustful man or woman fell, they dragged others down with them. This idea was echoed in Africa, Spain, Gaul and Italy. Sexual vice moved horizontally, from one person to the next, but it affronted and damaged vertically, from human to divine. These findings in Christian thinking on the mobility and active nature of vice can be summarised accordingly: sexual vice was hierarchical according to who committed the vice and what sexual act was committed; sexual vice transcended the spheres of public and private as private acts could have public consequences; sexual immorality actively contaminated and spread; it was able to make the church itself impure; and it was acknowledged as nearly impossible to control. These factors made sex an episcopal and clerical concern and a topic of rebuke.

The aim here has been to give a preliminary overview on a complex topic to show its relevance to our understanding of sexual morality and its importance to the current study. A thorough examination on the attributes that patristic figures gave to vice would be a welcome addition to our understanding of the topic, but such in-depth ambitions must be left outside this thesis.[353] However, we must consider whether admonishments on sexual vice were genuine attempts at completely rooting out such practices or hails that knowingly were falling on deaf ears, reminding the audience of the goals they should aspire to whilst knowing that only a few would. To either end, the rhetoric of

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Nec ab hostibus, nec a barbaris, sed a se ipso omnis homo in anima se intus occidit videndo, consentiendo, non prohibendo; omnes remansimus rei.'

[353] Transmission of sin and original sin have been examined at length, however. See Pier Franco Beatrice, *Tradux peccati: alle fonti della dottrina agostiniana del peccato originale* (Milano: Vita e pensiero, 1978), recently translated as Pier Franco Beatrice, *The Transmission of Sin: Augustine and the pre-Augustinian sources*. trans. Adam Kamesar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). See especially pp. 68-76.

illicit sex as a polluting force could be and indeed was employed, but when we examine some of the most polluting sexual acts – incest and prostitution – this spread of vice seems to become negotiable, suggesting that vocalisations of communal purity were known to be more ideological than practical advice. A study on incest demonstrates this further.

3.2 INCEST

Between the years 390 and 520, incest troubled the Western clergy with its elusiveness: defining which acts constituted incest was challenging to do, and there was a gap between clerical and secular ideas on the issue. This in itself is not surprising: the concept of incest is cross-culturally relative, reflecting socio-cultural conceptions of acceptable mating partners.[354] In a late antique context, this culture specific conception of 'incest' drew from several different backgrounds: definitions of incestuous pairings were rooted in Judaic and Roman traditions to which were added developing Christian interpretations of religious kinship. It is not surprising, therefore, that many felt a profound confusion as to what made up incest, nor is it then surprising that the consequences of incest could be negotiated on a case-by-case basis. This section examines how incest, despite being abhorred as impure, was in fact subject to leeway and negotiation.

It is important to emphasise that modern and ancient ideas of incest are vastly different as the word conveyed much more than sex between blood relatives. The word derives from *incestus/incestum*, signifying impure, unchaste or unclean. Thus, the word for an 'impurity' became, gradually, to signify acts of sex or marriages between people who were perceived to be too closely connected to engage in such a relationship. In terms of pollution and defilement, there was no doubt that committing an 'impurity' damaged the people involved – they were both tainted. Each ancient culture, however, had their own ideas of what constituted a perilous connection. There is further ambiguity from context to context whether 'incest' refers to sex, to marriages, to both, or some other

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[354] See the studies in Jonathan H. Turner and Alexandra Maryanski, *Incest: origins of the taboo* (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2005); Arthur P. Wolf and William H. Durham, eds., *Inbreeding, Incest, and the Incest Taboo: the state of knowledge at the turn of the century* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

type of activity.[355] Whereas in modern contexts incest often signifies illicit sex, especially child abuse, late antique *incestum* most often refers to a marriage or an act of religious ritual impurity. Sources on *incestum* between the years 390 and 520 also emphasise the plurality of the concept as we find the word used in many different contexts to signify a variety of incidents, acts and practices. A unifying element of marital/sexual *incestum*, even when *incestum* was unclear and problematic, was disgust that marks commentary for nuclear and non-nuclear incest. As such, here I will differentiate between types of incest: 'sexual incest' to signify acts of sex between relatives and family members, 'marital incest' or 'incestuous marriages' to signify a marriage between two people so closely related that some deemed the union impure, and lastly 'ritual incest' to denote impure ritualistic acts, such as pagan worship and magic. This third one was described as *incestum* in fifth century sources – however, our focus here is marital incest and sexual incest, and as such this third kind is excluded from the current study.

Even this breakdown leaves room for varying types of incest. Sex between parents and children most often is the core definition of incest and is cross-culturally almost universally condemned. The Greeks, for instance, had no word for 'incest', but Plato nonetheless recognised that an unwritten law prohibited parents from having sex with their children.[356] Aversion to this kind of 'nuclear' incest does not necessarily require religious or cultural reasoning as aversion to parent/child sex exists outwith human beings. Avoidance of close-kin relationships – so called 'incest avoidance' – is typical in the animal world, in animals closely related to humans, such as apes, but also in species of fish. The incest avoidance theory, known as the Westermarck effect, argues for a psychological reversion to sexual relationships with immediate family, where the developmental years of one's early life eliminates sexual attraction.[357] However, human ideas of relation and kinship are not only biological as people can also form marital and religious kinships and other types of associations that makes breeding of two such

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[355] W. Arens, *The Original Sin: incest and its meaning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[356] Plato, *De legibus* 8.838a.

[357] Named after the Finnish anthropologist Edvard Westermarck, who first argued for the effect in Edward Alexander Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1891). Although this work is still a fundamental piece for the study of incest, modern studies have developed his ideas further. See Turner and Maryanski, 2005, pp. 30-34, 189-190. For problems in applying the Westermarck theorem, see Wolf and Durham, eds., 2005, pp. 121-138.

people 'impure'. Ideas of incest become more complicated as prohibitions become cultural, rather than purely biological.[358]

As such, ideas of what constituted sexual or marital *incestum* vary in late antique sources. The most taboo of incest was to be abhorred: sexual relations between father/daughter and mother/son. However, already with brother/sister incest, there seem to be regional customs in Egypt and Syria that sanctioned these relationships in the first few centuries AD.[359] Once we move to uncles, aunts, cousins, in-laws, siblings or twins, and whether one was related through the matrilineal or patrilineal bloodline, ideas of incest show regional, temporal and cultural variation.[360] At the same time, we may observe conscious attempts to create clearer rules for incest during the era here examined, and these attempts strove to reduce obscurity around the issue and to better confront and eliminate this polluting sexual vice. Because of its ambiguity, the boundaries of incest and punishments for incest could and indeed did become a matter of negotiation. Before looking at laws and canons that attempted stipulating these, however, I will discuss the main traditional ideas and definitions of marital and sexual incest to discuss its many variations in fifth century Christian communities.

INHERITED INCEST

Behind the confusion on the nature of sexual and marital *incestum* lay the rich cultural heritage of late antique societies, which had incorporated varied traditions on incest. The Judaic tradition on forbidden marital and sexual unions was both comprehensive and contradictory, and Leviticus 18:6-18, 20:10-21 forbade most forms of familial

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[358] Arens, 1986 provides an examination of cross-cultural practices of incest, arguing for a biological as well as a cultural approach, especially showcasing that cultures defined their own 'incest' ideologies that in other contexts would have been strictly forbidden.

[359] See the studies in Keith Hopkins, 'Brother-Sister Marriage in Roman Egypt', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22.3 (1980), pp. 303-54; Brent D. Shaw and Richard P. Saller, 'Close-Kin Marriage in Roman Society', *Man* 19 (1984), pp. 432-44; Brent D. Shaw, 'Explaining Incest: brother-sister marriage in Graeco-Roman Egypt', *Man* 27.2 (1992), pp. 267-99; Sofie Remijsen and Willy Clarysse, 'Incest or Adoption? Brother-Sister Marriage in Roman Egypt Revisited', *Journal of Roman Studies* 98 (2008), pp. 53-61; Walter Scheidel, 'Incest Revisited: Three Notes on the Demography of Sibling Marriage in Roman Egypt', *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 32.3-4 (1995), pp. 143-55. For Syria, see Simon Corcoran, 'The Sins of the Fathers: A Neglected Constitution of Diocletian on Incest', *Journal of Legal History* 21.2 (2000), pp. 1-34.

[360] For incest between twins, see the fragment examined in Nikolaos Gonis, 'Incestuous Twins in the City of Arsinoe', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 133 (2000), pp. 197-98.

incest at length, although it curiously leaves out father/daughter relations.[361] Despite these lengths to forbid the many variations of incest, the scriptures also contained stories that were not necessarily negative depictions of sex and marriages between family members. Lot's daughters seduced their inebriated father to beget children by him (Gen. 19:30-37) while Abraham entered into a union with his patrilineal half-sister, Sarah, with whom he had a son, Isaac (Gen. 17:15-16, 21:1-5).[362] The simultaneous forbidding of some incestuous relations but the sanction of others is incongruous.[363] However, the instances of condoned incest are presented in a context of biblical mythology and, as in the case of Abraham and Sarah, were directly dictated by God, and as such were part of exceptional narratives and not guidelines.[364] Nevertheless, this lack of a cohesive narrative and doctrine troubled religious figures, who were left with the task of explaining this problematic tradition. Augustine for his part reasoned that in the past such unions had been acceptable out of necessity – in his time they would no longer be sanctioned.[365]

Roman approaches to kinship and incest further obscured the tradition that influenced Christian thinking on the matter. Sexual liaisons between mothers and sons, fathers and daughters, were to be averted, and although relationships with one's extended family

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[361] On this omission, see Elizabeth Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 21. While this could be explained by an argument that Levitical laws were based on the incest stories of Genesis, the rape of Lot by his daughters in Gen. 19:30-37 breaks this pattern – the omission of father/daughter incest in Levitical laws, in other words, remains unexplained. See Calum M. Carmichael, *Law, Legend, and Incest in the Bible: Leviticus 18-20* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

[362] Further examples are Jacob marrying two sisters, Leah and Rachel (Gen. 29:15-30), Nahor marrying his niece (Gen. 11:29), and Tamar having sex with her father-in-law (Gen. 38:13-18).

[363] Judaic sanctions also forbid a father and son having sex with the same woman, which appears to reflect the idea that men related by blood could not 'share' a woman – see Gen. 35:22, 2 Sam. 16:20-22, 1 Kings 1:1-4. Yet, in direct contrast, Onan was ordered to sleep with his dead brother's wife (Gen. 38:8-9). While Onan avoided ejaculating into her, the sex they practised was not condemned, only its conclusion was. Brothers sharing a woman seems to have been acceptable, while a father and son could not do the same. These complex networks are not unique to Judaic thought and have been examined in Françoise Héritier, *Two Sisters and Their Mother: the anthropology of incest* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1999).

[364] The disparages between old Jewish stories and Levitical incest laws are examined in length in Carmichael, 1997.

[365] Augustine, *De civ. D.* 15.16 (CCSL 48.0478): 'While it was quite allowable in the earliest ages of the human race to marry one's sister, it is now abhorred as a thing which no circumstances could justify.' = 'et cum sorores accipere in matrimonium primis humani generis temporibus omnino licuerit, sic auersetur, quasi numquam licere potuerit.'

of cousins, aunts, uncles, were problematic, they already formed a greyer area.[366] Furthermore, committing sexual or marital *incestum* looked beyond blood relations as a Roman *familia* was not centred around blood ties. Relationships contracted through marriage and adoption counted likewise,[367] and second century jurist Gaius stated that marital *incestum* would occur whether the relation was through blood or adoption.[368] Roman laws of the early empire were flexible to a degree, considering whether incestuous marriage had occurred between immediate kin or not, whether the person through whom a marriage relation had been formed was alive or not, and so forth.[369] To give a well-known example of flexible attitudes to marital *incestum*, Emperor Claudius changed the law to allow his marriage to his niece through his brother Germanicus, a law that was not repealed until 342, forbidding both paternal and maternal uncles from marrying their nieces.[370] Emperor Claudius may have been able to change the law to suit his needs, but his incestuous union was still scandalous: Tacitus later recorded the unique circumstances that led to their marriage, including measures taken to purify Rome of the defilement it had caused.[371] One could only push the boundaries of *incestum* so far before divine retribution was at stake. At the same time, the Constantinian dynasty that repealed this law in 342 itself practised marriages between cousins, successfully consolidating familial and imperial power in this way – *incestum* indeed was in the eye of the beholder.[372]

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[366] The most comprehensive study on Roman attitudes towards incest is Philippe Moreau, *Incestus et prohibitae nuptiae: conception romaine de l'inceste et histoire des prohibitions matrimoniales pour cause de parenté dans la Rome antique* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2002).

[367] On the composition of a Roman *familia* and *domus*, see the discussion in Richard P. Saller, *Patriarchy, Property and Death in the Roman Family* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 74-95. For punishments for *incestum* in Roman law, see Gardner, 1990, pp. 125-127; Susan Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti Coninges from the time of Cicero to the time of Ulpian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 37-39.

[368] *Gai. Inst.* 1.59-93. See also *Lex Iulia* on incest, in Thomas A. McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality and the Law in Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 140-147.

[369] See the discussion in Paul Hartog, '"Not even among the pagans" (1 Cor 5:1): Paul and Seneca on Incest ', in *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context: studies in honor of David E. Aune*, ed. by John Fotopoulos (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 51-63, at pp. 55-57.

[370] *C.Th.* 3.12.1. It should be noted, of course, that this uncle-niece marriage occurred in a social and imperial elite and was exceptional. See C. M. C. Green, 'Claudius, Kingship and Incest', *Latomus* 57.4 (1998), pp. 765-91.

[371] Tacitus details the union in length in *Annales* 12.5-8.

[372] See Jack Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 53-55.

The sustained marginalisation of sexual and marital nuclear incest can also be seen in the history of the early Christian communities. Due to Christian terminology of members being regarded as 'brothers' and 'sisters', pagan sources demonstrate befuddlement as to how these people were actually related to one another. Rumours of Christians putting lamps out for the duration of their meetings fuelled the view that these 'brothers and sisters' were engaging in secret orgies. A crime ascribed to early Christians was, consequently, *incestum*.[373] These accusations were made of early communities in the West likewise as Gallic Christians were accused of committing sexual incest in the second century AD.[374] Undoubtedly in these early instances we see what Catharine Edwards has called 'the sexualised other' as part of community definition, employed by pagans to marginalise Christians and later used by Christians themselves for the exact same purpose.[375] Anyone who committed some form of *incestum* was an outsider to be shunned and alienated.

Incest could also occur through religious kinship: the *consanguinitas* of the people involved could constitute *incestum*, and the *affinitas* of people could make a union between them incestuous.[376] For Christians, *consanguinitas* and *affinitas* implied brotherhood, sisterhood and the interconnectedness of Christians in Christ, forming the basis of *cognatio spiritualis* – spiritual kinship, which connected people who were not related to each other in blood or through marriage.[377] The limitations that spiritual kinship put on people may be seen from the forbiddance of unions between young people and their godparents, or between families connected by godparenting, which

[373] B. Wagemakers, 'Incest, Infanticide, and Cannibalism: Anti-Christian Imputations in the Roman Empire', *Greece and Rome* 57.2 (2010), pp. 337-54, at p. 338.

[374] Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.1.14 (PG 20.0413): 'And some of our heathen servants also were seized, as the governor had commanded that all of us should be examined publicly. These, being ensnared by Satan, and fearing for themselves the tortures which they beheld the saints endure, and being also urged on by the soldiers, accused us falsely of Thyestean banquets and Oedipodean intercourse, and of deeds which are not only unlawful for us to speak of or to think, but which we cannot believe were ever done by men.'

[375] Edwards, 1993, p. 87.

[376] For Roman views, see Ann-Cathrin Harders, '*Agnatio, Cognatio, Consanguinitas*: Kinship and Blood in Ancient Rome', in *Blood and Kinship: Matter for Metaphor from Ancient Rome to the Present.*, ed. by Christopher H. Johnson and others (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2013), pp. 18-39.

[377] For the term, see Archibald, 2001, p. xv.

were spiritual relationships rather than blood ones.[378] This invisible link between people has been accounted for as follows: 'For men and women who are "perfected" as sisters and brothers in Christ, not only are all persons on earth their brothers and sisters, but all relations are *ipso facto* incestuous.'[379] This definition offers an extreme view in which all members of the Christian community are related to each other, but while our sources demonstrate an awareness and concern over marital incest and spiritual kinship, they never go to these extremes.

One could commit marital/sexual *incestum* in a variety of ways, therefore, and in the fifth century such crimes were recognised as severe and scandalous. Furthermore, in terms of polluting acts, *incestum* – an 'impurity' – was one of the most severe. Rumours that Christians committed incest at their gatherings, which had arisen from first and second century contexts, seemed unthinkable by the fifth century by which time Christian terminology ('brothers', 'sisters') was understood and recognised as metaphors of spiritual kinship. Writing in the 440s, Salvian of Marseilles noted that 'the origins of our religion were thought to spring from two great crimes, the first being murder and the second incest, which is worse than murder.'[380] Here, sexual *incestum* is considered to be the vilest act one could commit – even taking a life was preferable. However, the question of spiritual kinship obscured the definition of marital *incestum*, creating a problematic concept that church figures were unsure how to approach, how to define, and how to punish.

We saw in the previous chapter that rape legends were popular in Christian writings of the late fourth and fifth centuries, but so were incest legends. Orosius is exemplary of this, including historical incest stories into his history of the world. He records the defilement – *incestum* – of Vestal Virgins, linking the concept with both sexual vice and religious purity, and thus testifying to both sexual and ritualistic *incestum*.[381]

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[378] These rules became normalised in the Byzantine church. See the discussion in Claudia Rapp, *Brother-Making in Late Antiquity and Byzantium: monks, laymen, and Christian ritual* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 231-236.

[379] Marc Shell, 'The Want of Incest in the Human Family: Or, Kin and Kind in Christian Thought', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62.3 (1994), pp. 625-50, at p. 631.

[380] Salvian, *De gub*. 4.17.2 (CSEL 8.0095): 'Siquidem etiam initia ipsa nostrae religionis non nisi a duobus maximis facinoribus oriri arbitrabantur, primum scilicet homicidio, deinde, quod homicidio est gravius, incestu.'

[381] See Cornell, 1981.

However, *incestum* did not always have a religious connotation as evidenced by Orosius's further discussion on the crime. He records the Assyrian queen Semiramis having sex with her son, the Persian king Darius marrying his sister, a similar scenario in the Egyptian courts, Caligula having sex with his sisters, Nero having sex with his mother and sister, and finally Caracalla marrying his stepmother.[382] Accusations of various types of incest were popular in invective when constructing 'bad' emperors or rulers, and apart from Caracalla and the Vestal Virgins, all of Orosius's chosen examples involve incest within the nuclear family – the most abhorred kind. Three of Orosius's incest stories contain mother/son incest, including the story of Oedipus.[383] Significantly, mother/son incest is thought to be more taboo than other kinds of incest due to phylogenetic factors, and modern psychologists consider mother/son incest to be more psychologically damaging to the individuals involved than father/daughter or brother/sister incest is to the parties involved.[384] The defiling and unnatural aura of mother/son incest, in particular, may explain why it is featured so often – it was more shocking than other kinds of incest. These acts were, for Orosius and his readers, ultimate manifestations of uncontrollable lust and lack of virtue, breaking moral and natural boundaries.

Even so, there was clearly something appealing about stories of incest as illicit, alien experiences. Christian writers worried over accidental incest, especially within the nuclear family: the exposure of unwanted children, Christian figures such as Justin Martyr and Minucius Felix worried in the second and third centuries, might result in parents accidentally having sex with or marrying their abandoned children once they

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[382] Orosius, *HAP* 1.4.3 for Semiramis, for Vestal Virgins 3.9.5, 4.2.8, 4.5.9, 5.15.22, 6.3.1, for Darius 3.16.9, for Ptolemy 5.10.6-7, for Caligula 7.5.9, for Nero 7.7.2, for Caracalla 7.18.2. cf. *Historia Augusta* that records the same story on Caracalla (10.1-4), confusing, as Orosius does, Julia Domna as his stepmother rather than his mother.

[383] The first to Semiramis and her son (*HAP* 1.4.3); the second to the famed Oedipus, whose story Orosius claims to omit but still hastens to mention that he was the brother of his own children (*HAP* 1.12.9); and the last is the aforementioned record of Nero and his mother (*HAP* 7.7.2). The Roman reception of Semiramis contains other sexual notions, for instance Ammianus Marcellinus credited her as the first person to castrate youths in Amm. Marc. 14.6.17.

[384] Sibling incest is facilitated by sex role segregation within family units, whereas father/daughter incest is regarded as the nuclear family relationship that is most based on cultural abhorrence than biological factors. From this follows that mother/son is often the most taboo, especially because of the perceived nurturing relationship that a mother has with an infant. For these views, see Turner and Maryanski, 2005, pp. 75-81.

grew up.[385] This fascination with the idea of incest was to be a recurring theme to the extent that in medieval hagiographies even saints were said to be born of incestuous unions.[386] The uses and origins of 'incest' were many, therefore, and incest could be committed in many different ways in a late antique context.

Between the years 390 and 520, *incestum* could still be a non-sexual act, such as magic or pagan worship, but when it came to sexual relations, it nearly always focused on marriages – as opposed to our more modern ideas of sexual abuse. Clerics and legislators alike addressed the issue of who could marry whom, and what made up an incestuous act. Ideas of pollution were, therefore, in the making as efforts were made towards defining these 'impurities'. I now turn to examine how the impure crime of marital *incestum* was confronted and what attempts were made to regulate incest more clearly. Finally, we will examine a specific case of incest from early sixth century Gaul to discuss how incest was perceived by lay Christians and how bishops intervened with incestuous unions to negotiate *incestum* with them.

REGULATING INCEST

Clerics puzzled over regulations for incestuous marriages and over what degree of separation was appropriate. The traditional views were more flexible than Christian ideas: for instance, studies have argued that in late Roman society no stigma was attached to marriages between first cousins, which were probably quite common.[387] Nevertheless, Augustine was relieved when by the early 420s marriages between cousins were rarer, which he credited to the more refined moral intuition of Christians:

> And with regard to marriage in the next degree of consanguinity, marriage between cousins (*consobrinarum*),[388] we have observed that in our own

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[385] Justin Martyr, *Apologia* 27; Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 31. See also the argument that child abandonment was met and supported by the rise of ascetic communities where such children were left in John Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers: the abandonment of children in Western Europe from late antiquity to the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 138-179 and, for opposing views, see Ville Vuolanto, *Children and Asceticism in Late Antiquity: continuity, family dynamics, and the rise of Christianity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 131-133.

[386] Archibald, 2001, p. 235. See also Geert Jan Van Gelder, *Close Relationships: Incest and Inbreeding in Classical Arabic Literature* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2005).

[387] Lennon, 2013, pp. 74-75.

[388] It is unclear why Augustine used the feminine *consobrinarum* here, and not a masculine *consobrinorum*. The term *consobrinus/consobrina* designates a first cousin. Historically, there was an inclination for the term to refer to a cousin through one's mother's side, however it gradually began to be used for both patrilineal and matrilineal cousins. Augustine's use of the feminine here may be trying

time the customary morality has prevented this from being frequent, though the law allows it. It was not prohibited by divine law, nor as yet had human law prohibited it; nevertheless, though legitimate, people shrank from it, because it lay so close to what was illegitimate.[389]

Augustine expressed some disgruntlement that regulations in imperial law and current church sanctions fell short on the question of cousin marriages as ideally they would not be sanctioned at all. Augustine was, however, wrong about the legality of cousin marriages when sometime between 420 and 425 he wrote Book 15 of *De civitate Dei* quoted above. At least a decade earlier in 409, it had been decreed that one could not marry within the fourth degree – that is, one's first cousin. However, if such a union thoughtlessly had been entered into, a supplication to the emperor could bring pardon, as stipulated by Honorius and Theodosius II at Ravenna in January 409.[390] Importantly, the law stated this to be a reaffirmation of a law passed by Theodosius I in the fourth century, but this law has been lost. Theodosius I, then, issued a law forbidding first cousin marriages sometime in the second half of the fourth century. Furthermore, in 396, Arcadius and Honorius had expounded that one could not inherit or pass on inheritance through an incestuous union, including cousins.[391] Writing in North Africa in the first half of the 420s, therefore, Augustine appears to have been unaware of three separate imperial laws regarding marriages between cousins, all indicating such unions to be forbidden. As the law of 409 also shows, people entered into such unions without knowing of its illegality, suggesting that many were not aware that marriages between cousins were forbidden, just as Augustine was not aware of this either. The significance of this will be discussed in due course.

Other fourth and fifth century laws provided further restrictions on who could marry whom. The Theodosian Code, which came into effect in 438/9 for East and West

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to emphasise the object of the marriage – the woman – from a masculine perspective, hence his use of the feminine. For the terminology, see Archie C. Bush, '*Consobrinus* and Cousin', *The Classical Journal* 68.2 (1972), pp. 161-65.

[389] Augustine, *De civ. D.* 15.16 (CCSL 48.0478): 'Experti autem sumus in conubiis consobrinarum etiam nostris temporibus propter gradum propinquitatis fraterno gradui proximum quam raro per mores fiebat, quod fieri per leges licebat, quia id nec diuina prohibuit et nondum prohibuerat lex humana. Verum tamen factum etiam licitum propter uicinitatem horrebatur inliciti et, quod fiebat cum consobrina.'

[390] *C.Th.* 3.10.1.

[391] *C.Th.* 3.12.3. The incestuous unions forbidden in the law include marriages with a man's cousin, with his niece (whether through a sister or brother), and with women previously married to his kinsmen, such as a brother's widow.

respectively, compiled imperial legislation since the time of Constantine. These were the laws that held up in imperial court, and later emperors in the fifth century, such as Majorian and Severus, added laws of their own to the Code.[392] Many laws in the Code dealt with incest. The law of 342 repealing Claudius's adjustment to marry his niece we have already mentioned, but a law from 355, issued by emperors Constantius and Constans at Rome, restricted relations further, forbidding men from marrying their sisters-in-law, be that a former wife's sister or one's brother's wife. This same law also declared children born of such unions as illegitimate.[393] Emperors Honorius and Theodosius II repeated the restrictions on marriages in 415 with the inclusion of forbidding a woman from marrying two brothers as well.[394]

A law issued in December in 396 at Constantinople by emperors Arcadius and Honorius also reveals some attitudes to marital incest.[395] This law again emphasises the invalidity of such marriages, now outlining inheritance rights: the 'wife' may never inherit, nor the illegitimate children, but rather the inheritance is to go to legitimate family members. The law notes that 'both parties shall be branded with infamy,' that is the man and the 'wife', immediately after dismissing the children. Children born of incestuous marriages were not viewed in moralising terms, but simply placed amidst other illegitimate children. Examined chronologically, therefore, imperial laws appear to expand restrictions set by their predecessors, and to close loopholes left by previous laws. The trend in imperial laws is towards clearer and more thorough definitions of incestuous marriages – there is no mention, however, of sex between people who are related to each other as the laws only consider marital relations.[396] We should reflect on these laws in relation to lay habits: the closing of loopholes and extension of forbidden unions suggests that these types of marriages were occurring – this will further be attested by a specific incest case examined below. Marrying within one's extended family must have been common on some scale, yet this behaviour was

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[392] On the history of the Theodosian Code, see Harries and Wood, 1993; John Matthews, *Laying down the Law: a study of the Theodosian Code* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

[393] *C.Th.* 3.12.2.

[394] *C.Th.* 3.12.4.

[395] *C.Th.* 3.12.3.

[396] See Section 4.2 on polygyny for *stuprum*, under which these acts may have fallen under. This is also in direct contrast to modern ideas of 'incest', which often denotes sexual abuse within a family, but rarely denotes a marriage.

increasingly discouraged and marginalised. Excluding children from inheritance further sought to enforce this.

Church councils also touched upon the issue, but with less frequency than imperial legislation. Church councils were also more concerned with punitive measures after the misstep of marital *incestum* had already occurred, rather than finding preventive measures. The Council of Elvira in Southern Spain at the beginning of the fourth century had decreed that a man who married a stepdaughter had committed *incestum* and was not to receive communion even at his death.[397] In terms of limiting incestuous marriages, Elvira only forbade one type of affiliation. The Council of Rome in 402 decreed that a man was not allowed to marry his uncle's wife, declaring it to be fornication, but stating that reconciliation with the church was possible if the couple separated and penance was performed.[398] After this, no evidence survives of a western council that would have discussed the issue until at a Gallic council in Agde in 506. This time it was considered at some length:

> Concerning incestuous unions, we allow them no pardon, unless the offending parties cure the adultery (*adulterium*) by separation from each other. We deem incestuous persons unworthy of any name of marriage, and deadly to be mentioned.[399] For they are such as these: if any one violates his brother's widow, who was almost his own sister, by carnal knowledge; if anyone takes up his wife's sister; if anyone marries his stepmother; if anyone joins himself to his full cousin (we forbid this from present time to such a degree that we do not loosen up those who set themselves up before); if anyone by lying together has polluted (*polluatur*) the widow or daughter of his maternal uncle, or the daughter of his paternal uncle, or his stepdaughter. However, they who are forbidden such unlawful unions shall have liberty to marry more agreeably to the law.[400]

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[397] See Elvira, Canon 66 (Mansi 2.0015-0016): 'Si quis privignam suam duxerit uxorem, eo quod sit incestus, placuit nec in finem dandam esse communionem.'

[398] Rome 402, Canon 11 (Mansi 3.1138).

[399] This appears to be a reference to incest being a mortal vice – as such, even mentioning it is dangerous to one's soul.

[400] Council of Agde, Canon 14 (61) (CCSL 148.0227): 'De incestis coniunctionibus nihil prorsus veniae reservamus, nisi cum adulterium separatione sanaverint. Incestos vero nec ullo coniugii nomine praevalendos, praeter illos quos vel nominare funestum est, hos esse censemus: si quis relictam fratris, quae pene prius soror extiterat, carnali coniunctione violaverit; si quis frater germanam uxoris accipiat; si quis novercam duxerit; si quis consubrinae subrinaeque se societ (quod ut a praesenti tempore prohebimus, ita et ea quae sunt ante nos instituta non solvimus); si quis relictae vel filiae avunculi misceatur aut patrui filiae vel privignae concubitu polluatur. Sane quibus coniunctio inlicita interdicitur, habebunt ineundi melioris coniugii libertatem.' Translation partly adapted from Joseph Bingham, *Origines ecclesiasticae; or the Antiquities of the Christian Church*. Vol. 7 (London: William Straker, 1840), pp. 283-284.

The canon goes to some lengths to define the different types of unions that were considered incestuous, and the impure nature of these unions is clear.[401] Marital *incestum* had polluted – *polluatur* – the people involved, and it was also considered to be a type of adultery. Why this is not called fornication, however, is unclear, although the canon from Rome in 402 preferred this term. As Chapter 4 will discuss, *adulterium* implies that at least one of the two parties involved was in a legitimate marriage. If an incestuous union was considered as no union at all, *fornicatio* may have exposed this delusion better, but perhaps *adulterium* sought to reflect their erroneous assumption that they were in a legitimate union. In any case, here we see a church council forbidding various types of marriages, including ones between cousins, which Augustine discouraged but could not strictly forbid some hundred years earlier. At Agde, any future incestuous couples would be forced to separate from their spouses, but significantly incestuous spouses already married were not forced to separate.

The canon clearly aims to outline what unions were illegitimate, including many variations and not only focusing on one type of union as previous canons had. This canon was repeated in the Council of Epaon in 517, and in between the two councils the Council of Orleans in 511 forbade a man from marrying his brother's widow or his first wife's sister. Anyone who did so would be struck with ecclesiastical severity, but the canon does not specify what such a punishment meant in practical terms.[402] Early sixth century Gallic councils were nevertheless taking a stance against incestuous marriages. In terms of developing ideas on incest, there appears to have been success in limiting the types of marriages considered legal, such as marriages between cousins, for instance. Bishops felt more confident in forbidding cousin marriages outright by the sixth century than Augustine had, transferring them into canon law, and even more significantly there appears to be some harmony between this and imperial legislation likewise.

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[401] Marriages considered incestuous in this canon are a man marrying his dead brother's wife, his wife's sister, his stepmother, his cousin, his marrying his maternal uncle's widow or daughter, his marrying a paternal uncle's daughter or stepdaughter, his marrying anyone he has consanguinity with, and his marrying a woman that has previously been with one of his kinsmen. The relationships of consanguinity are not clearly defined.

[402] Council of Orleans, Canon 18 (CCSL 148A.0009-0010): 'Ne superstis frater torum defuncti fratris ascendat, ne sibi quisque amissae uxores sororem audeat sociare. Quod si fecerint, ecclesiastica districtione feriantur.' Council of Epaon, Canon 30 (CCSL 148A.0031-0032) will be discussed below.

The development of incest regulations, secular and ecclesiastical alike, shows a gradual tendency towards clearer definitions and increased prohibitions, which has often been seen as the influence of Christianity – an approach which is not without fault and which overlooks the influence of non-Christian voices.[403] The effect of these limitations on marital incest in late Roman society has been argued both ways: it has been seen as disrupting Roman social continuity while others have argued that these laws did not revolutionise Roman marital patterns in any significant way.[404] The Council of Agde, however, was accommodating, allowing existing marriages to continue, but stating that future ones would not be tolerated. Gallic communities needed a transitory period, but creating communities where some were allowed to remain married to their cousins, for instance, but others were not allowed to marry them, may have been confusing, as we will soon see.

The regulations examined here show that work was needed in stipulating legitimate and illegitimate marriages between people related to each other. For the church, these unions were cases of *incestum* – for many lay Christians, they were simply marriages. In determining this relationship, there was room for individual negotiation, despite *incestum* being abhorred as a most serious sin. This flexibility is significant for our understanding on how rules for sexual *mores* were composed at this time. There is evidence of flexible negotiation on a case-specific level, which brings us face to face with the limitations of imposing universal moral codes to Christian communities at large. It is to this evidence to which I now turn.

FAILURE? AVITUS OF VIENNE

A unique set of letters from the corpus of Avitus of Vienne, composed sometime in mid-510s, details a local incest case in which Avitus was involved. From these letters, we see interaction between Christian ideas of morality and people's behaviour in daily life. Avitus has already been discussed in conjunction to a rape case, but this time he

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[403] For the debate on the overriding influences, see Evans-Grubbs, 1995, pp. 317-342; Moreau, 2002, pp. 302-329. See also John Howard Fowler, 'The Development of Incest Regulations in the Early Middle Ages: family, nurturance, and aggression in the making of the medieval West' (Rice University, 1981).

[404] Shaw and Saller, 1984**,** pp. 432-437.

was involved in an incest scandal.[405] The first letter, *Ep.* 16, written by Victorius, Bishop of Grenoble, has him approaching his metropolitan Avitus about a charge that had taken place in his town: a man had married his dead wife's sister and was not trying to deny the charge, and Victorius was unsure how to punish the couple. Avitus wrote back to the bishop (*Ep.* 17), stating: 'Even a layman cannot fail to be aware that a marriage born of close kinship cannot occur without a great stain (*sine grandi macula*).'[406] Here again we see that marital incest was systematically associated with impurity and defilement – this time, it was thought to stain. While Victorius did not describe the case as *incestum* in his initial letter, Avitus identified the case at hand as *crimen incesti* in his reply.[407]

As we know, Constans and Constantius had forbidden marrying a sister-in-law in 355, and this legislation had been repeated in 415 by Honorius and Theodosius II.[408] The Council of Agde in 506 had stipulated against marrying a sister-in-law, as indeed the Council of Orleans in 511 had done likewise. The exact year of this incest scandal is unknown, but the date of c. 516-517 has been suggested.[409] If we place, therefore, these events in the second half of the 510s, both imperial and at least two canonical rulings against such a union existed at the time. Avitus handed down a sentence: the couple must separate and be sequestered from the church for a while. If the couple refused to obey, they should be excommunicated until they separate and undergo public penance. If Avitus was aware of the canons of Orleans in 511, he reflects the ambiguity of the canon that states no exact punishment for those who had married sisters-in-law. On the other hand, Avitus's sentence of separation reminds us of the canon of Agde in 506, except that Agde did not force separation on existing couples. Yet, Avitus's assumption

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[405] Avitus, *Epp.* 16-18. The letters are in translation in Shanzer and Wood, eds., 2002, pp. 285-290. The Latin edition used here is Malaspina and Reydellet, eds., 2016. The contents of these letters have also been examined in Ian Wood, 'Incest, Law and the Bible in Sixth-Century Gaul', *Early Medieval Europe* 7.3 (2003), pp. 291-303.

[406] Avitus, *Ep.* 17.2 (= Malaspina 14.2): 'quis enim vel laicus non advertat, non sine grandi macula fieri de affinitatis propinquitate conjugium?'

[407] Avitus, *Ep.* 16.3 (= Malaspina 14.3): 'Et quia indicatis laboriosum ipsum ante multos iam annos illicitam secundae uxoris copulam fuisse sortitum, sufficiat impune bacchatum longo tempore crimen incesti.'

[408] *C.Th.* 3.12.2 and *C.Th.* 3.12.4, respectively.

[409] See Shanzer and Wood, eds., 2002, p. 285.

that even laymen should be aware of such marriages as tainting was soon proven to be wrong.

Remarkably, *Ep*. 18 details Avitus's confrontation with the incestuous (and angered) layman Vincomalus, who did not wish to be separated from his wife. The final letter reveals that upon being informed of Avitus's ruling, Vincomalus left Grenoble and travelled to Vienne to complain. The letter is Avitus's account of this confrontation to Bishop Victorius, allowing us further details on the specifics of the incest case. According to the bishop, when he attempted to explain the situation to the disgruntled layman, he 'emitted a groan – not of compunction, but of confusion.'[410] Vincomalus had been married to the sister of his first wife for thirty years, Avitus records – there is nothing in the first letter from Victorius that would have indicated that the incestuous union had been of such long standing. If Vincomalus married his second wife in the 480s or early 490s, he did so before Agde in 506, which forbade marrying a sister-in-law, but did not force separation on existing incestuous couples, as well as before Orleans ruled against marrying a sister-in-law in 511. If the rulings in Agde are taken into consideration, Vincomalus *should* have been allowed to remain married. However, imperial law had illegalised such unions in the 350s and in the 410s. Vincomalus's attempts to appeal to the longevity may have allowed an exemption in canon law, but not imperial. However, Vincomalus nor Avitus appear to have been aware that there was precedent in canon law allowing his union to be upheld.

Ep. 18 states that someone in Grenoble had raised the issue of Vincomalus having married his first wife's sister thirty years prior. It is unclear why someone raised the alarm after such a long time; the first letter only relates that a fellow lay Christian initially began to accuse Vincomalus of incest. However, it is now easy to see why Vincomalus was having a hard time regarding his marriage as incestuous: his first wife must have died at a reasonably young age as Vincomalus was still alive after a thirty-year remarriage. Taking into consideration the average life expectancy of the time and the fact that men presumably married in their twenties,[411] Vincomalus's second

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[410] *Ep*. 18.4 (= Malaspina 15.4): 'non conpunctus, sed confusus ingemuit.'

[411] For the age of men at marriage, see Richard P. Saller, 'Men's Age at Marriage and Its Consequences in the Roman Family', *Classical Philology* 82.1 (1987), pp. 21-34. In a rural, lower class context, however, patterns of marriage were likely to be different and life expectancy shorter.

marriage must have lasted far longer than his first marriage ever could have. In response to these developments, Avitus relaxed the initial punishment by revoking the need for public penance, which would have been a humiliating ordeal for Vincomalus and his wife. A divorce would do.

Ian Wood has interpreted this incident to be about a man who fell victim to rumours, but to see this as an example of late antique gossiping would be to sell it short.[412] The episode is suggestive of a much larger problem. It becomes clear that many Christians were not aware of the church's rules on marital *incestum* and that secular and ecclesiastical laws do not reflect actual marriage practices. Furthermore, the Bishop of Grenoble's referral of the case to Avitus demonstrates a confusion within the clergy itself – Victorius did not know what church standing on such an incestuous union was. However, Avitus seemed equally unsure of the rules, although it was clear to both bishops that *incestum* had been committed. The lists of attendees for the two councils that had issued against such marriages, Agde in 506 and Orleans in 511, do not include clergy from Grenoble or Vienne as having been present.[413] Awareness of most current attitudes to and punishments for marital *incestum* may have thus been better acknowledged in towns where the clergy had attended the most recent councils.[414] In any case, Avitus issued a sentence that was stricter than anything that councils had previously stipulated. Avitus insisted on separation after thirty years, which no existing canon demanded for such a marriage. Upon being given this decision, Vincomalus struggled to comprehend the rules that he must have regarded as foreign and irrelevant to his personal circumstances.

Vincomalus's incestuous marriage further strengthened developing canon law. In 517, the Council of Epaon convened under the watchful eye of Avitus, from which the tentative dating of the letter originates. Canon 30 of the council forbade a man marrying his dead wife's sister. It is likely that Avitus and real cases of incest were the causes

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[412] Wood, 2003, p. 300.

[413] We do not know of Victorius's career, but Avitus was bishop from c. 490 onwards, and as such may have been expected to attend these councils. His name, however, is not amongst the clergy.

[414] Some bishops attended both councils, such as Cyprian of Bordeaux, Nicetius of Auch and Cronopius of Périgueux. Due to a lack of evidence, however, we cannot compare their localities to see if rulings on marital *incestum* were better understood there. See CCSL 148.0213-219; CCSL 148A.0013-0019.

behind this rewriting. After all, as Avitus knew, there was confusion over marrying one's sister-in-law, not only amongst the laity but within clerical ranks likewise. A second, more high profile case may also have been an influencing factor, this time involving a man named Stephanus, a Burgundian official who also married his dead wife's sister around the same time. Many have thus seen the incest legislation of Epaon as deriving from these real incest cases, not unduly.[415] However, as already noted above, Canon 30 issued at Epaon was a repetition of Canon 14 from Agde in 506.[416] Ian Wood's examination of Gallic incest laws omits this when he credits Epaon as a turning point in creating extensive incest legislation.[417] Avitus certainly had personal reasons to make sure this law was repeated, but importantly at Epaon such incestuous unions were once again allowed to stay together if their marriage had begun before the issuing of the canon.[418] The sentence of separation given to Vincomalus was therefore stricter than what the council convened under Avitus decreed. We do not know what became of Vincomalus or if this canon affected his circumstances in any way. Perhaps Avitus realised that he had been too harsh or the canon simply mimicked the punishments deemed appropriate at Agde.

Real cases affected canon law – Avitus's incest case is a unique example of this, and of how one could negotiate consequences of immoral behaviour on a case-to-case basis. Furthermore, while it may be hard to quantify, we should not think that this was the only time that real events lay behind an ecclesiastical ruling on the habits and behaviours of lay people. Ideas of Christian behaviour were in dialogue with the laity – the active role of the laity in formulating the relationships that the church had with them has recently been brought into a new spotlight in research done on Gaul.[419] Vincomalus is a further example of this exchange and dialogue between the clergy and

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[415] Shanzer and Wood, eds., 2002, p. 286; Wood, 2003, pp. 297-299.

[416] Council of Epaon, Canon 30 (CCSL 148A.0032).

[417] Wood is aware of the canon in Orleans in 511, but makes no mention of Agde. Instead he says, pp. 296-297: 'The canons of Epaon are unusual in the space they devote to the matter of incest. Certainly incest had been discussed at earlier councils, notably by Clovis's bishops at Orleans (511). But there the bishops had been content simply to state that no man should marry his brother's widow, or his dead wife's sister. By contrast the Epaon list is extensive.' However, Epaon was not more extensive than Agde in the number of incestuous types identified.

[418] Council of Epaon, Canon 30 (CCSL 148A.0032): 'Quod ut a presenti tempore prohebemus, ita ea, quae sunt anterius instituta, non solvemus.'

[419] Bailey, 2016.

the laity. The issue of *incestum*, however, was far from settled, further reflecting that incestuous marriages kept occurring as many continued to view these unions as non-incestuous.[420] Breaking traditional thinking on the matter was difficult to do, taking several generations.

Canon and imperial laws allowed little compromise or consideration for cases that fell into grey areas. This uncompromising nature of legislation must have been difficult for many members of the Christian church, and not only Vincomalus. The case is exemplary of a failure to successfully implement marital incest legislation, despite imperial laws issued in the fourth century and the first half of the fifth. Furthermore, as a fellow lay Christian first brought the case to the attention of people of Grenoble, it is clear that some people knew what recent incest regulations were. As such, this is not mere gossip, but a demonstration of some ideological breakthrough, at least in the case of the anonymous person who brought up the charge: Vincomalus was forbidden from marrying his dead wife's sister who, through the first marriage, had become his own sister through marriage and Christian kinship. The episode in question demonstrates the kind of small and localised disruption that marital *incestum* caused in late antique marital patterns – in rural communities and localities, marrying in-laws or others related through spiritual kinship may have been, and probably was, relatively common.

The incest laws and canons examined above suggested that there was a movement towards clearer and wider ranging definitions of marital *incestum* than before. However, the case of Vincomalus attests that these legislations were unknown to many. Between the years 390 and 520, therefore, incest saw increased attempts to outline it, but it remained ill-defined to clergy and lay Christians alike. Punishments were negotiable, no doubt due to the fact that proper unified assessment of marital *incestum* was lacking. There was some sympathy for those who erred, and even separation could be negotiated depending on when the couple had married.

To the best of my knowledge, there is no example from the Roman West between the years 390 and 520 where sexual or marital incest occurred within a nuclear family. As discussed at the start of this section, such incest raises innate aversion, and as such is

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[420] See Wood, 2003, p. 297, n. 47.

rarer in occurring than culturally defined cases of incest. Furthermore, at this time nuclear incest was usually part of historical narrative or divinely sanctioned scriptural *exempla*. The rich and varied incest tradition made it more difficult to establish clearly defined Christian regulations regarding the issue. While church leaders did not want this problem to remain obscure, evidence suggests that they were not successful in illuminating it either.

Such behaviour was always considered to be defiling – every time we come across the word *incestum*, we should remind ourselves that in contemporary contexts it signified a 'literal' impurity. The conversation therefore revolves around ideas of religious and sexual purity and impurity, but the agenda of disease and contamination is not pushed much in this context. Perhaps incestuous marriages were not viewed as sexual sinning as such, as the problem was often a monogamous union rather than illicit sexual activity. Only the council of Rome in 402 used the word *fornicatio* for incestuous marriages, and while incest polluted participants, there was no fear of it spreading to others. As a source of defiling sexual activity, incest was a matter of debate, negotiation and ongoing definition. This is important to the active nature of sexual *mores*: they evolved according to developments within Christian communities, and when multiple different ideas on a sexual crime existed, bishops were able to negotiate their own terms for purity and punishment. However, we see a return to ideas of contagiousness when we turn to examine a person who was, in a very tangible sense, the embodiment of contaminating sexual vice: the prostitute. It is to the prostitute's defiling qualities in fifth century texts to which we now turn, where again we find accommodation and negotiation – and even inclusion.

3.3 PROSTITUTION

In idealistic terms, Christian communities were intra-dependant, moralistic networks in which the pollution of one could lead to the pollution of many. No figure embodies this dynamic as well as that of the prostitute, who tainted by her presence and who contaminated those she slept with. I use the pronoun 'she' with some precaution: both men and women sold their bodies for sex, with men being in the minority. The discussion here revolves solely around female prostitutes, however, as sources here used discuss them solely. However, we should not assume that men were not selling

sexual services as well at this time.[421] Prostitutes formed one of the most despised group of people in Roman as well as Christian society, and there was hardly any scenario in which the use of prostitutes could be sanctioned, nor could a profession of sex be reconciled with the Christian ideal of marital monogyny either. In his 2013 book, *From Shame to Sin*, Kyle Harper has argued that prostitution remains one of the main areas in which the transformation of sexual morality has been inadequately studied.[422] This is not entirely surprising: the historical record for prostitution is scant at best, the legislation on prostitution is muddled, and Christian commentary is fleeting and superficial, which does not demonstrate clear cohesion of attitudes or give profound insight into the development of venal sex.

The defiled nature of the prostitute, however, remained her defining quality: she was thought to live in a perpetual state of impurity, and Roman sources attest how prostitutes were thought to stain others.[423] There would have been a bodily reality as well as ideological reasons to consider prostitutes as impure and tainted – several prostitutes may have sustained vaginal or anal injuries as well as urinary tract infections, due to having sex several times a day.[424] However, what constitutes a 'prostitute' is difficult to define. Thomas McGinn, whose studies have gathered the fragmented evidence from the Roman imperial era, has sought to demonstrate the ambiguity as well as variety and scope of Roman prostitution.[425] One of the problems, McGinn points out, is the liminality of the so-called profession: some women would have supplemented their earnings from their 'day jobs' by having sex for money on the side, but these women were not prostitutes in any full-time or even part-time sense. There was, in particular, liminality in the sexual availability of women who worked in taverns, as Roman law

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[421] For male prostitution, see Williams, 1999, pp. 40-50.

[422] Harper, 2013, p. 3. There have, however, been important studies on ancient prostitution. See Violaine Vanoyeke, *La prostitution en Grèce et à Rome* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1990); Bettina Eva Stumpp, *Prostitution in der römischen Antike* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998); Thomas A. McGinn, *The Economy of Prostitution in the Roman World: a study of social history and the brothel* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004).

[423] Lennon, 2013, p. 76.

[424] Robert C. Knapp, *Invisible Romans: prostitutes, outlaws, slaves, gladiators, ordinary men and women - the Romans that history forgot* (London: Profile Books, 2013), p. 237.

[425] McGinn, 1998; McGinn, 2004.

likewise demonstrated by limiting such women's legal rights.[426] Sometimes even the possibility of having sex for money was enough to taint a woman and her reputation.

For the era between 390 and 520, the evidence for prostitution continues to be scattered, and we gain little insight into the reality of prostitution at this time. A Christian dislike of prostitution is clear, however: the place of prostitutes in a society in which religious figureheads promoted Christian chastity was problematic – how could one reconcile the existence of prostitution in a Christian world? There were different answers to this, but approaches rarely tackled prostitution as a real, concrete problem. Rather, the focus was on men who paid for sex, and when church figures focused on the prostitute instead, she often became a majestic hagiographical figure rather than a real person working in the local tavern or brothel.[427] Our discussion of incest has shown how such tainting practices could be negotiated between a bishop and his fellow clergy and lay Christians, offering an example of trial and error. Here, we again see how a polluting sexual force – prostitution – could become a topic that was tailored for specific audiences by bishops. The prostitute was often used as a symbol of salvation, thus including her within, rather than excluding her from, the Christian moral realm. The idea of contagiousness and pollution is at play here, but due to her utter defiled baseness, 'the prostitute' emerges as a highly complex symbol of religious idealism.

SALVATION FOR ALL? MAXIMUS'S SAMARITAN WHORE

Maximus of Turin, whose wartime sermons we have already examined at length, preached readiness for martyrdom and faith in God during barbarian warfare in Northern Italy. His war-focused sermons were highly moralising and we find further condemnations of sexual misbehaviour in his other sermons. Maximus was concerned with the sexual behaviour of his community and its purity, and he discussed the prostitute in this context; as a symbol of salvation and a tool of communal correction. Here I will examine one sermon – Sermon 22 – at length to demonstrate how Maximus manipulated scripture through omission and reinterpretation to root out sexual vice and to enhance communal purity and cohesion in his congregation. This is demonstrative

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[426] *C.Th.* 9.7.1. See also J. N. Adams, 'Words for 'prostitute' in Latin', *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 126.3/4 (1983), pp. 321-58.

[427] See discussion on prostitutes in hagiography below.

of how clerical figures confronted impurity within their congregations, and how they used exegetical means to discourage sexual sinning. We have seen negotiation between clergy and lay Christians – this time, almost, we have an example of Maximus negotiating with holy text to produce his desired interpretation.

Maximus preached on prostitution, both buying and selling sex, in Sermon 22 that focused on alms-giving, notably appearing to argue that all sins, in Maximus's view, could be forgiven.[428] The date of the sermon is uncertain, but dates to the 390s or 400s when Maximus was actively preaching in Turin.[429] The sermon advises Maximus's congregation to give alms in order to wash away their sins. After all, he says, it is better to use money on removing sins than on committing them – such is the man who stops sleeping with prostitutes: 'A person who had once spent money in order to commit adultery now expends money in order to cease being an adulterer.'[430] This is an admonishment for local men who were buying sex, and at first it is their behaviour that Maximus appears concerned with. However, he then turns to scripture to not only discuss alms-giving further, but to show that even the worst type of sinner can receive salvation, such as a prostitute.

Maximus proceeds by evoking the story of the Samaritan woman whom Jesus meets at the well (John 4:4-26), in order to further illustrate how alms work. Maximus gives a parallel of mercy as water flowing from the well in such a fashion that even 'a woman who is fornicating with a sixth man' can approach God.[431] Maximus derives the number six from scripture: John 4:18 has Jesus observe that the Samaritan woman has had five men, 'and the one you have now is not your husband,' Jesus remarked. The woman is astonished that Jesus knows this about her, recognises his divinity, and, subsequently, is converted.[432] Although scripture does not identify the woman as a prostitute,

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[428] For a more in-depth discussion of this, see Allan Fitzgerald, 'Maximus of Turin: How He Spoke of Sin to His People', *Studia Patristica* 23 (1989), pp. 127-32.

[429] See Table 2.1 above, p. 38.

[430] Maximus, *Serm.* 22.1 (CCSL 23.0083): 'qui pecuniam quondam dederat ut adulterium perpetratet, nunc pecuniam eroget ut adulter esse iam desinat.'

[431] Maximus, *Serm.* 22.2: 'mulierem sexto iam non viro sed adultero fornicantem vivi.'

[432] For more on this passage, see for instance Stavros S. Fotiou, 'The Transformation of Existence: Christ's Encounter with the Samaritan Woman According to John 4:4-42', *The Expository Times* 124.7 (2013), pp. 327-32. The encounter is significant as the lengthiest conversation that Jesus has in the Gospels, and notably with a foreign woman who was deemed impure.

however, Maximus does so: she came to 'the well of Samaria as a prostitute (*meretrix*)' and returned to the city chaste, now preaching the glory of Christ.[433] Maximus then quotes Proverbs 30:20:

> I think that the prophet said about this woman: 'Such is the way of a prostitute (*mulier meretrix*): when she has washed herself she says that she has done nothing wrong.' Clearly this is said of her who, after having washed herself at the source, does not remember the vices of her sins, assumes the virtue of preaching, and, wiping away her stains with living water, has no more awareness of her sin.[434]

Maximus states how wonderful it is that a conversion or the giving of alms can wash away sins for anyone – not just for the Samaritan woman, but also for the adulterous men in his congregation. '[The man who gives alms] does not know the sins of youth, and although he had been an adulterer because of the corruption of sin, he becomes a virgin because of faith in Christ.'[435] Maximus has paralleled scripture with problems present within his congregation, and advised the community against prostitutes and other adulterous affairs, promising absolution from sins. Such sinners required a process of purification from this moral defilement, which they could attain, just as the Samaritan woman who was described as stained, but who Maximus relates as renouncing her impurity.[436] Defilement and pollution could be washed out.

However, when we examine this sermon in greater detail, it becomes apparent that Maximus is manipulating scripture, re-interpreting segments and removing passages from original contexts, all to create the idea that, firstly, the Samaritan woman was a prostitute and that, secondly, holy scripture says that prostitutes can wash away their sins. Neither of these are, strictly speaking, the case. Indeed, it is unusual that Maximus identifies the Samaritan woman as a *meretrix*, after having identified her as having had six men. The figure of six men is low for any sex worker – six might be a realistic figure for a day's work, but not a lifetime's. Much more likely, the Samaritan woman is a lower class woman who has been the concubine or long-term consort of several

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[433] Maximus, *Serm*. 22.2: 'ad puteum Samariae meretrix advenerat.'

[434] Maximus, *Serm*. 22.3: 'De hac igitur prophetam dixisse puto: 'eiusmodi est', inquit, 'via mulieris meretricis; quae cum se ablverit, nihil se dicit fecisse pravum.' De hac plane dictum est, quae posteaquam se fonte ablvit salvatoris, delictorum vitia non meminit virtutem praedicationis adsumit et viva aqua abstergens maculas suas ad evangelizandum non conscientia peccati retrahitur.'

[435] Ibid.: 'iuuentutis scelera non agnoscat, sitque virgo fide Christi, qui fuerat adulter corruptione peccati.'

[436] Ibid.

different men – a distinction that may have transformed her into a prostitute in Maximus's eyes. Yet, if we compare Maximus's exegesis of her to his more famed contemporaries, Augustine and John Chrysostom, we find that the Samaritan woman was not commonly identified as a prostitute at this time.[437] Naturally, loose morals might make one as good as a paid woman, but as Maximus's sermon focuses on alms, there is a monetary exchange he visualised as taking place in the Gospel of John as, indeed, he did in his own community.

Yet, Maximus's wilful re-interpretation of the Samaritan woman does not stop there. He says that the woman no longer remembers her sins, and quotes Proverbs as seen above: 'Such is the way of a prostitute (*mulier meretrix*): when she has washed herself she says that she has done nothing wrong.' Yet Maximus's version of this proverb describes the woman as a *mulier meretrix*, whereas *mulier adultera* is the form related in the Vulgate. In full length, Proverbs 30:20 states: 'This is the way of an adulteress: she eats, and wipes her mouth, and says, "I have done no wrong."' The proverb is not stating that such a woman can easily wash away her sins – it is criticising her for her arrogance and lack of ability to recognise her sins. Such a woman lives and eats as if her sin is not, but this is not because of conversion, but because of her sinfulness. Twice in the sermon, therefore, Maximus takes a scriptural passage and transforms it, firstly, into a commentary on a prostitute and, secondly, as showing that scripture supports her conversion and salvation.

Maximus's use of scripture shows his rather vigorous attempts at confronting impure acts in his community: the primary targets behind Maximus's preaching are the men who have sex with prostitutes, and a secondary target is to inspire the congregation overall. A promise of leading a life where one's history of sin (buying sex) had not occurred was in direct contrast to the polluted, defiled nature of these women: a prostitute who was suddenly pure was an oxymoron. Maximus asked, 'How can she who makes unclean herself be purified?'[438] But, miraculously, she could be. If the Samaritan woman could be forgiven, then so could the Christians of Turin, whatever

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[437] Craig S. Farmer, 'Changing Images of the Samaritan Woman in Early Reformed Commentaries on John', *Church History* 65.3 (1996), pp. 365-75, at pp. 366-368.

[438] Maximus, *Serm.* 22A.1 (CCSL 23.0087): 'quomodo potest purificari ipsa cum polluat?'

their sins were. At the end of his sermon, Maximus said that if, indeed, a prostitute can become a virgin once more in Christ, so can an adulterous man who sleeps with whores. He seeks to emphasise the awesome extent of Christian salvation, even for those who have committed grave sexual sins, and are thus contaminated and polluted. Ideas of contaminating defilement and impure sexual sin made the prostitute a lesson in salvation.

A liturgical sermon, such as this one, is noteworthy. Maximus had to work hard to put forth the argument of the prostitute that I have outlined above. Not only did Maximus manipulate scripture to address immoral sexual behaviour, he used the impure baseness of the Samaritan woman to transform her into a compelling, hopeful figurehead of Christian conversion. Again, sexual pollution is found to be temporary, as Maximus finds a way to cleanse the prostitute for his audience. The more hopelessly tainted, polluted and despised a person was, the more awesome was his/her conversion and absolution. The men of Turin could purify themselves, too, but as they already were Christians, they had to purify themselves through alms. This should remind us of the flexibility and creation of rules that Avitus of Vienne demonstrated in our discussion of incest, which took place some hundred years after Maximus. Sexual sinning – committing incest, having sex with a prostitute – was polluting for a Christian, but there were ways to become pure again. One did, however, have to bend to the will of the local clergy.

The Samaritan woman in the Gospel may have been dubious in terms of her occupation, but we have examples of prostitute conversions that are more explicit. Martyrologies in the fourth and fifth centuries featured prostitutes who were moved by a religious calling to transform their sinful lives, thus becoming saints and role models.[439] These women were romanticised figures, such as Pelagia the Harlot, whose abandonment of her courtesan ways for a life in Christ was first evoked in the sermons of John Chrysostom and later by Jacob the Dean. Her story of conversion worked comfortably within the confines of pagan romance with the twist that her saviour was of a divine origin instead

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[439] Burrus, 2007, pp. 128-159.

of a long-lost love or a handsome youth.[440] This approach that prostitutes could leave their polluting lives and become preachers and saints, saved in Christ, was a departure from non-Christian ideas of such women. McGinn has suggested that while pagan opinion had held that prostitutes could not hope to improve their stations, Christian writers established prostitutes as creatures that could be saved.[441] Maximus followed a tradition, therefore, of a saved prostitute that was already popular at the time. However, he manipulated scripture to achieve this, instead of relating the story of a martyred Christian saint.

Maximus makes no mention of penance, but does expect that once the sinners have repented, these men will sin no more, as the Samaritan woman did not either. There are also some fleeting comments in Maximus that are suggestive of the reality of prostitution in Turin at his time, beyond scripture. Firstly, Maximus attests to the use of prostitutes in Turin and to the notion that especially young men paid women for sex – hence Maximus's remark that men carried the sins of their youth.[442] Yet, as Maximus calls this a case of adultery, married men likewise slept with such women, and not only unmarried young men. The problem touched both the young and the old. In order to confront these polluting acts, therefore, Maximus offered a reinterpretation of scripture so that he could discuss his chosen sexual vice, even when the scripture did not, strictly speaking, address what he portrayed it to address. We have already discussed how Christian preaching on sexual vice responded and reacted to warfare – here we have seen how scripture was used in a reactionary manner, likewise, to help Maximus discuss ongoing vice in his congregation. In order to discourage men sleeping with whores, he renegotiated the congregation's perception of sexual pollution and absolution from it.

This brings us back to communal purity and pollution. Despite the depravity and uncleanliness associated with prostitutes, they were not necessarily set aside as outcasts – in theory. It is difficult to find evidence of any real prostitution cases. Nevertheless, the theoretical lenience that such contaminated women could become the most pious of

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[440] Zoja Pavlovskis, 'The Life of St. Pelagia the Harlot: Hagiographic Adaptation of Pagan Romance', *Classical Folia* 30 (1976), pp. 138-49.

[441] McGinn, 1998, p. 132.

[442] Christian Laes and J. H. M. Strubbe, *Youth in the Roman Empire: the young and the restless years?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 140-142.

Christians is surprising when we consider the disgust expressed regarding a sexually tainted Christian community that we examined at the beginning of this chapter. Instead of commands to expel all sexually tainted people from the Christian community, men like Maximus had to find ways to accommodate those who sexually sinned into the congregation. However, not only did conversion stories of prostitutes feed into the popular imagination that relished such tales, these stories all unanimously underlined that a prostitute had to leave her profession if she was to become truly Christian. Yet, when we turn to more concrete discussions on everyday prostitution, there is little hint that the clergy were expecting conversions. If these are not stories attempting inclusion or abolishment, what were they attempting?

PROSTITUTION: IDEOLOGY AND REALITY

We have examined Maximus's re-writing of scripture to use the despised and polluted figure of the prostitute as a symbol of Christian salvation. The aim was not to convert any prostitutes as such, but rather to inspire others to commit themselves to purer lives free of vice. As such, Maximus's discussion had very little to do with the reality of day to day prostitution, apart from Maximus's criticism that men in his congregation had or were having sex with prostitutes. Prostitution was a part of fifth century society, and clerical and legal texts attest to the everyday normalcy with which prostitution continued. Polluting as prostitutes were and sinful as having sex with them was, the only real sense that actions were being taken towards limiting prostitution comes from imperial laws rather than the writings of clerics – yet these laws, too, are problematic.

Maximus and hagiographies may have idealised whores and their conversion stories, but other clerics were less idealistic about prostitution. Some realism can be seen: as discussed in Section 3.1 above, Augustine ranked sexual vice according to how sinful it was – sleeping with a prostitute was not as bad as sleeping with someone's wife, he concluded. Furthermore, Augustine held the surprising view that prostitutes were necessary: 'If you do away with harlots, the world will be convulsed with lust.'[443] The removal of such women would only cause sinning that was even worse – this, at least, was Augustine's view in 386/7. There is no sense here that Augustine wished for more

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[443] Augustine, *De ordine* 2.4.12 (PL 32.1000): 'Aufer meretrices de rebus humanis, turbaveris omnia libidinibus.'

vigorous efforts in rooting out prostitution – quite the opposite, in fact. It is likely that prostitutes continued to be easily available in these centuries. For instance, Pompeii has been used for a discussion of where prostitutes could be found, some claiming that prostitution was restricted to infamous neighbourhoods. This has been disproven: prostitutes could be found anywhere, in any part of the city, and it is unlikely that the successive Christian centuries brought any change to this.[444] Prostitutes were present at circuses, baths and theatres, but their presence within the Christian community remained unresolved. With a marginal group such as prostitutes, their presence throughout the era here in question is not often explicitly stated.

Notably, pagan as well as Christian men continued to purchase the services of prostitutes, and illustrative of the relative normalcy of this can be found in a letter from 418, when Augustine writes to a woman called Ecdicia whose husband had resorted to prostitutes after their agreement to an abstinent marriage had failed.[445] In this exchange, the presence and use of prostitutes is not in any way thought remarkable. In an undated sermon, however, Augustine preached that sleeping with a whore united the man to her with the result that the man was subsequently excluded from the Kingdom of God.[446] Although undated, it seems that Augustine's views on prostitution fluctuated and changed during his lifetime. His comments do not formulate a cohesive approach on the inclusion or exclusion of these women, nor does he seem to have strongly attempted to root out prostitution. The problem of the sex trade was not one that could easily be solved or a topic on which one could clearly formulate one's own opinion.

We find further evidence of prostitution in other areas of the West at this time, again suggesting that there was an air of normalcy to the presence of such women. The idea of them, even, was enough to lighten up the mood: in the 430s, Valerian of Cimiez criticised drunk men in his congregation for taking part in a play about prostitutes, which included inappropriate dancing and rude language.[447] The bishop, naturally,

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[444] On the arguments that prostitutes were restricted to neighbourhoods, and arguments against this, see Thomas A. McGinn, 'Zoning Shame in the Roman City', in *Prostitutes and Courtesans in the Ancient World*, ed. by Christopher A. Faraone and Laura McClure (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp. 161-76.

[445] Augustine, *Ep.* 262 (CSEL 57.0621-0631).

[446] Augustine, *Serm*. 161 (PL 38.0878-0885).

[447] Valerian, *Hom*. 1.7.4 (PL 52.0696).

called for such activities to stop. However, such a play on stage is not surprising,[448] and the date of Valerian's criticism demonstrates the sustained popularity of theatrical prostitute characters in late Roman theatre, where one found Christians in the audience and on the stage alike.

Largely, however, Christian authors of this era comment on prostitution little. The fact that prostitution is discussed as little as it is – as fantastical hagiography or religious allegory that leaves the reality of prostitution in admonishments and disapproving quips – suggests that it was difficult to confront prostitution. This may have been a question of priorities: after all, as Augustine said, there were sins that were much worse. Yet this is inconsistent with the expectation of collective purity that we have examined, especially when we consider how impure these women were thought to be. Instead of being sources of pollution and contamination for the religious collective, prostitutes continued to be leisurely amusements for those less morally strict. The ideology of vice spreading could be selective, therefore, and the calls to communal purity were generic and did not go into detail too greatly. Perhaps this was thought to be enough.

When we examine laws issued between the years 390 and 520, we find some attempts at tackling prostitution, but none that are very convincing. Firstly, laws supported the idea that such women were socially inferior and tainted: prostitutes lived in *infamia* and were excluded from secular public life and confined to contempt.[449] Fourth century laws appear to have targeted male prostitution, exploitation of slaves and daughters, and the rights of pimps.[450] Constantinian laws have been described as ones of 'benign contempt' towards prostitutes.[451] Within the time period here examined, laws appear a little stricter: in 428, Theodosius II and Valentinian issued a law forbidding the head of the household to prostitute his daughters or female slaves. Any such man would lose all power over the woman he had forced into prostitution and, furthermore, he would

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[448] Dorothea R. French, 'Maintaining Boundaries: the Status of Actresses in Early Christian Society', *Vigiliae Christianae* 52.3 (1998), pp. 293-318; Anne Duncan, 'Infamous Performers: comic actors and female prostitutes in Rome', in Faraone and McClure, eds., 2006, pp. 252-73.

[449] For the history of *infamia*, see Sarah E. Bond, 'Altering Infamy: Status, Violence, and Civic Exclusion in Late Antiquity', *Classical Antiquity* 33.1 (2014), pp. 1-30.

[450] A good summary of Theodosian and Justinianic laws can be found in Clark, 1993, pp. 29-30.

[451] Brundage, 1987, p. 105.

be sent to the mines.[452] In 460, Emperor Leo attempted to ban prostitution entirely –
while we may hail this as an unprecedented gesture, it failed, as laws enacted by
Emperor Justinian I in the sixth century show.[453] As Kyle Harper has pointed out, these
are laws enacted against coerced prostitution, such as prostituting one's slaves.[454] They
are not, however, attempting to limit prostitution practised by foreigners or
free(d)women, but rather they acknowledge that forcing someone into a life of
prostitution should be a punishable act.

The legal evidence is contradictory on further accounts. For instance, despite legislating
against coerced prostitution, the profession as practised by, presumably, non-coerced
parties remained a source of imperial taxation until the end of 430s, if not even later.[455]
Furthermore, Jerome claims that Constantine illegalised male prostitutes, yet we have
laws forbidding the same being published under Theodosius I.[456] Did Constantine's law
simply not take, was Theodosius reinforcing his own legislative power by repeating
such a law, or was Jerome, writing around 408, mistaken? It is difficult to assess the
real impact of imperial laws as indeed we have seen the discrepancies between incest
legislation, knowledge of these laws, and actual practices. However, we do have
evidence of a more hands-on approach regarding prostitution, too. Justinian and
Theodora famously founded a convent for former prostitutes called Repentance, though
the historian Procopius stated that some of the prostitutes who were forced into going
there threw themselves over the walls.[457] While this anecdote comes from sixth century
Constantinople, it does suggest that for some women prostitution was a conscious
choice and that they were not looking to reform. There is no reason to assume that the
barbarian kingdoms in the West did not have women who chose the profession of sex
to make ends meet, too.

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[452] *C.Th.* 15.8.2.

[453] *C.J.* 11.41.7. One of Justinian's laws from AD 535 rules against pimps tricking women into prostitution (*Nov.* 14.1).

[454] Kyle Harper, *Slavery in the Late Roman World, AD 275-425* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 309.

[455] Brundage, 1987, p. 106.

[456] Jerome, *Commentariorum in Esaiam* 1.2.5-6; *C.Th.* 9.7.6.

[457] Procopius, *De aedificiis* 1.9.7; *Anecdota* 17.5-6.

A far more in-depth study on late Roman prostitution would be required to determine if the gradual Christianisation of society affected or changed patterns in prostitution in any discernible way, or if Christianisation ever brought any kind of notable decline in the industry. Legislation against prostitution may have changed the kind of prostitution available, but did not bring an end to the trade itself. If we assume that the rather minimal discouragement of prostitution from the priesthood and imperial laws combined had some effect, it may have been that prostitution became more clandestine than before. The literary evidence nevertheless testifies that prostitutes continued to practise their trade, that they had customers who were Christians, and that prostitution continued, as indeed it continues today in countries where it is illegal and considered a moral issue.

Lastly, the fifth century, despite being disruptive to communities in the West, was also conducive to prostitution because of these disruptions. Indeed, women who were particularly vulnerable to prostitution were those facing poverty and lack of other resources, and the discussion in Section 2.1 above has emphasised that warfare was disruptive, causing raiding, stealing and other by-products of violent conflict. Furthermore, where armies moved were also soldiers interested in purchasing sex.[458] The movement of peoples, dislodged from their home communities for various reasons, may have thus boosted the numbers of women offering sex for sale and of men willing to buy it. Shortages in food or money may also have encouraged a profession of sex, especially as prostitution had been used to subsidise regular work already in pre-Christian Rome. Warfare may have been conducive for situational prostitution, therefore, but Christian sources discuss the trade little as it is, and there is no commentary of the two in conjunction. However, even if prostitution encouraged by warfare is not explicitly found in textual evidence, local men continued to have sex with prostitutes, and this perhaps is more significant for the current discussion, where I have sought to demonstrate that even the most polluting of sexual vice could be a matter of negotiation between a bishop and his flock. There appears to have been a disconnect between ideas of collective purity and the existence of prostitution in one's Christian city or town.

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[458] For instance, Appian, *Bellum hispaniense* 85, records the interest of armies in prostitutes.

Despite agreement that professions of sex were tainting, we find few sources demanding their abolishment. Was this a battle that clerics did not entertain any hope of winning? If so, this may explain the popularity of the prostitute as a convert saint and a symbol of salvation – rather than confront prostitution that was ingrained in society, it was easier to discuss idealised behaviour and idealised prostitutes. Conversely, this shows that Christian moralising discourses could be highly adaptable and negotiate ways to discuss negative behaviour in positive terms, such as the discourses on salvation here examined show. Even purity, demanded of all and lamented when lost, was an oft-vocalised ideal that clerics knew fell short of actual normative behaviour. Thus, there is a sense of lenience or, at least, of looking the other way, as prostitution continued to exist at the doorsteps of Christian communities. Excluding impure people and impure acts from Christian communities was considered important, if not vital, for the future of such communities, but such exclusion was simultaneously not feasible. Preachers thus employed prostitute conversion stories to underline that even those most depraved could be saved, become untainted, and join the pure religious collective. This was enticement, and not a command, in the face of limited ecclesiastical power to control people's behaviour.

3.4 CHAPTER CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has examined ideas of sexual purity and contamination, and how two of the most tainting sexual acts, incest and prostitution, were topics of rebuke that became matters of negotiation between bishops and their flocks. However, there is much disconnect between these ideas, although they all embody polluting behaviour. From a religious perspective, sex had become a part of Christian ideology, in which sexual behaviour and a moderate engagement in sex was linked to one's status as a Christian, translating in turn into one's religious status within a Christian community. Sexual vice could and did spread. It is this sense of purity, and the dangers and punishment of impurity, that are central to fifth century discussions of sexual morality.

However, incest and prostitution, hailed as tainting consistently, were perceived as vice or as frustrating annoyances, but were not envisioned as having the power to destroy communities themselves. Nor, when the two are discussed, are they linked to perhaps the most obvious objections that we might expect: prostitution is not condemned due to

wasted seed or a lack of pronatalism that was central for Christian sex practices overall, although it was surely obvious that having sex with a prostitute was condemnable on both of these accounts. Children of incest were left without inheritance in imperial laws, but Christian texts do not discuss or consider children of these unions beyond their illegitimacy, nor do they view incest as wasting one's seed.

We have already attested to the anxiety that immoral behaviour inflicted upon clerics, having them express fear for their communities, and in this context the figure of the prostitute should have, perhaps, become more problematic than it did. Polluting as it was, Western clerics made no real efforts to tackle prostitution at this time. Incest paints a different story, albeit for most of the fifth century the issue of incest does not seem to have been a topic of much discussion. The flurry of activity at the beginning of the sixth century is unique and attempts to cover past omissions. These narrower ideals of a world where no prostitutes were visited and no people of too close kin were wed clashed with the interests and aspirations of lay people. The importance placed on sexual behaviour did not permeate from clerics down to be esteemed equally by the laity.

Again, we are faced with a discrepancy between Christian idealistic moral doctrine and actual behaviour and habits of people. One of the fundamental reasons behind such opposing views was tradition: changes to sexual licences that had centuries of tradition in the Roman West were difficult to implement. In the next chapter, I will discuss late antique tradition as a major influencing force on Christian views on sex. The kinds of conflicts seen here – Avitus's incest case being an appropriate example – demonstrate that traditional ideas of appropriate conduct were different from stricter, Christian ideas. Not only is this the basis of many conflicts and disagreements, but tradition furthermore explains why, as a whole, implementing Christianised ideas of sexual *mores* failed at this time. These failures have been exemplified here: prostitution did not see vigorous attempts at being rooted out in its entirety, but it continued to co-exist with religious calls to chaste lives, and while the ideology of incest developed greatly, its turn into practice was slow in coming. These dualities in late Roman society are always but a scratch away beneath the surface of 'Christianisation'.

4. DOMINANCE OF TRADITION: ROMAN *MORES* IN CHRISTIAN DISCOURSES

Christian discourses on sexual morality were rooted in a vibrant ideological framework of Roman conceptions of sex. In other words, while a source may appear to be giving voice to Christian ideas of sexual behaviour, it simultaneously attests to the continued internalisation of Roman views on sex that, at times, clashed with Christian perceptions. Contradictory Roman and Christian views can be attested to amongst not only lay Christians, but amongst clerics as well. Attitudes towards homosexual acts and polygyny between AD 390 and AD 520 illustrate how Roman *mores* problematised and infiltrated Christian views. Sources on the two reflect a continuation of Roman ideas on sex that cannot be reconciled with Christian ideas. As such, this chapter examines the role of Roman socio-cultural paradigms in Christian discourses on sex.

The narrative that the late Roman world created a distinctive Christian ideology of sex is challenged – Christian ideology and society continued to be Roman in many key respects. This is important for our overall assessment of changes in moralistic discourses as it will argue against interpretations that developments demonstrate distinctively Christian thinking. Firstly, I will discuss homosexual acts. Undoubtedly, between the years 390 and 520, men's sexual relationships with each other were marginalised and condemned in law and Christian texts alike, yet these discussions were considered against Roman paradigms of male/male sexual dynamics, and even Christian clerics failed to approach sex between men from a distinctive Christian view. Instead, Christian texts continued to consider insertive/receptive roles, the social status of the men, and other markers that, for Romans, had defined the boundaries of male/male sex. Tradition also supported married men's polygynous practices, and this was widely accepted in late Roman society by Christians and non-Christians alike. In response, clerics' discussions on *adulterium* criticise Christian men's reluctance to practise marital monogyny, reflecting this to be a continued source of frustration but nevertheless common practice.

The influence of tradition will help us question the extent to which moralising discourses had become 'Christian' between 390 and 520. On the one hand, we will see rather cohesive Christian thinking on adultery and monogamy but find little evidence

of its acceptance amongst lay Christians, while on the other discussions on homosexual acts have a sense of overall condemnation, yet Christian thinkers define same-sex desire and sex in Roman terms that are more accepting than Christian views. Pre-existing moral codes that were in opposition to Christian ideas continued to dominate much of late Roman thought, suggesting that we are still far from a society that would have recognised all polygyny or all homosexual acts as inherently sinful. Some clerics, such as Augustine, were well aware of these challenges, when in 421/422 he wrote:

> Sins, however great and detestable they may be, are looked down upon as trivial, or as not sins at all, when men get accustomed to them; and so far does this go, that such sins are not only concealed, but are boasted of, and published far and wide.[459]

This continuation of Roman sexual norms has not gone unnoticed. Gillian Clark has observed that when one examines the sexual habits of lay Christian men, these men 'continued to behave in ways in which did not really seem to them (or their families) to be wrong.'[460] At the same time, however, resolving such illicit behaviour began to require clerical involvement, showing that private matters of sex were being brought into the realm of the church and of episcopal judgement.[461] Indeed, Avitus's incest case in the previous chapter illustrates this perfectly. The majority of illicit sexual engagements would have passed without clerical involvement or judgement, however. We may be seeing the beginning of a transition of sex increasingly into the religious realm, but here I wish to show that, simultaneously, everyday ideas of sex were dominatingly non-Christian.

In light of recent scholarship that has enhanced our understanding of shared culture and heritage in late antiquity, the mixture of Roman and Christian voices on the subject of sexual morality, in unison, should not be surprising. Susanna Elm's work in particular has persuasively demonstrated that elite men of the late Roman world, whether pagan

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[459] Augustine, *Enchiridion* 80 (CCSL 46.0093): 'Huc accedit quod peccata quamuis magna et horrenda, cum in consvetudinem verterint, aut parua aut nulla esse creduntur, usque adeo ut non solum non occultanda verum etiam praedicanda ac diffamanda videantur.'

[460] Clark, 1993, p. 38.

[461] See, for instance, Danuta Shanzer, 'Some Treatments of Sexual Scandal in (Primarily) Later Latin Epistolography', in *In pursuit of Wissenschaft: Festschrift für William M. Calder III zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. by Stephan Heilen and William M. Calder (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2008), pp. 393-414 and Ralph W. Mathisen, 'Seething Adolescence, Suspect Relations, and Extraneous Women: Extra-Marital Sex in Late and Post-Roman Gaul', in ibid., pp. 303-14.

or Christian, drew from a complimentary, unified culture – exemplary of this are Julian the Apostate and Gregory of Nazianzus, whose literary works mark an intellectual rift and debate between a pagan emperor and a Christian bishop. Notably, their battlefield was one of philosophy, rhetoric, and other shared features of their *paideia*.[462] Admittedly, however, many lay Christians would not have enjoyed the level of education that many elite men possessed – yet their understanding of oral culture, basics of rhetoric, and cultural memory would have been shared. There are two levels of perception at work here: on a higher level, we have the understandings of Christian moralists on sexual behaviour, based on scripture and personal views and experiences, viewed through the lens of the Christian faith, that are not in agreement with each other and, beneath that, the understanding of lay Christians on these same issues, again forming a wide spectrum, based on socio-cultural norms, and personal views and experiences. The extent to which these spheres, with their degrees of variation, overlapped with each other is debatable, as is the extent to which these ideals and expectations were mutually understood. Conflict, therefore, arose.

By exploring homosexual acts and polygyny in fifth century texts, I wish to challenge narratives of consistent change and the idea of a definite 'Christian' perception of sexual relationships. Furthermore, contradictory clerical views in our sources will remind us of the need to appreciate individualistic articulations on sex at this time.

4.1 HOMOSEXUAL ACTS

The often-voiced view that homosexual behaviour underwent a significant transformation in public perceptions in the late Roman world is not unfounded. In the 120s, Emperor Hadrian journeyed with his lover Antinous, whose posthumous cult made him one of the most celebrated figures of the centuries that followed.[463] Some two hundred and seventy years later, in 390, an edict was written in Rome that demanded male prostitutes to be burned alive in public.[464] The time that passed between

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[462] Elm, 2012, pp. 147-181, 378-432.

[463] Much has been said on the pair. Royston Lambert, *Beloved and God: the story of Hadrian and Antinous* (New York, NY: Viking, 1984); Caroline Vout, 'Antinous, Archaeology and History', *Journal of Roman Studies* 95 (2005), pp. 80-96; and Caroline Vout, *Power and Eroticism in Imperial Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 52-61 on literary sources on Antinous.

[464] The contents of the law, *C.Th.* 9.7.6., are obscure and have been a matter of debate. See discussion of this law below.

these two examples witnessed a drastic change in attitudes, but these changes may not be as dramatic as these examples, admittedly extremes, would lead us to believe. Nevertheless, the early Christian period has often been depicted as a time when tolerance for homosexual acts dwindled. The idea that 'morality' is a temporally and spatially conditioned model is demonstrated well by fluctuating attitudes to sexual intimacy between men in the late Roman world. Sex between women is a lesser concern throughout this period, but will also be discussed briefly.

This section argues that despite increasing condemnations of sex between men, clerics struggled to move their reasoning on homosexual acts from cultural norms to more religiously backed ideas. We have already attested to lay Christians' struggles with new restrictions with regard to incest and prostitution, and indeed we will see these struggles when we examine polygyny. Homosexual acts, however, are different. Clerics struggled to remove their condemnations of male/male sex from traditional ideas on the same, despite these traditional ideas being laxer than scriptural views. An examination of these views shows the influence of traditional conceptions of sex on Christian clerical thinking.

In order to show how the discussion here offers a new stance on the topic of homosexual behaviour, the field's history must be addressed.[465] Many early works, such as the studies by D.S. Bailey and Vern Bullough, supported the idea that Christianity has always been opposed to homosexual relations.[466] In his 1980 work, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, John Boswell argued in favour of a far wider acceptance of homosexual relationships in the early Christian and medieval past than had been previously recognised – a claim that invoked a mixed reaction from Boswell's contemporaries.[467] David Halperin criticised the work for failing to recognise that ancient sexuality is so inherently different from modern conceptions that any study into

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[465] For terminology and 'homosexuality' versus 'homosexual behaviour', see Section 1.3 above.

[466] See Derrick Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1955); Bullough, 1976.

[467] John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). See Mathew Kuefler, ed., *The Boswell Thesis: essays on Christianity, social tolerance, and homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 6-12 on the reception of Boswell's work.

it is ultimately flawed.[468] Amy Richlin has maintained that, despite claims of tolerance, pederasty – a romantic and usually sexual relationship between an older man and a youth bordering on manhood – was consistently condemned in Roman society, thus laying doubt on Boswell's assertions of open-mindedness.[469]

Craig Williams made a significant contribution towards a fuller understanding of homosexual relations in the Roman Empire with his 1999 work *Roman Homosexuality*, which explored the nuances in the sexual status of Roman men who had sex with other men. The subtleties in these men's identities are often lost in modern readings of ancient texts as our culture has no touching point with them.[470] Williams emphasised that our sources are comprised of sporadic legislation for which we have little context, problematic satires which offer a version of reality that may be equally factual or fictive, as well as love poetry, invectives, histories. All of these in their complexity underline at least one notion of truth: sexual or romantic male/male relationships were constructed in accordance with power and status, instead of focusing on the men's biological sex. The act of sex was not the issue, in other words, but rather the statuses of the men involved, the roles taken, and the circumstances in which the sex occurred.

These points need further elaboration. One of the defining elements for acceptable or unacceptable sex between men was the importance of roles taken in anal sex (the insertive vs receptive roles[471]), and the expectation that these roles followed proper pre-set models. The distinction of what role one took in the sex act was vital: the penetrated man was often the subject of ridicule whereas the penetrating man did no harm to himself. This was partly due to the receptive man taking on the supposedly inferior role of a woman as well as stemming from the notion that only the insertive male got sexual pleasure out of anal sex, turning the receptive man, therefore, into a vessel for sexual

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[468] David M. Halperin, ed., *Before Sexuality: the construction of erotic experience in the ancient Greek world* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: and other essays on Greek love* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990).

[469] Richlin, 1988.

[470] Williams, 1999. A second edition was published in Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[471] I follow Williams' terms insertive/receptive, as these are more helpful in thinking of sex between men, rather than passive/active (and indeed why should a passive partner have to *be* passive? If he did most of the work during sex, would that still make him passive?). See ibid., pp. 18-19, 160-161.

pleasure that could be dehumanised.[472] The receptive partner should also be a social inferior or 'other': a slave, a prostitute, a foreigner. Often, they should be younger and still unbearded. In contrast to these ideas, the Levitical tradition approached sex between two men differently. The insertive and receptive partners were both equally culpable as no distinction was made between them: 'If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death' (Lev. 20:13).[473] The Pauline writings on homosexual acts followed the same premise that sex between two men (or women) was sinful, regardless of roles taken.[474]

A view that the act itself is sinful makes emphasis placed on who takes which role – receptive/insertive – obsolete. Neither should social status, citizenship or age matter as the act is always sinful no matter who commits it. Yet in a society that was used to viewing sex between men as an act demonstrating clear power dynamics of a powerful insertive (Roman) male and an emasculated receptive male, it was difficult to dislodge perceptions of male/male sex from these paradigms. In response, these key elements – status, roles taken, circumstances of sex – that were central to homosexual relations in Roman thought continued to be the markers of clerical understanding on the topic as well, even if the approaches of clerics were religious. For such men, homosexual behaviour was not the topic of humour and ridicule that it had been a few centuries earlier, when men like Juvenal and Martial were able to use homosexual acts as humorous punch lines for their social commentary.[475] For fifth century clerics, homosexual acts were (nearly) always mentioned within the context of a moral and

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[472] However, some ancient sources attest to the receptive partner's pleasure as well. See, for instance, Martial 1.46 on the receptive partner ejaculating during sex. For the idea that those in the receptive role did not get sexual pleasure, see for instance Ovid, *Ars Amotaria* 2.681-4. Nevertheless, the pleasure of the receptive male was usually an afterthought.

[473] In the Vulgate, this read: 'qui dormierit cum masculo coitu femineo uterque operati sunt nefas morte moriantur sit sanguis eorum super eos.'

[474] For Paul, same-sex encounters are limited to three references, Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10. In Romans 'men committed shameful acts with other men' without any role distinction, but are consumed by their passions. Notably, also women 'exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural' (Rom 1:26). Corinthians and Timothy, conversely, record that ἀρσενοκοῖται may not enter the kingdom of heaven, which has proven to be a difficult word to translate. See David F. Wright, 'Homosexuals or Prostitutes? The Meaning of ἀρσενοκοῖται (1 Cor. 6:9, 1 Tim. 1:10)', *Vigiliae Christianae* 38.2 (1984), pp. 125-53 and Martti Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: a historical perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), pp. 113-118 .

[475] See, for instance, Juvenal who mocks men who wish to marry each other (Juv. 2.117), or Martial, who jocularly discusses men who have girlfriends and boyfriends (Mart. 2.62), mocks manly women who sleep with other women (Mart. 7.67), and relates tales of effeminate men who sneakily seduced married women too (Mart. 10.40).

religious condemnation. Discussion of the topic had also moved from explicit commentary to vague and curt mentions: as discussed in the previous chapter, Augustine described sex between men as an act of which it was shameful to even speak.[476] When homosexual acts were spoken of, however, clerical views reflected Roman ideas of power and status.

Firstly, I will demonstrate reliance on Roman conceptions of male/male sex by examining the story of Sodom, which as a case study encapsulates the struggles in forming a Christian doctrine for same-sex acts and desires. Secondly, I will examine law codes, which provide some of the most condemning evidence for homosexual sex, but this evidence may have been subject to misinterpretations in scholarship. I will argue that using legislation as indicative of Christian views is weak at best. Lastly, I will finish this section on a discussion of homoeroticism in fifth century texts to propose that same-sex desire was considered natural in clerical texts, even if acting on any such desire was considered deadly. The discussion that follows will enable us to more fully recognise the layers of thought that formed the perception of sexual intimacy between men between 390 and 520. Even in an age dominated by negative attitudes and increased marginalisation, the topic was not clear-cut, nor could clerics form unified attitudes on the issue, but rather they based their judgements on traditional Roman views, with limited help from scripture.

SEARCHING FOR SODOM

Roman attitudes towards same-sex relationships continued to define late antique thought on the topic, reoccurring in Christian views – perhaps unwittingly. This can be seen in the various retellings of the story of Sodom, to which different Christian figures added their own touches. For many today, Genesis 19 signifies a scriptural condemnation of homosexuality. However, the story was reinterpreted in numerous ways in early Christianity and in the Middle Ages, and its homosexual aura was the result of centuries of exegesis and analysis.[477] The story accounts two angels arriving

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[476] Augustine, *De bon. conj.* 8 (CSEL 41.0198).

[477] Two excellent works on the developing interpretations of Sodom are Mark D. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) and Michael Carden, *Sodomy: a History of a Christian Biblical Myth* (London: Equinox, 2004).

at Sodom and being offered a place to stay at Lot's house. Upon the news spreading, local men surround the house and demand to have the angels – it is unclear what, exactly, the men wish to do to them, but Lot offers his virgin daughters to the mob in the angels' stead, and is refused. The angels ultimately save Lot and his daughters, but Sodom and its citizens are destroyed by divine wrath. This part of Genesis held much appeal in the fifth century, especially for its message that improper behaviour would cause divine punishment and, furthermore, divinely sanctioned destruction. In a western context, where military activity troubled all provinces, the story resonated.

Orosius often portrayed God as actively punishing wicked people for bad behaviour, as discussed above, and as such Sodom finds a natural place in his narrative.[478] Orosius describes Sodom and its neighbouring cities as prosperous and well off. The story nevertheless ends badly: 'From abundance came extravagance, and from extravagance came foul lusts (*foedae libidines*), and "men committed shameless acts with men" (Rom. 1:27) without even giving thought to place, rank, or age.'[479] With the use of Pauline scripture, Orosius clearly connects Sodom with homosexual desire and seems to suggest this was a habit in Sodom.[480] However, the pinnacle of his version is not only this, but that the participants did not follow the traditional power structures related to them: place, rank, or age. Would the events of Sodom have been less deplorable if these men had chosen the age of their partners properly or made sure that the sexual encounter did not take place as part of a public mob? This certainly is not what Orosius wished to imply, but the lack of propriety made the scene in Sodom worse for him and for his readers than it otherwise may have been. Roman moral judgements are inserted alongside scripture, where they originally were not. However, Orosius is not alone in these attempts to add further sinfulness to Sodom by including Roman paradigms, attesting to a mixture of pre- and post-Christian notions of sexual behaviour.

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[478] See p. 120, n. 348 above.

[479] *HAP* 1.5.8 (CSEL 5.0046): 'ex abundantia enim luxuria, ex luxuria foedae libidines adoleuere, adeo ut masculi in masculos operantes turpitudinem ne consideratis quidem locis condicionibus aetatibusque proruerent.' Here, I have adapted Moorhead's translation by inserting the NRSV translation of 'masculi in masculos turpitudinem operantes.'

[480] Rom. 1:26-28 is the most extensive of the Pauline condemnations for homosexual acts. Rom. 1: 27-28 states: 'The men giving up natural intercourse with women were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty of their error.' For the many interpretations of Rom. 1:26-27, see Nissinen, 1998, pp. 103-110; M. D. Smith, 'Ancient Bisexuality and the Interpretation of Romans 1:26-27', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64.2 (1996), pp. 223-56.

Prior to Orosius, at the turn of the century in Gaul, Sulpicius Severus also wrote a history, this time a chronicle, in which Sodom was re-narrated. Sulpicius introduces the city as a place where 'males [were] forcing themselves upon males.'[481] Once the angels are residing in Lot's house, Sulpicius says that the wicked youth of the town demanded the new arrivals for *stuprum*.[482] Lot offered them his daughters in place of his guests, but they did not accept the offer, having a desire rather for things forbidden.[483] Here Sulpicius omits the fact that according to scripture all men, young and old alike, came to Lot's house: 'the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house' (Gen. 19:4). By choosing to narrow down the sinners to youths alone, Sulpicius is reaffirming his readers' expectations of the restless sexual urges of young men, to which Roman authors attested.[484] Again, we see deviation from and re-interpretation of scripture, to adjust a passage to the cleric's view of his own society.

However, Sulpicius is also voicing a more Christian idea on the scene at Sodom when he says that the youths had a desire 'for things forbidden' – *illicita*. The original Judaic context aside, for the Romans it was not illicit to sexually subjugate a foreigner, as indeed the angels were perceived to be in Sodom. Wanting to penetrate a foreigner, as we may assume these youths wished to do, was therefore not of itself wrong for Romans, but rather one of the constructions under which sex between men was acceptable. If this act was illicit because the men were guests, however, Sulpicius does not indicate this interpretation in any way. Sulpicius instead offers a hybrid interpretation where wanting to penetrate a man is now sinful – a scripturally backed interpretation, but one which Romans would not have problematised themselves – yet sexual aggression is identified with youth. From a pastoral perspective, by adding old men amidst the aggressors as Genesis does, the story could have been a stronger reminder on the dangers of same-sex *stuprum* for all ages. Yet, Sulpicius omits the older

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[481] Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicon* 1.5 (PL 20.0098A): 'viris in viros irruentibus.'

[482] The concept of *stuprum*, signifying a sexual crime, is difficult to clearly define due to its complexity and plurality. For *stuprum*, see Elaine Fantham, '*Stuprum*: Public Attitudes and Penalties for Sexual Offences in Republican Rome', *Echos du Monde Classique* 35.3 (1991), pp. 267-91.

[483] Sulp.Sev. *Chronicon* 1.6: 'juventus improba ex oppido novos hospites ad stuprum flagitabant. Lot pro hospitibus filias offerens, non acquiescentibus quibus illicita potius desiderio erant.'

[484] Laes and Strubbe, 2014, pp. 136-163.

men from his narrative to transform it to a story that he found more relatable. We do nevertheless see that by the start of the fifth century, wanting to have sex with another man by penetrating him was articulated as sinful by Christian authors.

Orosius and Sulpicius both mixed Roman ideas and Christian condemnation when they retold the story of Sodom. Yet, they were also ahead of their time: it was not obvious at the beginning of the fifth century that there *was* a connection between Sodom and same-sex desire. A 'sodomite' was still understood with a capital S to signify a person from the city of Sodom and not, as later happened, as someone who engaged in homosexual sex. Neither do early Christian readings of the story of Sodom suggest divine punishment because of homosexual acts *per se*, nor does Lot's act of offering his daughters to the sexually aggressive men suggest that these men had solely homosexual interests.[485] However, the exclusive connection between Sodom and homosexual desire was made clearer at this time, and indeed, we may see the groundwork being laid out by writers like Orosius and Sulpicius.

If we compare these men's works with the views of Augustine, these developments become even more interesting. Orosius identifies homosexual activity as the doom of Sodom by quoting Paul's letter to the Romans and Sulpicius directly links Sodom with *stuprum* – there is no denying that something sexual is at stake. Augustine hinted at such a sexualised reading too, yet it took him years to explicitly do so. In the Augustinian corpus, one finds several references to Sodom, in which the story passes through several different stages of interpretation. By following these discussions chronologically, we may see Augustine's own progression in what the crime of Sodom had in fact been.

In *Confessiones,* written between 397 and 400, we find one of Augustine's earliest references to Sodom. Augustine states that:

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[485] The precise sexual interests of the men of Sodom and what the perceived crime of Sodom was has resulted in much scholarly debate. Bailey, 1955, argued that scriptures do not offer a homosexual interpretation of Sodom but that this was a later construction, a notion that has been supported by more recent works of Jordan, 1997 and Carden, 2004. For counter-arguments that Sodom is clearly about homosexual acts, which is reflected within scriptures themselves, see for instance Carmichael, 1997, p. 55.

> Shameful acts which are contrary to nature, such as the acts of the Sodomites,[486] are everywhere and are always to be detested and punished. Even if all peoples should do them, they would all be liable to the same condemnation by divine law, for it has not made men to use one another in this way.[487]

This may initially seem like a straightforward interpretation of 'Sodomites' as those with homosexual interests, however this conclusion would be rushed as a closer reading reveals that Augustine fails to say what the crimes of the Sodomites were. Men ought not to 'use' one another *illo modo* but how is this to be understood? Is it rape, as whatever the scene at Sodom was, it clearly was not consensual, and if so, is Augustine condemning men raping men? Augustine uses the very vague *flagitia* – shameful things – to describe Sodom's activities. Likewise, it would be premature to suppose that acts 'contrary to nature' is a straightforward condemnation of same-sex desire and acts as further examples show.

Our second example comes from *De civitate Dei* and its Book 16, written in 418. In this book, Augustine says:

> After this promise, Lot was delivered out of Sodom, and a fiery rain from heaven turned that whole region of the impious city into ashes, where *stupra* in men had grown strong to such an extent that it was custom, comparable to laws that permit other kinds of licence.

In Latin, this passage reads:

> Post hanc promissionem liberato de Sodomis Loth et ueniente igneo imbre de caelo tota illa regio impiae ciuitatis in cinerem uersa est, ubi stupra in masculos in tantam consuetudinem conualuerant, quantam leges solent aliorum factorum praebere licentiam.[488]

This passage is an apt example of the problems in scholarship interested in Genesis 19, as *stupra in masculos* has been translated in multiple ways. The NPNF series misleadingly translates this phrase as 'sodomy,' which echoes the time of its 1887

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[486] 'Sodomitarum'.

[487] Augustine, *Confessiones* 3.8.1 (CSEL 33.0056): 'itaque flagitia quae sunt contra naturam ubique ac semper detestanda atque punienda sunt, qualia Sodomitarum fuerunt. quae si omnes gentes facerent, eodem criminis divina lege tenerentur, quae non sic fecit homines ut hoc se illo uterentur modo.'

[488] Augustine, *De civ. D.* 16.30.1 (CCSL 48.0535). Translation own. The final clause ('quantam leges solent aliorum factorum praebere licentiam') shows some licence on my part to convey Augustine's meaning that *stuprum* in Sodom might as well have been a law, as it was in their very tradition and way of life.

publication and shows the significant leap that has been made from Augustine's own wording to a flat-out condemnation of homosexual acts.[489] The use of the word 'sodomy' is undeniably archaic now, and in works that are more recent, we see *stupra in masculos* being translated as 'sexual promiscuity among males', 'homosexual practices among males', and 'sexual intercourse between males.'[490] All these versions pay more attention to the original phrasing, yet these are not satisfactory either.

Unsurprisingly the scholars who have paid the most attention to the wording are those pursuing an understanding of the interpretation of Sodom rather than those projecting preconceptions of Sodom onto the text. Mark D. Jordan translates the phrase as 'debaucheries in men,'[491] which is a more literal and accurate translation of the phrase, although I have retained *stupra* in its original form as there is no satisfactory word or phrase that conveys *stuprum* in English. The interpretation of this passage centres upon *in masculos*, and whether we see this as a statement of an innate masculine quality of men being prone to *stuprum*. Do we, that is, interpret *in masculos* literally – *in/into men* – or replace the preposition 'in' with 'among' or 'between' as several of the translations above, which reduces the reading to sex acts and which, furthermore, would have more clearly been designated by an ablative *in masculis*? It is my view that Augustine considered desire for male/male *stuprum* as an innate, defining quality of the men of Sodom, which is supported by his comment that this *stuprum* was so ingrained in the society of Sodom that it might as well have been law. Thus: *stupra* in men. As such, by 418 Augustine had articulated that male/male *stuprum* was in question, which is a development in itself, and there no longer is any doubt that (attempted) sex acts were at the heart of Sodom. Yet the men of Sodom were on trial for innate lustfulness found *in masculos*, which takes this from a moral discourse on sex acts to a discourse on sexual desire itself.

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[489] See NPNF 2 (Buffalo, NY: The Christian Publishing Company, 1887; reprint: Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 1995), p. 329.

[490] These translations are, in order: LCL, *De civitate Dei* V (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 145; *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, trans. by Henry Bettenson (Penguin Books, 1972), p. 680; *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. by R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 743.

[491] Jordan, 1997, p. 37.

If we follow this chronology in Augustinian writings through, then in 422 Augustine discusses the topic once again in *Contra mendacium*. Here Augustine ponders which crime was worse: giving up one's guests for the 'wickedness which the Sodomites were attempting to do'[492] or offering one's daughters instead? Neither is strictly speaking very pious behaviour, and Augustine had to explain Lot's actions. This discussion on Genesis is now firmly rooted in sex in more explicit terms than before as Augustine says that the Sodomites were interested in 'forcing [the angels] to undergo womanly things', that is *oppressi muliebria patiantur*. This phrase was used by Romans to indicate a man being penetrated, and this choice of words is more sexually explicit than *flagitium* or *stuprum* as it suggests the way in which the sex was had.[493] As Augustine discussed if a lesser sin may be committed in order to prevent a larger sin, 'since it is less evil for women to suffer *stuprum* than for men',[494] it becomes clear that these Sodomites were, in Augustine's reading, sexually interested in women too as Lot's daughters were viable replacements for the angels. An interest in men does not cancel out interest in women, and Augustine moved freely between both types of desire. Simultaneously, the scene at Sodom was taking place in the context of 'libidinous frenzy.'[495] He seems to be condemning not simply homosexual acts, but unconstrained desire likewise, adding a further element of loss of control thought to be unmanly of men.

Sodom, therefore, continued to be viewed as an aggressive and violent scene by various church figures at the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth century.[496] We see distinctive Roman interpretations of it: Sulpicius's youths demanded the angels for *stuprum*, and Orosius was concerned with the age and social status of the participants.

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[492] Augustine, *Contra mendacium* 20 (CSEL 41.0493): 'scelus quod Sodomitae … facere conabantur.' How vaguely expressed again!

[493] For the use of the phrase, see Jonathan Walters, 'Invading the Body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought', in *Roman Sexualities*, ed. by Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 29-43.

[494] Augustine, *Contra mendacium* 20: 'minus malum est feminas quam viros perpeti stuprum.' The NPNF translation uses 'lewdness' for *stuprum* – a rather misleading translation. See NPNF 3.1056. See Section 2.3 above on Augustine's notion that it is better to rape women than men, which he supposes was Lot's motivation in offering his daughters.

[495] Augustine, *Contra mendacium* 22 (CSEL 41.0495-0496): 'libidinosas insanias.'

[496] The focus here has been on Western sources, but as far as Eastern contemporaries are concerned, John Chrysostom's readings on Sodom are the most significant as he adds a homosexual aura to Sodom most explicitly out of all Eastern authors at this time. See Carden, 2004, pp. 141-145.

The role of traditional ideas on sex between men is undeniable in these texts and ideas of proper and improper homosexual acts are constructed around them. Augustine's version of the story clearly attests to male desire for women and men alike, never assuming that men would be restricted or confined to one or the other. Mark Jordan has argued that Augustine does not see the sin of the Sodomites as being same-sex desire as such but rather the violent expression of these urges, which the above discussion supports. Furthermore, Jordan has argued that this distinction has been lost in readings of Augustine.[497] Sulpicius also supports this condemnation of uncontrolled desire as, indeed, his choice of youths ties the story with excessive lust and lack of control.

One may have expected men such as Sulpicius, Augustine and so forth, to articulate ideas on sex between men that were more in tune with the all-encompassing scriptural condemnation that included the shared blame of both parties without any further consideration. Sodom, however, proved difficult to interpret in this light: the angels could not be blamed for the course of events, so no blame could be placed on the (receptive) parties that would have traditionally received the ridicule. This in itself naturally brought into focus the insertive males as transgressors, but Christian authors seem to have been unsure how to criticise these men. To this end, they relied on traditional thinking on homosexual acts as the insertive man had to be criticised: one had to think of status, one had to think of age – if one did not, one had grievously erred.

Apart from Sodom, sex between men continued to be present in Christian texts as an element of history and legend. For instance, Jerome recalled the famed Antinous already mentioned with some distaste but without any moral tirade on the subject,[498] while those recalling the past could not help but mention the sexual escapades of lustful men. As with incest, homosexual relationships seem to have been suitably scandalous

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[497] Jordan, 1997, p. 35. In the East Augustine's contemporary, John Chrysostom, was a pioneer in establishing this same connection. See Ulriika Vihervalli, '"Unmindful of What They Were Born": Homosexual Behaviour in Roman North Africa, c. 300 – 430' (University of Edinburgh, 2011).

[498] Jerome quotes Hegesippus's comments on the cult of Antinous, noting that 'Hadrian Caesar numbered Antinous among his favourites' in *DVI* 22, translated in Thomas P. Halton, ed., *Jerome: On Illustrious Men* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), p. 42. Though this is reported without any direct criticism, in *Adversus Jovinianum* Jerome adds a hint of distaste: 'And to make us understand what kind of gods Egypt always welcomed, one of their cities was recently called Antinous after Hadrian's favourite' = 'Et ut sciremus quales deos semper Aegyptus recepisset, nuper ab Hadriani amasio urbs eorum Antinous appellate est.' (*Adv.Jov.* 2.7 = PL 23.0296-0297).

to warrant mentions. For instance, Orosius discusses the abduction of Ganymede and Nero's marriage to another man.[499] The late fourth century *Historia Augusta*, on the other hand, is especially interested in moral misbehaviour of emperors, following a long tradition of a voyeuristic interest in men in charge of the Roman Empire.[500] Peppered with mentions of homosexual desire and sex, it records Hadrian's tendencies,[501] Lucius Verus's desire for young men,[502] Commodus's debauchery,[503] Elagabalus's various sex crimes with men,[504] and Carinus having sex with men.[505] These sexual and romantic encounters in the mythical and historical past were part of late antique cultural tradition, well known to Christians and non-Christians alike. Notably, these too were stories of excessive lust and desire for receptive males, committed by men who also had wives or female concubines. An excessive desire to penetrate a man is the most frequent type of misbehaviour that is recorded.

Patristic discourses analysed above may reflect Christian writers' struggle to think in non-traditional paradigms, but conversely one could argue that emphasising traditional markers of acceptable/unacceptable homosexual behaviour could have gone further in showing such behaviour's immorality to lay Christians, who had an evolved understanding of Roman paradigms for male/male sex, than a generic condemnation of 'sin'. After all, Orosius must have thought that his audience would object that no age or rank was considered when the men of Sodom made their advances. However, this

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[499] Orosius, *HAP* 1.12.3 and 7.7.2.

[500] The purpose and dating of *HA* has been the topic of much scholarly debate. Cameron, 2011, pp. 743-774, provides an overview of the historiographical discussion. *HA* has often been dated to 390s, placing it within the scope of the current study. Cameron, however, makes a case for an earlier dating, placing *HA* in the 370s, but at present no scholarly consensus exists. Furthermore, the intentions of *HA* have inspired much discussion, from being labelled as pagan propaganda to 'being as trivial as everyone used to think' in ibid., p. 781. I am in no doubt that *HA* sought to amuse its readers with its extravagant and outrageous remarks on emperors' sex lives, bad habits and scandalous liaisons, thriving on fictive constructions of exaggerated immorality. However, it is simultaneously a highly skilled piece of literature, as shown by the recent study in David Rohrbacher, *The Play of Allusion in the Historia Augusta* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016).

[501] *HA,* Hadrian 11.7.

[502] *HA,* Lucius Verus 4.4.

[503] *HA,* Commodus 1.7 on polluted orifices; 3.6 on kissing men in public; 5.4 on taking male sex-slaves on travels; 10.1 on sex with men; 10.8 on male sex-slaves; Pertinax 8.5 on Commodus's phallus-shaped cups.

[504] *HA,* Elagabalus 5.1 on sex with men; 5.2 on using all of his orifices; 5.3 on lovers with large penises; 8.6 voyeurism practised in baths for well-endowed men; 12.2 promoting men with large penises, and the list goes on.

[505] *HA*, Carinus 16.1.

would suggest that non-Christian ideas were favoured over condemnations found in scripture. Such a reversal would be highly unusual in Christian moralistic rhetoric, but may also have been a way to make condemnation more approachable to audiences, if that audience recognised the Roman paradigms of male/male sex better than Christian views of shared culpability overall. It becomes clear that traditional ideas of male/male sex were so embedded in cultural understandings on the topic that even Christian moralists themselves could not help but judge same-sex encounters on the same merits as late Roman culture had done for centuries.

This influence of traditional ideas of sex is crucial for our understanding of how discourses on sexual morality were created at this time: traditional ideas of illicit sexual behaviour continued to be relevant and central to moralistic thought. Existing scholarship on Sodom and scholarship on homosexual behaviour in the late Roman era has not, to the best of my knowledge, explored this crucial link between Christian views on same-sex intimacy and the continued reliance on traditional power dynamics of sex. The contribution here made will have shown how a consideration of Roman ideas can be used to flesh out Christian clerics' understanding of sexual practices and to show that clerics recognised, understood and conducted their own views within these paradigms. When they discussed Sodom, they could not overturn the prevailing Roman ideas within themselves.

LEGAL EVIDENCE AS 'CHRISTIANISING'?

The role of tradition is equally important when we examine imperial and canon law. This has been the frontier of 'Christianisation' for many. The influence of Christian thinking on imperial law, and vice versa, has already been discussed in Chapter 3 when we examined incest and prostitution. For laws on homosexual acts in the late antique era, we again see 'the influence of Christian authorities', as argued, for instance, by James Brundage.[506] However, the problem of limited contextual evidence for laws, and the edited and abbreviated nature of these laws in legal collections, makes it difficult to assess what types of behaviours or sexual habits laws that limited sex between men were actually targeting. It is difficult to confidently conclude, therefore, that laws reflect

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[506] Brundage, 1987, p. 123.

'Christian' ideas as indeed even these 'Christian' ideas are dubious in their approaches to sexual intimacy between men.

For canon law in the West, one cannot say much with regard to homosexual acts. The most direct action taken against them comes from the Synod of Elvira in early fourth century Spain, which forbade communion to any man who had engaged in sex with a boy: 'Those who sexually abuse boys may not commune even when death approaches.'[507] After this, we have no record of a Western council that discussed the matter during this time period. The problem with this canon is, of course, that it seems to address pederasty rather than all sex between men – again, we see a concern over status, age and power dynamics, rather than an overall condemnation of all male/male sex that was articulated in Pauline and Levitical scripture. It appears that overall condemnations were still too foreign to be articulated.

We began this section with reference to a 390 law demanding men who had sex with other men to be burned, but this was not the first fourth century imperial law on the matter. In 342, a law issued by Constantius and Constans, in convoluted, confusing and perhaps deliberately ambiguous language, forbade men from uniting with one another.[508] It is unclear if this law is talking about marriage, or the futility of male/male sex in reproductive terms, or if it is objecting to men abandoning their usual role as the sexually dominant party – the insertive male. The law has been seen as attempting to reinforce this third option, however, as legislating for traditional gender roles of a Roman *vir*, who should not succumb to other men.[509] Whatever the law was aiming to punish, it demanded severe consequences for it, although the law does not state what precisely such a punishment should be. The law from 390 by Theodosius I, Valentinian II and Arcadius**,** on the other hand, demanded men to be burned alive:

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[507] Elvira, Canon 71 (PL 161.0686C): 'stupratoribus puerorum nec in finem dandam esse communionem censuimus.' For this council, see Samuel Laeuchli, *Power and Sexuality: the emergence of canon law at the Synod of Elvira* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1972).

[508] *C.Th.* 9.7.3: 'When a man marries in the manner of a woman, a "woman" about to renounce men, what does he wish, when sex has lost its significance; when the crime is one which it is not profitable to know; when Venus is changed into another form; when love is sought and not found? We order the statutes to arise, the laws to be armed with an avenging sword, that those infamous persons who are now, or who hereafter may be, guilty may be subjected to exquisite punishment.'

[509] Eva Cantarella, *Bisexuality in the Ancient World*, 2nd edn (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 175-196; Harper, 2013, pp. 152-153.

All persons who have the shameful custom of condemning a man's body, acting the part of a woman's, to the sufferance of an alien sex (for they appear to be different from women), shall expiate a crime of this kind in avenging flames in the sight of the people.[510]

This law was posted in the Forum of Trajan in Rome, and the Theodosian Code gives no further information on it. This, combined with the 'marriage' law of 342, have resulted in some interpretations that men with homosexual interests were persecuted and executed in accordance with imperial laws in the late Roman era.[511] However, Timothy Barnes has challenged the idea that imperial laws demonstrate a move towards harsher views on homosexual relations at this time. Instead, he has argued that the law quoted above was not a condemnation for all men, but rather targeted male prostitutes specifically.[512] Barnes's interpretation that this law aimed to rid Rome of male prostitutes and not, as is erroneously thought, of all men who had had or were having sex with men is likely to be correct. Indeed, the particularly brutal punishment of being burned alive feels extreme when considering that there was no legal precedent for it and that such an attack against people of good social status would surely have been met with opposition. Burning receptive male prostitutes alive, on the other hand, is more plausible, even as it is cruel.

Furthermore, Barnes has compared this law with a contemporary legal text known as the *Collatio Legum Mosaicarum et Romanarum*, which compares Judaic and Roman laws on various topics, including legislation on homosexual acts. Barnes has argued that in the 390s a Jewish scholar in Rome, who knew the law of 390 quoted above, attempted to bring Judaic law in line with this more recent imperial ruling on burning male prostitutes alive. When composing a work that compared Roman and Judaic law, therefore, the *Collatio* tweaked the wording of Leviticus 20:13, which had stated: 'If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them.' As discussed above, this passage

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[510] *C.Th.* 9.7.6.

[511] Bailey, 1955, pp. 68-70.

[512] T. D. Barnes, 'Leviticus, the Emperor Theodosius, and the Law of God: Three Prohibitions of Male Homosexuality', *Roman Legal Tradition* 8 (2012), pp. 43-62. While male prostitutes could be insertive with their male customers, such acts were scandalous – most Roman texts assume that male prostitutes were receptive in sex, and as such the law may be attacking only the receptive, prostituted party that was subject to a long tradition of ridicule.

clearly condemned both parties of homosexual sex. Yet, the collator of the *Collatio* recorded the Judaic law as follows: 'Moses says: He who spends the night with a male in the role of a female, it is an abomination: let them both die, they are guilty.'[513] While both parties remain guilty, the *Collatio* singles out the receptive man more. Barnes has argued that the *Collatio* thus aimed to heighten the culpability of the receptive partner, in response to the imperial law condemning male prostitutes.

The *Collatio* then moves on to recount the law of 390, which appears to have been preserved in greater length in the *Collatio* than in the Theodosian Code, to which the abbreviated version quoted above was entered into in the 430s. The lengthier version preserved in the *Collatio* explicitly attacks male prostitution alone and not all men who had engaged in sex with other men.[514] According to the *Collatio*'s lengthier version, Rome was defiled by the 'womanish shame' of male prostitutes, 'whose disgraceful sensuality let them to use the male body in a female manner so to damn it to the passive role of the other sex.'[515] These prostitutes were to be dragged out of their brothels and burned in front of the people – the law was posted in the Atrium of Minerva in Rome. The relationship between the *Collatio* version and the Theodosian Code version is not entirely clear in terms of its contents, date and time of publication, yet they are clearly drawing from the same origin.[516] The *Collatio* version, perhaps reflecting the original

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[513] *Collatio* 5.1.1: 'Moyses dicit: Qui manserit cum masculo mansione muliebri, aspernamentum est: ambo moriantur, rei sunt.' Printed in Robert M. Frakes, *Compiling the Collatio Legum Mosaicarum et Romanarum in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 168, translation on p. 213.

[514] *Collatio* 5.3.1, in length, reads:

'The same Theodosius: the Emperors Valentinian, Theodosius and Arcadius Augusti, to Orientius, Vicar of the City of Rome:

We no longer allow the City of Rome, the mother of all virtues, to be defiled for so long by the contamination of the womanish shame in men and that rustic strength of the ancient founders, diminished by the effeminately enervated people, to inflict insult against the ages of the founders and of the emperors, Oh Orientus, most dear and pleasant to us. Your praiseworthy skills, therefore, will purge by means of the flames of vengeance with the people watching, as the immensity of the outrage demands, all those caught and dragged out of all the brothels of men (it is shameful even to say the term) whose disgraceful sensuality led them to use the male body in a female manner so to damn it to the passive role of the other sex and to have nothing differentiate from women, so that all may comprehend that the shelter of the spirit of man ought to be sacrosanct nor shall those who have foully thrown away their own sex and sought to be the other be without the highest punishment. Posted on the day before the Ides of May at Rome in the atrium of Minerva.' Translation in ibid., p. 213.

[515] *Collatio* 5.3.1: 'effeminati in viris pudoris'; *Collatio* 5.3.2: 'quibus flagitiosus luxus est virile corpus muliebriter constitutum alieni sexus damnare patientia', in ibid., p. 170.

[516] *Collatio* 5.3.1 and *C.Th.* 9.7.6 differ in both their date and location. *C.Th.* 9.7.6 was posted at the Forum of Trajan in August 390, whereas the *Collatio* 5.3.1 version was posted in the Atrium of Minerva

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law more closely, clearly focuses on receptive partners, and as such, Barnes has argued that the collator intentionally focused Mosaic laws on the receptive males as well. As we have seen, the idea of a shared culpability was not utilised by Christian authors of the early fifth century fully, but rather condemnations relied on traditional Roman dynamics of sex, and in this dynamic, the receptive partner was subject to scorn.

Barnes's firm dating, location and identity of the collator of the *Collatio* are in contrast with Robert M. Frakes's extensive study on the *Collatio*. Frakes's conclusions are much more tentative: the collection quite likely originates from the West and is by the hand of a person who is middle class and non-elite, perhaps someone working in the civil service.[517] Frakes, however, concludes that the author of the *Collatio* was likelier to have been Christian than Jewish.[518] Frakes does not provide a commentary on the differences between *Collatio* 5.3.1 and *C.Th.* 9.7.6. However, it is unlikely that sure answers can be given on the relationship and relative transmission of these two laws. Our concern here is not to settle this debate either, but rather to illustrate that, firstly, what has often been considered as proof of 'Christianised' imperial laws against homosexual acts are not so. It seems likely that the law of 390 wished to tackle male prostitution, but was not objecting to all male/male sex like Christian scripture did. These laws focused on receptive males and problematised the dangerous gender-blurring that receptive males embodied. In response to these developments in emphasising the dangers of letting oneself be penetrated, the collator felt the need to make Judaic tradition focus more specifically on the receptive party likewise. Here, too, the dominance of late Roman traditional thought on sex between men is tangible, instead of Christian thought.

Furthermore, we may now give some observations on developments in law. It would be erroneous to claim that fourth century laws on sex between men represent Christianisation or are reflective of a more widely shared sentiment in the lay, pagan, clerical or Christian population. If these laws had any affect, they certainly made a statement that a man should never let himself be penetrated by another man, and this

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in March 390. Possible theories accounting for such differences, however, must be left outside the current study.

[517] Frakes, 2011, pp. 128-129.

[518] Ibid., pp. 130-140.

may have forced people who wished to engage in such activities into finding more discrete ways of achieving their sexual goals. Presumably, one could not turn to male prostitutes anymore, but one's own male slaves would still have been easily accessible for many. Laws, however, do not address this, nor does the topic of sex between men come up again in the surviving legal evidence from the fifth century.

The very limited legal tradition on sex between men is not extensive enough to support any notion that 'Christianisation' was in effect here – it only attests to an anxiety and discomfort regarding, and aggression towards, receptive males, who were betraying their gender roles. The marginalisation of male prostitutes and punishments for receptive men both say more about the Roman idea of *vir* than they do about Christian ideals of men or Christian ideas of male/male sex. One must be careful, therefore, not to look for grand Christianising ideologies in law, and even more careful not to insert 'Christianisation' into law retrospectively. This latter is particularly hard not to do, as the next wave of Roman legislation on homosexual acts discussed the topic more thoroughly than before, thus creating a sense of progression between laws that are, fundamentally, independent of each other and issued in a two-hundred-year span, in vastly different circumstances. These later laws come from Justinian in the 530s and 540s, beyond the chronological span here examined.[519] In these laws, both the receptive and insertive parties are equally condemned at last, and *Novel* 141 even cites Sodom as an example of inappropriate male behaviour.[520] In the context discussed here, this is an

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[519] The legislations of Justinian included *C.Th.* 9.7.3 forbidding unions between men, but excluded *C.Th.* 9.7.6 discussed at length here. Justinian summarised punishments for men in *Inst.* 4.18.4 in 533, subjecting such men to the same punishments as those who had committed adultery – death. *Nov.* 77, from 538, punished men who committed 'reprehensible vices, and commit crimes against nature'. *Nov.* 77 then moves to punish those who blaspheme and calls all such sinners to be punished with death. *Nov.* 77 is a confusing law, being both vague in its expression of sex between men, and in its lengthy inclusion on blasphemy, which takes up the majority of the law. *Nov.* 77 also places strict punishment for judges who may avoid sentencing people guilty of crimes against nature and blasphemy. *Nov.* 141 from 559, on the other hand, is more explicit. Again, the law states that it is concerned with crimes against nature, but is now more definite in who it is targeting: 'We have reference to the corruption of males (de stupro masculorum / των ἀρρένων φθοράν), a crime which some persons have the sacrilegious audacity to perpetrate.' This time, the law does not call for death, but a confession before the Patriarch, followed by a penitent life. Those who do not confess will face consequences. There are clear problems here even in the consistency, scope and definition of Justinian's attitudes towards male/male sex, one notable observation being that Justinian relaxes the law from 538 with his addition in 559. The law does not differentiate between insertive/receptive, but Justinian's argumentation of homosexual acts as being against nature unifies both laws. While the Christian core of Justinian's legislation cannot be denied, the legislation on homosexual acts in his law codes is vague and confused.

[520] *Nov.* 141: 'Scimus enim ex sacris scripturis edocti, quale deus iustum supplicium iis qui Sodomis olim habitarunt, propter hunc in commixtione furorem intulerit.'

ideological milestone for both Sodom and for insertive/receptive dynamics, which had never been condemned in law before. For Christianising laws, we must look well into the sixth century, and these developments likewise account for the way in which fourth century laws have misleadingly been interpreted.

However, comprehensively aggressive sixth century laws do not mean that traditional views on same-sex desire were now obsolete. As we turn to discuss the survival and articulation of homoeroticism and homoerotic desire in Christian texts, we find both in abundance. Homoeroticism and its continued acknowledgement in Christian texts is our last point of consideration for traditional views' dominance in discussion of sex between men.

HOMOEROTICISM

In this final section, I wish to discuss evidence of a continued understanding and appreciation of homoerotic desire between 390 and 520 in order to suggest that traditional ideas of same-sex attraction continued to be understood as common and inevitable in Christian texts. This attests to traditional Roman ideas of attraction, which were considered problematic by clerics, but simultaneously were thought to be natural. Recently, the subtleties in expressing homoerotic desire have been expertly studied by Mark Masterson, who has shown that homoerotic desire remained a central part of homosocial relationships at this time, in how men related to each other, expressed admiration, and showed rank and status.[521] However, this language was highly complex and coded, relying on intertextuality, which educated elites would have felt comfortable with and would have mutually understood. Considering these findings on secular elites in relation to Christian texts, we find similar appreciation of desire as defining male relationships, but in these contexts desire is always dangerous as it was linked to sexual desire.

As seen above in our commentary on Sodom, one of the few aspects of the episode not problematised was the desire that the men of Sodom had for the angels, but rather the maddening and overly passionate aspects of this desire were questioned. By examining

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[521] Masterson, 2014.

texts written between 390 and 520 that express homoeroticism, we can even further see that Christian clerics continued to consider this type of attraction as inevitable and natural. At least, they never questioned such desire as unnatural. This further underlines the dominant force of traditional ideas of sex and attraction between people of the same biological sex at this time.

The most sexually charged discussions on same-sex intimacy come from ascetic texts or texts written for or to ascetic communities. The potential danger of same-sex intimacy found in these texts represents an intensified idea of sex and lust: written for audiences striving for absolute continence, the problem of desire is heightened to proportions that may not be found in other contexts. These texts demonstrate a shift from policing sexual acts to policing desire itself – something much more instinctive and intangible, and as such even more difficult to control.

One key text in discussing homoerotic desire had its origin in the East. Around 404 Jerome translated *Regulae S. Pachomii*, the Rule of Pachomius, from Coptic-based Greek to Latin.[522] Pachomius (292 – 348) was an Egyptian, credited as the founder of coenobitic monasticism and whose rule only survives in Jerome's translation.[523] The *Regulae* was circulated widely in the West in the fifth century, and Pachomius's contributions to promoting monastic life was acknowledged by western figures such as Leo the Great in the 440s and by Gennadius who added Pachomius to his list of illustrious men in the 460s/470s.[524] The reception of the rule appears to have been positive, resonating in Western churches and communities despite its rather different origins in the fourth century Egyptian desert.

The rule that was distributed amongst a Latin readership had much to say on homoerotic desire and its dangers in monastic settings. This may have been somewhat foreign in the West at this point where monasticism was still rather new – yet communities existed

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[522] For dating of the translation, see J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: his life, writings, and controversies* (London: Duckworth, 1975), p. 280.

[523] Jerome's work, however, may not be very reflective of Pachomius himself or his ideas. See Philip Rousseau, *Pachomius: the making of a community in fourth-century Egypt* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), p. 38. The *Regulae* have been translated in Armand Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*. Vol. 2: *Pachomian Chronicles and Rules* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981).

[524] Leo, *Ep*. 3; Gennadius, *DVI* 7. For the dating of Gennadius's *DVI*, see n. 628 below.

in the West, and in these communities, ascetic men lived in close quarters with each other.[525] The extent to which the *Regulae* worried over physical intimacy between men is telling. Rule 93 stipulates that no monk should rub oil on another's body unless expressly told to do so,[526] nor should a monk assist another who has a thorn in his foot, but that such touching of another's foot must be supervised – perhaps there was concern that the touching would turn into fondling, which in turn might escalate into something more.[527] The most explicit is Rule 94:

> No one should speak to another after lights out. No one should sleep with another on a rush mat. No one should hold another's hand; but whether they stand, walk, or sit, let [each] be separated from the other by one cubit.[528]

This is but to name a few – several rules focus on limiting contact between individual monks. These stipulations discouraged reliance on the comforts of this world, and while they may be concerned with intimate friendships as such affections are earthly rather than spiritual, the worry over a sexual interest is only one cubit – that is 45.72 centimetres – away. Rule 7 decrees that 'let no one look at another while twisting ropes or praying, let him rather be intent on his own work with eyes cast down.'[529] The danger of wandering eyes is especially sexual as attested in scripture and by many early church fathers, all of whom knew that even the act of looking could constitute the deadly sin of adultery.[530]

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[525] Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 41-53; Goodrich, 2007; Dunn, 2008, pp. 82-110.

[526] *Reg. Pach.* 93 (PL 23.0075): 'Nullus lavare alterum poterit, aut ungere, nisi ei fuerit imperatum.'

[527] *Reg. Pach*. 95 (PL 23.0075): 'Spinam de pede alterius, excepto domus praeposito, et secundo, et alio cui iussum fuerit, nemo audebit evellere.'

[528] *Reg. Pach.* 94 (PL 23.0075): 'Nemo alteri loquatur in tenebris: nullus in psiathio cum altero dormiat: manum alterius nemo teneat; sed sive steterit, sive ambulaverit, sive sederit, uno cubito distet ab altero.' Here, I have used the translation from Mark Masterson, 'Impossible Translation: Antony and Paul the Simple in the *Historia Monachorum*', in Kuefler, ed., 2006, pp. 215-35. The problems of heteronormative translations are again an issue here when compared to the translation offered by Veilleux, who modifies this rule to forbid men 'sitting' on the same mat, rather than sleeping. Veilleux also takes further licences, all noted within his work, but without any justification as to why he has made these alterations from the original Latin. A comparison of his translation and Jerome's is an illustrative and worrying example of how original meaning and context – in this case homoeroticism – can be written out of texts by a translator.

[529] *Reg. Pach.* 7 (PL 23.0066): 'Nemo aspiciat alterum torquentem funiculum, vel orantem; sed in suo defixis luminibus opere sit intentus.'

[530] Matt. 5:27-28: 'You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.' The gaze was feared in particular in monastic contexts, as testified by Basil the Great in *Sermo ascetico* (PG 32.0880), translated in Boswell, 1980, p. 160: 'When [a young monk] is speaking to you or singing opposite you, look down as you respond to him, so that you do not by gazing at his face take the seed of desire from the enemy sower and bring forth harvests of corruption and loss.' For John Chrysostom's

In these texts, the dangers of same-sex desire step into the void that an explicit discussion on sex has left in its wake. Western counterparts of these anxieties are not without precedent as these themes are also found in what is at times called the Augustinian Rule. This is not an official rule but rather is based on a letter that Augustine wrote to nuns, presumably residing in Hippo, in 423, guiding them in their daily religious life.[531] *Ep.* 211 provides us with rare mentions of sex and desire between women, which have thus far gone unmentioned. The silence regarding this matter is largely due to a silence in the sources themselves,[532] as well as due to the phallo-centric idea of sex that Augustine himself demonstrates.[533] Addressing holy women, Augustine says:

> The love which you bear to each other must be not carnal, but spiritual: for those things which are practised by immodest women in shameful jest and sporting with one another ought not even to be done by those of your sex who are married, or are intending to marry, and much more ought not to be done by widows or chaste virgins dedicated to be handmaids of Christ by a holy vow.[534]

Augustine clearly condemned the unmentionable 'things' done by women, which were *iocando* and *ludendo* – done jokingly or sportingly. He does not appear to consider sexual acts between women as a very intense experience or, really, even as a conclusive act of sex. He does not label this activity as *fornicatio* or *stuprum*, so in his mind this was clearly something lesser. It is unclear if these acts should be thought of as being oral sex, mutual masturbation or manually stimulating each other's vaginas, or if

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views on the dangers of the gaze, see Blake Leyerle, 'John Chrysostom on the Gaze', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1.2 (1993), pp. 159-74.

[531] Augustine, *Ep.* 211 (CSEL 57.0356-0371).

[532] For this topic, see Bernadette J. Brooten, *Love Between Women: early Christian responses to female homoeroticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Sandra Boehringer, *L'homosexualité féminine dans l'antiquité grecque et romaine* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2007).

[533] Jacqueline Murray, 'Twice Marginal and Twice Invisible: Lesbians in the Middle Ages', in *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*, ed. by Vern L. Bullough and James A. Brundage (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 2000), pp. 191-222.

[534] Augustine, *Ep.* 211.14 (CSEL 57.0369): 'Non autem carnalis sed spiritalis inter vos debet esse dilectio; nam quae faciunt pudoris inmemores etiam feminis feminae iocando turpiter et ludendo, non solum a viduis et intactis ancillis Christi in sancto proposito constitutis sed omnino nec a mulieribus nuptis nec a virginibus sunt facienda nupturis.'

perhaps the Roman idea of women rubbing against each other is in question here.[535] Nevertheless, he further says:

> When [nuns] go to the baths, or wherever they have to go, let there not be less than three; and the sister who requires to go somewhere is not to go along with those she chooses herself, but with those the superior orders.[536]

We may suppose that Augustine expected the sexually dangerous ethos of the baths, combined with nudity, to lead women astray. Yet this activity is not at the same level as penetrative sex with a male. Augustine does not condemn *quae faciunt pudoris inmemores* as horrendous sins, although clearly these acts are something in which women should not engage. Brooten has argued that 'Augustine takes for granted that women will be sexually attracted to other women,'[537] but simultaneously these widows or brides-to-be are sexually attracted to men. The view that Augustine takes on sex between women as something less than sex explains why female homoeroticism is less of a topic in clerical texts than its male counterpart: it constituted, perhaps, some kind of foreplay that men thought could not be consummated.

Furthermore, not only is Augustine criticising carnal lust in an ascetic community of women, but he mentions that married women and single women were in danger of this frivolous temptation, too, as quoted above. Not only, therefore, does Augustine perceive an intensely ascetic environment to produce such behaviour in women, but this can happen amongst laywomen as well. *Ep.* 211 is a unique document as it gives evidence of sexual acts between laywomen *and* religious women alike that we would otherwise be ignorant of. One wonders how common such activities amongst women were, if a normative response to them was that they were jokingly done and did not bear any moral consequences. In terms of desire, however, not only were men perfectly capable of desiring one another, so were women, and women did not necessarily even need the homosocially intense environment of an ascetic community to be in danger of acting on these urges.

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[535] Church fathers were not completely unaware of the ways in which women could pleasure each other. For instance, Tertullian refers to rubbing as a sexual act between women in *De pallio* 4.9.5. This may refer to women rubbing their vulvas against each other's.

[536] Augustine, *Ep.* 211.13: 'Nec eant ad balneas sive quocumque ire necesse fuerit minus quam tres. Nec illa quae habet aliquot eundi necessitate, cum quibus ipsa voluerit, sed cum quibus praeposita iusserit, ire debebit.'

[537] Brooten, 1996, p. 351.

Augustine has also been used for discussions on desire between men, the evidence for which comes from Augustine's own biography. His *Confessiones* contain a touching interlude in which Augustine describes his friend who died in his youth and whom Augustine most ardently loved. The use of emotive and romantic phrasing such as 'I felt that my soul and his soul were but one soul in two bodies' has sparked speculation (and counter-speculation) about this relationship.[538] John Boswell has interpreted homoeroticism to equate homosexuality while others have fully denied that there was a place for sexual tension or desire in such discourses.[539] However, as demonstrated by the work of Mark Masterson, such articulations of intense same-sex desire played a significant part in interactions between elite men in late Roman society.[540] Such expressions of same-sex love were familiar to Augustine, and the value of male intimacy is idealised by him. Augustine's love for his friend ought to be read in the light of the kind of homosocial discourse seeking to strengthen bonds between men that Masterson has discussed. We must also note the difference between intense male friendships in secular settings, and the same in monastic settings, in which intimacy could be much more dangerous.

A comparison of Augustine's advice on ascetic homoeroticism and *Regulae S. Pachomii* shows that sexual intimacy was a concern that was hinted at in religious texts of this time, and some did this more explicitly than others: Augustine acknowledged that carnal desire was at stake, whereas the *Regulae* only hinted at this reading. If monastic warnings like those of *Regulae S. Pachomii* and Augustine's warnings to nuns demonstrate anything, it is that same-sex attraction was not seen as unnatural or something that needed explanation. Same-sex desire could overtake anyone, if one was not careful. Homoeroticism was part of the cultural tradition of the late Roman world, and natural in the context in which these authors wrote – but temptation could lead to sin, and as such one had to be mindful of these potentially harmful desires.

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[538] Augustine, *Confessiones* 4.6.11 (CSEL 33.0073): 'nam ego sensi aminam meam et animam illius unam fuisse animam in duobus corporibus.'

[539] For views that Augustine's relationship with his friend may have been romantic or sexual, see Boswell, 1980, p. 135 and Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2003), pp. 137-138. For opposing views, see Carolinne White, *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 59-60.

[540] Masterson, 2014.

Romans themselves saw homoeroticism, be it platonic or physical, as an influence of Greek culture and overly luxurious living. The interconnectedness of homosexual practices and Eastern luxuries has led some historians, such as Ramsay MacMullen, to suggest that elite men of Rome took up same-sex relationships because they were fashionable and that such behaviour remained largely in the upper classes, as engaging in homosexual liaisons did not occur to the less privileged.[541] Others have agreed that Greek culture did play a part but influenced all of society, including the lower classes, in furthering enthusiasm for homosexual acts.[542] The ideas represented by such scholarship demonstrate the continuing problem of heteronormativity in homosexual studies, which is difficult to remove when our own society is so fixated on the idea of clearly defined sexualities. Such studies begin with the assumption that homosexual acts and desires *need* to be rationalised – but this desire to rationalise them simply does not exist in the source material. In his article on how heterosexism has influenced interpretations of Paul's epistles, Dale Martin has demonstrated the tendency of modern scholars to read Paul's letters as addressing homoeroticism because from our modern perspective it is felt that homoeroticism *has* to be explained.[543] This in itself is a heteronormative oversight that, crucially, was not shared by the authors of ancient texts, and was not shared by Christian moralists either.

The fear of same-sex desire in sources here examined may appear drastic when contrasted with the early imperial centuries, when satires and speeches were full of humoured, even if critiquing, comments on men having sex with one another. However, Augustine warned against homoerotic desire, even as he said how ardently and intimately he loved his friend. Desire, within reason and non-sexual, was perfectly acceptable even as laws against sex were passed. Desire was not in itself deviant but acting on such desire or harbouring such desire was. As such, Christian texts are aware of the potential dangers of desire and warn against them. There are no attempts at rooting out the desire itself – one simply must not act on it. It may be that from

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[541] MacMullen, 1982.

[542] B. C. Verstraete, 'Slavery and the Social Dynamics of Male Homosexual Relations in Ancient Rome', *Journal of Homosexuality* 5.3 (1980), pp. 227-36, at p. 230.

[543] Dale B. Martin, 'Heterosexism and the Interpretation of Romans 1:18-23', in Kuefler, ed., 2006, pp. 130-51, at pp. 135-137.

homosexual to the homoerotic to the homosocial is the trend that intimacy between men took at this time, but such interpretations are hindered by limited evidence.

I have here surveyed discussions on Sodom, law, and ascetic texts on homoerotic desire. From these, the role of 'Christianisation' is less than the role of traditional Roman views on sex between men – perhaps homoeroticism shows most convincingly that wanting sex was condemnable and that changes in attitudes were taking place. However, even this discussion shows the continuation of Roman ideas of natural same-sex desire. As such, discussions on homosexual acts reflect traditional customs of Roman conceptions of male/male (or female/female) intimacy, even by Christian writers themselves. Tradition dominated the perception of these types of sexual behaviour, and homosexual acts were condemned using non-Christian ideas of power and social status. This was, partly, due to limited scriptural discussion on sex acts between men, leaving clerics to condemn such acts using the socio-cultural heritage that they were a part of and familiar with. Clerics, too, were Romans. As such, sexual same-sex relationships were framed, understood and communicated by using traditional ideas of sex between men, rather than Christian ideas of sin.

As we turn our attention to polygyny, we are again engaged in a conversation embedded in Roman values of male sexual licence that clashed with Christian attempts to root it out. This discussion allows us to explore the theme of traditional Roman views on sex further – however, instead of a topic that clerics and lay Christians somewhat agreed on, such as the marginalisation of receptive males, polygyny divided opinions as lay Christians did not consider extra-marital sex as adulterous or sinful. It is this conflict between traditional norms and differing Christian views to which we now turn.

4.2 POLYGYNY

Late Roman society combined (serial) monogamy with effective polygyny: that is, men had one legal spouse, but still had sex with multiple women.[544] Christian ideals objected to two aspects of this model: serial monogamy was discouraged as marrying once was preferable to remarriages, and effective polygyny was a source of continued frustration

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[544] See Section 2.2 for a more thorough discussion.

as Christian moral codes forbade extra-spousal sex.[545] Here, I seek to show that between the years 390 and 520 Christian communities in Spain, Gaul, Italy and North Africa continued as polygynous or semi-polygynous societies, even as the influence of Christianity with its emphasis on monogynous monogamy was on the rise. Many late Roman Christian males were not monogynous, nor did they feel badly about not being so.

When examining commentary on polygyny, we are often dealing with Christian discussions on adultery, or *adulterium*. Studies on adultery in Late Antiquity often focus on Christian theological views or imperial laws, but only fleeting consideration is given to actual practices of late Romans for whom practically all adultery committed by married men was normalised, as long as they did not sleep with someone else's wife.[546] As such, Christian criticism of extra-marital sex does not reflect increased 'Christianisation' of society: it reflects continued disregard of Christianised rules by much of society. This disregard caused clergymen to heavily criticise the continued extra-marital liaisons of Christians, showing the struggle that clerics faced in enforcing Christian monogynous monogamy. Much of society still practised Socially Imposed Monogamy (SIM),[547] where

> marital relationships and their attendant legal and social consequences are limited to single female partner but the husband is – in terms of legal rules and social sanction – free to … pursue additional non-casual sexual and reproductive relationships that may (but need not) entail cohabitation, most notably with co-resident or altrilocal concubines.[548]

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[545] Polyandry was not a common practice in late Roman society. See the discussion below on women having sex with their male slaves – an act punishable by death. Evidence of men having sex with other men is scarcer, although the law of 390 discussed above attests to male prostitution, an institution which would have served male and female clients. There is no surviving evidence of masters having sex with their male slaves from this era, but we cannot assume that this lack of textual evidence reflects non-practice.

[546] For the legal developments, some of which will be considered below, see Arjava, 1996, pp. 193-205; Mathew Kuefler, 'The Marriage Revolution in Late Antiquity: The Theodosian Code and Later Roman Marriage Law', *Journal of Family History* 32.4 (2007), pp. 343-70. For the complexities of polygynous monogamy, see Laura Betzig, 'Roman Monogamy', *Ethology and Sociobiology* 13.5 (1992), pp. 351-83 and Laura Betzig, 'Roman Polygyny', *Ethology and Sociobiology* 13.5 (1992), pp. 309-49. See also Satoshi Kanazawa and Mary C. Still, 'Why Monogamy?', *Social Forces* 78.1 (1999), pp. 25-50.

[547] Walter Scheidel uses 'Socially Imposed Universal Monogamy' (SIUM) to indicate that no exceptions were made for rulers or the elite. See Scheidel, 2009, p. 282.

[548] Ibid.

Bearing this in mind, I focus on the continuation of SIM in Christian communities of this time, in contrast to the ideal of marital monogyny preached.

Firstly, however, we need to consider what is meant by *adulterium*, which will be discussed repeatedly, as there are differences between a Roman legal definition and Christian views. The Roman definition centred on the married woman: *adulterium* was committed by her and with her. A married man did not commit adultery when he slept with prostitutes, slaves, foreigners, or unmarried free(d)women – the only time he was guilty of *adulterium* was if he slept with someone else's wife.[549] For Christian clergy, however, *adulterium* was defined much more broadly: a man always committed adultery when straying from the marital bed, just as his wife did. Upon marrying each other, a husband and wife became one flesh, after which having sex with anyone else was a breach of this union. In this light, Romano-Christian men lost their privileges to sex with concubines, slaves and prostitutes with impunity. Instead, their *adulterium* was considered sinful too – yet many men did not consider their actions to be so.

Pre-marital sex was not adultery, unless a married woman was involved, but rather this was *fornicatio*, signifying sinful sexual behaviour of some description. The distinction is not always clear between the two: *fornicatio* is at times used for sexual relations where one person is married, instead of the *adulterium* we might expect. Yet, a comparison of the two reveals that *adulterium* is discussed by clerics far more often and more extensively than *fornicatio* at this time. This should not be surprising as *adulterium* indicates the breach of a marriage, sanctioned by God. Damaging such a union was problematic and more potentially harmful than the escapades of non-married individuals. A distinction between *fornicatio* and *adulterium* is, however, at times lost to clerics themselves: not all fornication is adultery, but all adultery is fornication. Even Augustine, when discussing situations that permitted a man to separate from his wife, admitted this to be a 'most obscure question.'[550] Adultery would have warranted separation, but did fornication – and if so, what was the difference? It is clear that ideas regarding acceptable and unacceptable behaviour were still evolving at this time.

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[549] For more on the dynamics of Roman adultery, see Gardner, 1990, pp. 127-131; Evans-Grubbs, 1995, pp. 201-225.

[550] Augustine, *Retractationes* 1.19.6 (PL 32.0616): 'Sed quatenus intelligenda atque limitanda sit haec fornicatio, et utrum etiam propter hanc liceat dimittere uxorem, latebrosissima quaestio est.'

Traditional ideas of sexual licence, its breaches and punishments, continued to prevail over Christian thought throughout the era between 390 and 520. While clerics or ascetics were admired for their chastity, there is little evidence that laymen at large longed for such recognition themselves.[551] In fact, when we consider the habits traditionally allowed to married men – sex with slaves, concubines, prostitutes, girlfriends – we see evidence of lay resistance to ideas that attempted to limit these allowances. Arguments have been made that this resistance can, at least partly, be explained by the dwindling socio-political power of Roman men in the late Roman world – and, indeed, the loss of political power in western provinces may have been a further manifestation of emasculation for local men.[552] In this context, any articulation of masculine power, such as sexual behaviour, was given heightened importance. This connection may be relevant to the resistance discussed here.

The current study cannot summarise all commentary on polygynous practices at this time, and as such, I focus on texts that demonstrate resistance to monogyny amongst the laity, followed by an examination of laws that further demonstrate a failure to battle dominant pre-Christian notions of what constitutes acceptable sexual behaviour by married men and women. Traditional customs and behaviours accepted by most communities facilitated extra-marital relationships that men engaged in. It is in changing these norms that we are met with resistance and reluctance, indicating that a process of Christianising sexual morality had to call into question practices that for many were not sinful.

RESISTANCE TO MONOGYNY

Fundamentally, the question of extra-marital sex centred on men, and although they must have had female partners willing to engage in extra-marital sex with them – free(d)women, foreign women – these women never receive the attention that the men do. The expectation of male chastity was, perhaps, the most radical element of Christian moralistic thinking on sexual behaviour, whereas married women continued with a

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[551] Little evidence, but not none. See Laes, 2013.

[552] For the connection between loss of socio-political power and the construction of masculine identities in the late Roman world, see the discussion in Kuefler, 2001, pp. 77-78.

limited licence of their husbands alone.[553] Christian insistence on, firstly, monogynous monogamy and, secondly, restraint and moderation within this monogamy, are areas in which adjustment was needed and the most significant ideological failure was felt. Perhaps this is best summarised by Fulgentius, Bishop of Ruspe in Vandal North Africa at the beginning of the sixth century:

> If someone … has so kept moderation in regard to his wife that he has relations with his wife only for the sake of procreating children, such a person is without a doubt worthy of much praise, if there is anyone in our times who can fulfil this description.[554]

Fulgentius's scepticism on the existence of such men in the early sixth century speaks of the failure to restrain the sexual impulses of Christian men to procreation only and to their wives only. Here, then, we find that the cultural tradition of late antique western society, in respect to the sexual licence of men, struggled to change under Christian guidance. It should be noted, however, that some epigraphical evidence suggests that the ideal of male chastity left some impact on society of this time: tombstones marked some men as *virgo*, proudly – but this was a very small minority.[555]

Fulgentius's despair had been preceded by struggles and exhortations by numerous Christian leaders from Paul onwards. Indeed, scripture provided proof-texts for the clerical position that married men should not stray. 'You shall not commit adultery' (Ex. 20:14) left little room for debate on the Christian doctrine of marital infidelity, nor did the Pauline list of 'fornicators, idolaters, adulterers', all of whom would not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10). These sinful adulterers, significantly, were men too, and not only adulterous wives. Clerical figures reminded their flocks of this list of unworthy individuals frequently in the late fourth century and the start of the fifth: John Cassian, Jerome, and Augustine, for instance, all referred to this passage, as did Fulgentius of Ruspe.[556]

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[553] On late antique marriages and women more generally, see Clark, 1993; Reynolds, 1994; Evans-Grubbs, 1995; Kuefler, 2007.

[554] Fulgentius, *Ep.* 1.9 (CCSL 91.0192): 'si uero … tantam seruauerit in uxore temperiem, ut filiorum procreandorum causa tantummodo misceatur uxori, multa laude talis est procul dubio dignus, si quis hoc nostris potest implere temporibus.'

[555] Laes, 2013.

[556] This is by no means intended to be an exhaustive list: John Cassian, *Collationes*, 12.3; Jerome, *Apologia* 2.18; Jerome, *Ep. Pauli ad Cor.* 6 (naturally); Augustine, *Speculum: De Epistola B* 6;

For clerical figures, the problems of polygynous practices of married men were numerous: they undermined Christian marriage, revealed the double standard of men's sexual licence versus women's, as well as supported non-marital relationships and illicit sexual encounters. Against these problems, there is consistency in the espousal of anti-adulterous rhetoric, which is partly due to the clarity that scripture offered on the topic: adultery was a sin that a conversion may forgive, but once converted adultery became a mortal sin.[557] The Gospels were also stricter than the Jewish tradition as Matt. 5:28 made the act of gazing at a woman into spiritual adultery committed in one's heart – the consequences, however, were less severe than the death penalties dictated by Judaic texts.

The most extensive commentaries on the issue come from Augustine, who considered adultery to be a disease (*morbus*) to which men were particularly prone.[558] This sickness imagery is already familiar to us from the previous chapter, where we saw that sexual vice was often likened to contaminating disease. What is interesting in these writings is that they reflect lay resistance to Christians calls to monogyny. Christian men's use of concubines was a particularly debated topic, causing tension between bishops and their flocks. This is apparent in the creation of an opposing interlocutor within textual evidence – Augustine has conversations within his works to discuss views that the opposition would have offered. For our purposes, these constructed lay 'responses' reveal the other half of this conflict.

Sermon 224, dated c. 412-416, is a telling example of the differences between a clerical view and a lay view on non-marital relations. Exemplary in oratory rhetoric, and as

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Fulgentius, *De fide ad Petrum* 36. The authorship of *Speculum* is challenged. For the debate, see Anne-Marie La Bonnardière, *Saint Augustin et la Bible* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1986), pp. 401-409.

[557] John 8:1-12 has Jesus forgiving a woman caught committing adultery. In this episode Jesus famously asks those who have not sinned to throw the first stone at the adulteress. In response, no one does, and Jesus sends the woman away with a command not to sin any longer. In comparison, Leviticus 20:10 punishes a man and a married woman committing adultery with death. The Gospels offered a new view, that adultery could be forgiven, but one had to repent, convert and enter a life of piousness.

[558] Augustine, *De. adult. con.* 1.6 (PL 40.0454): 'perquam facile enim viris est in hoc morbi vitium irrvere.' Augustine discussed adultery extensively: in 401 he wrote *De bono conjugali* and *De sancta virginate*, and in 419/420 he wrote *De adulterinis conjugiis*, and still revised some of his views in 426/427 in *Retractiones*. For a concise discussion on Augustine's views on adultery, see Anne-Marie La Bonnardière, 'Adulterium', in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, ed. by Cornelius Petrus Mayer and others (Basel: Schwabe, 1994), pp. 125-37.

such quoted here in length to show its contents fully, the sermon has the feel of a spoken tirade. Augustine confronted his congregation with the following:

> Therefore, I say to you, my brethren, my sons, to you who have wives, do not admit any other interest; to you who do not have wives and who wish to marry, keep yourselves inviolate for your wives, as you desire to find them inviolate. You, who have vowed chastity to God, do not look back. Behold, I say this to you; I cry out to you; I exonerate myself, for God has placed me here as a minister, not as an overseer. Nevertheless, wherever I can, wherever I am given the opportunity, wherever I am permitted, wherever I know circumstances, I chide; I rebuke; I anathematize; I excommunicate; yet I do not correct. Why? Because 'neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the growth' (1 Cor. 3:7). Now, since I am speaking, since I am admonishing you, what else is needed except that God hear me on your behalf and that He accomplish something in you, that is, in your hearts. I speak briefly; to you I commend the faithful, yet I alarm them; I am trying to build you up (in the Lord). You are members of Christ; hear, not me, but the Apostle when he says: 'Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot?' (1 Cor. 6:15) But someone or other says to me: 'She whom I have is not a harlot; she is my concubine. Holy bishop, you have made my concubine a harlot!' Did I say that? The Apostle makes the complaint and I have brought a false charge upon myself! I wish you to be sound in mind; why do you rave at me as if you were insane? Do you, who say this, have a wife? You answer: 'Yes.' Well, then, as I said, whether you wish it or not, any woman other than your wife who cohabits with you is a harlot. There, go, tell her that the bishop has insulted you. You have your lawful wife, and another cohabits with you; whoever she is, as I said before, she is a harlot. On the contrary, your wife is faithful to you; she knows no one except you alone and she does not contemplate knowing another. Therefore, since she is chaste, why do you commit fornication? If she loves you alone, why do you love two women? But you say: 'My servant is my concubine. I do not go to somebody else's wife, do I? I do not go to a public harlot, do I? Am I not permitted to do what I wish in my own house?' I answer: 'You are not so permitted. They who act thus go to hell and will burn in everlasting fire.'[559]

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[559] Augustine, *Serm*. 224.3 (PL 38.1094-1095): 'Ideo vobis dico, fratres mei, filii mei, qui habetis uxores, ut nihil aliud noveritis; et qui non habetis, et ducere vultis, integros vos ad eas servate, sicut integras vultis eas invenire. Vos qui continentiam Deo vovistis, nolite retro respicere. Ecce dico vobis, ecce clamo vobis, ego me absolvo: erogatorem me Deus posuit, non exactorem. Et tamen ubi possumus, ubi datur locus, ubi conceditur, ubi scimus, corripimus, obiurgamus, anathematizamus, excommunicamus: et tamen non corrigimus. Quare? Quia neque qui plantat est aliquid, neque qui rigat; sed qui incrementum dat Deus (1 Cor. 3:7). Modo quia loquor, quia moneo, quid opus est, nisi exaudiat me Deus pro vobis, et agat aliquid in vobis, hoc est, in cordibus vestris? Breviter dico, et vobis commendo, et fideles terreo, et vos aedifico. Membra Christi estis: nolite me, sed Apostolum audire: Tollens, inquit, membra Christi, faciam membra meretricis (1 Cor. 6:15)? Sed dicit nescio quis: Meretrix non est quam habeo, concubina mea est. O sancte episcope, meretricem fecisti concubinam meam! Numquid ego dixi? Apostolus clamat, et ego incurri calumniam. Ego te volo esse sanum: in me quare furis sicut insanus? Habes uxorem, qui hoc dicis? Habeo, inquis. Bene: velis nolis, illa quae praeter uxorem tecum dormit, iam dixi, meretrix est. Ecce vade, et dic ei quia iniuriam tibi fecit episcopus. Habes uxorem tuam legitimam, et alia tecum dormit: quaecumque est illa, iam dixi, meretrix est. Sed servat tibi uxor tua fidem, nec novit alium nisi te solum, et non disponit se nosse alterum. Cum sit ergo illa casta, tu quare fornicaris? Si illa te unum, tu quare duas? Sed dicis: Ancilla mea concubina mea est, numquid ad uxorem alienam vado? numquid ad

In this sermon, the question of extra-marital sex with concubines is revealed to be an active debate in the Christian communities of North Africa, where some lay Christians felt that they were being wronged by Christian moral ideologies. The accused are married Christian men, who have a concubine in their household in addition to their legitimate wife.[560] Such a situation was, most certainly, unacceptable. The steps that Augustine makes his imagined protester go through further exemplify in what ways Christian men responded to accusations of infidelity.

First, there is denial from married men: 'She whom I have is not a harlot.' Men considered their live-in concubine to have elevated, even if unrecognised, status. Augustine disagreed and explicitly stated that such women were whores. Anger follows: 'Holy bishop, you have made my concubine a harlot!' To be a harlot was shameful, but to be a respectable man's concubine was not. Men who engaged in these long-term relationships formed emotional attachments to their concubines and were not pleased to be told that these women were comparable to common whores. Lastly, the married Christian men resort to bargaining – or perhaps even blackmail. Augustine's invisible interlocutors say that at least they were not sleeping with someone else's wife (unquestionably *adulterium*) or visiting prostitutes. Compared to these two, having a live-in concubine was acceptable. Implied is the clear assumption from these fornicating men that they *could* be sleeping with married women or prostitutes if they wanted to, and as indeed some of their peers did. Augustine should, therefore, grant them their concubines at least, as this sinning was lesser.

The last lines of the passage reveal a further level of this issue: 'Am I not permitted to do as I wish in my own house?' The men in Augustine's audience felt that they should be allowed to conduct their own households as they best saw fit and that the church's moral judgement should not reach into the privacy of their homes. Augustine, however,

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meretricem publicam vado? An non licet mihi in domo mea facere quod volo? Dico tibi, non licet. In gehennam vadunt, qui hoc faciunt, in sempiterno igne ardebunt.'

[560] The presence of live-in concubines alongside legitimate wives is debated for Roman societies, but here Augustine seems to suggest co-habitation. See the discussion in Beryl Rawson, 'Roman Concubinage and Other *De Facto* Marriages', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 104 (1974), pp. 279-305; Raimund Friedl, *Der Konkubinat im kaiserzeitlichen Rom: von Augustus bis Septimius Severus* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1996).

said that they would burn in hell for such acts. The sermon testifies to tension between clerical preaching on marital monogyny and lay culture on the same, especially in men's power over their own households and their possession of concubines. Augustine's juxtaposition of such concubines to whores strove for obvious implications to downgrade and diminish these relationships. This needed doing as no moral judgement was attached to concubines – numerous people had such relationships, including Augustine himself when he was younger.[561] Yet, as his religious understanding grew, so did his estimation of concubines fall.

Other sources further attest to polygynous habits of Christian laymen. Maximus of Turin complained to his community about the same issue in the early fifth century:

> There are some who, when they have married wives in lawful fashion, associate with concubines contrary to the divine law, not realising that by acting against marriage they have bound themselves by their own fetters.[562]

This time in Northern Italy, we again have Christian men who take concubines although they are already married. Maximus also included in his sermon a counter-argument from the men of Turin, now giving voice to not only disgruntled married men, but also single men. 'But suppose someone says: "I have no wife; therefore I have taken a little serving girl for myself."'[563] Again, the invisible interlocutor tries to fend off episcopal judgement by countering accusations with an activity that was perceived to be 'less bad' than something else. Indeed, an unmarried man having sex with a slave girl could not be adultery. Yet even here Maximus's response is stern, pointing out the illegitimacy of any children born from such unions, thus making the union itself futile – this was in keeping with imperial laws.[564] This again demonstrates the SIM practised by late Roman men, which did not reflect the Christian ideal of marital monogyny.

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[561] On the normalcy of concubinage, see Rawson, 1974. On Augustine's own affairs, see Brent D. Shaw, 'The Family in Late Antiquity: the experience of Augustine', *Past & Present* 115 (1987), pp. 3-51 and Danuta Shanzer, '*Avulsa a Latere Meo*: Augustine's Spare Rib - Confessions 6.15.25', *Journal of Roman Studies* 92 (2002), pp. 157-76.

[562] Maximus, *Serm.* 88.5 (CCSL 23.0361): 'Sunt enim nonnulli qui, cum legibus uxores duxerunt, contra divinitatis legem sibi sociant concubinas, non intellegentes quod contrahendo matrimonia propriis se vinculis constrinxerunt.'

[563] Maximus, *Serm.* 88.5: 'Sed dicit aliquis: "Uxorem non habeo, ideo mihi ancillulam sociavi."'

[564] The legal tradition on inheritance and illegitimate children is somewhat patchy, although both numerous patristic sources and legal evidence indicate that laws were in place to deal with these issues. See the discussion in Harper, 2011, pp. 452-460.

Notably, as both Augustine and Maximus testify, the concubines of married men were household slaves. These slaves could ascend to a position of a concubine, but fundamentally they remained their masters' slaves unless they were manumitted. It is rarer to find examples of married men who had non-slaves as concubines, but this too may have occurred. The Council of Toledo in 400 made a stipulation concerning Christian men who had legitimate wives *and* concubines, stating that they were not to receive communion if they were bigamous – however, if they only had a concubine and were not married, communion could be given to them.[565] It is not certain if in this canon the married men's concubines were slaves or women from outside their households. In any case, the canon attests that unmarried men often had concubines and that this was not viewed as a particularly severe moral wrong, and likewise it may suggest that some married men kept non-slave concubines as well: this was polygyny in a very real sense.

Other religious figures agreed that there was no scenario in which a slave 'girlfriend' could be an endorsed relationship. As Leo the Great was quick to clarify in his letter to Narbonne in 458/459, 'a wife is one thing, a concubine is another, just as a slave girl is different from a free woman.'[566] He also clears away obstacles that may hinder anyone from obtaining a legitimate wife:

> Since a married woman is different from a concubine, to eject a slave girl from one's bed and receive a woman of unquestioned free birth is not a second marriage but an honourable procedure.[567]

There was uncertainty over the legitimacy of concubines, wives, slave girls, and their co-existence in Christian households. Leo clarified that one could abandon a concubine or slave with impunity, endorsing entering into legitimate marriages instead. One could not, however, enjoy multiple partners simultaneously. Scholarship has generally interpreted concubinal relationships as being dictated by the men, who got involved with women that they did not wish to or could not marry, often for financial reasons or

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[565] Council of Toledo, Canon 17 (CCH 4.0336): 'Si quis habens uxorem fidelis, si concubinam habeat, non communicet. Ceterum is qui non habet uxorem et pro uxore concubinam habeat, a communione non repellatur; tantum ut unius mulieris, aut uxoris aut concubinae, ut ei placuerit, sit coniunctione contentus. Alias vero vivens abiciatur donec desinat et per paenitentiam revertatur.'

[566] Leo, *Ep.* 167.7 (PL 54.1204): 'Itaque aliud est uxor, aliud concubina; sicut aliud ancilla, aliud libera.'

[567] Leo, *Ep.* 167.7 (PL 54.1205): 'Quia aliud est nupta, aliud concubina, ancillam a toro abjicere et uxorem certae ingenvitatis accipere, non duplicatio conjugii, sed profectus est honestatis.'

because of difference in status.[568] The man's role in dismissing such relationships is certainly attested to by Leo in his letter. However, the women's assumed passivity in these relationships and their assumed low status may be misleading – Danuta Shanzer has argued that those who became concubines may have been women who themselves did not wish to marry and whose good social status may have played a role in that decision.[569] Most evidence on concubines in fifth century sources, however, suggests that these women could be dismissed on the man's whim, portraying men to be the ones who controlled the relationship. If the woman was a slave, this assessment definitely holds true.

Married men's concubines were, therefore, an issue, but traditionally a man engaged in concubinage prior to a formal marriage. These unions differed from premarital love affairs by their long-term length as well as cohabitation. We have some examples of this more traditional concubinage of single men. Sometime after 472, Sidonius Apollinaris wrote of a youth who had at last put away his slave concubine and had married an honourable woman of good social standing, much to the relief of the young man's friends.[570] While again a slave, the man had dismissed her in favour of a legitimate wife. Furthermore, the sexual licence of men, especially young men, is also attested to by Paulinus of Pella (376 – c. 459), a Gallo-Roman aristocrat whose autobiographical poem from c. 459 recounts his sexual appetites when younger:

> I checked my passions with this chastening rule: that I should never seek an unwilling victim, nor transgress another's rights, and heedful to keep unstained my cherished reputation, should beware of yielding to free-born loves though voluntarily offered, but be satisfied with servile amours in my own home: for I preferred to be guilty of a fault rather than of an offence.[571]

For many men, this type of compromise of restraining themselves only to the sexually available women in their own household may have seemed like an acceptable solution – indeed, Paulinus considered this to be 'chastening' – *castigans*. Paulinus's mention

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[568] Arjava, 1996, pp. 205-17; Shaw, 1987, pp. 16-17.

[569] Shanzer, 2002, p. 166. See Shanzer's article for historiography, pp. 158-159.

[570] Sid.Apol., *Ep.* 9.6.

[571] Paulinus of Pella, *Eucharisticus* 162-167 (LCL 115, Ausonius 2.0318-9): 'Hac mea castigans lege incentiva repressi; invitam ne quando ullam iurisve alieni adpeterem carumque memor servare pudorem cedere et ingenuis oblatis sponte caverem, contentus domus inlecebris famulantibus uti, quippe reus culpae potius quam criminis esse.'

of not transgressing another's rights might further be referring to his decision not to have sex with married women, which would have constituted committing a crime and offending another man's rights. Paulinus thus reasoned that sex with slaves was not, after all, an offence. From describing these sexual habits of his youth, he went on to record that he also had a child by one of these slaves, but the child died quickly.[572] Children fathered by the master, or the master's sons as Paulinus himself was only a teenager at this time, would have been found in many late Roman homes. Again, the consent and willingness of the slaves is completely absent, although Paulinus does note that he never forced himself on anyone who did not wish it, and as such some agreement or mutual interest between him and slave(s) must have been in place. As the son of a well-to-do family, Paulinus considered these sexual habits to be acceptable behaviour, and we may surmise that many men of similar backgrounds thought the same. Men with the social means to do so continued to exercise their sexual licence as their fathers and grandfathers had – the only self-imposed rule being, perhaps, that one did not commit crimes or tarnish their own reputations with excessive sexual acts.

Clerics were well aware that a double standard existed in the SIM practising society that they inhabited: for extra-marital affairs, women were punished and men excused. In an undated sermon given in Chusa, a small village of which the precise location is unknown, Augustine retorted:

> They hear of women dragged to the forum if they are found with slaves. They have never heard of a man dragged to the forum because he was found with a slave-woman. Yet the sin is equal. In equal sin, it is not God's truth but human perversity, which makes the man seem more innocent.[573]

This unequal treatment of adulterous men and women was mentioned in many of Augustine's sermons and was likewise noted by his contemporaries.[574] Not only was this a question of hypocrisy, but the above highlights the topic of slaves and problems

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[572] Paulinus, *Eucharisticus* 169-175.

[573] Augustine, *Serm.* 9.4 (PL 38.0078): 'solent enim audire adductas mulieres esse ad forum, quae forte cum servis inventae sunt. adductum virum ad forum, quia inventus est cum ancilla sua, numquam audierunt, cum sit par peccatum. In peccato pari innocentiorem facit videri virum non divina veritas sed humana perversitas.'

[574] See *Serm.* 82.11, 132.2-4, 153.5.6, 224.3, 332.4, 392.4.4. Eastern bishops and clerics were also struggling with Christian men's polygynous practices, highlighting the double standards in the punishment of adulterous women, but not adulterous men. See Jerome, *Ep.* 77.3; John Chrysostom, *In I Thess.* 5.2; Gregory Nazianzen, *Oratio* 37.6-7.

in determining their sexual functions in households. In an important article, Carolyn Osiek has problematized the sexual use and abuse of slaves in Christian communities and the lack of contemporary commentary on this.[575] The sexual availability of slaves was taken for granted by most of late Roman society, as indeed Paulinus of Pella demonstrated above. Sexual encounters with one's slaves took place away from the public eye and as such caused anxiety for clerics, but these relationships previously had had a place in public discourse: they were sources of humour for comedies and satires of the High Empire, and legalities also were discussed in Roman law concerning children born of such unions.[576] Osiek has concluded that the sexual use of slaves was so ingrained in late antique culture that church authorities either did not consider it a problem or that this was a problem so widespread that tackling it was futile, leading to few even trying.[577] A few did comment on these matters, however, as here seen, but in these comments the experience of slaves is not a consideration, but rather clerics again focused on criticising the expressions of polygyny around them. In other words, it was the behaviour of elite men they were concerned with, and not the sexual abuse of slaves.

There are numerous further examples of polygyny troubling Christian communities across the West. In the province of Hispania in the 390s, Pacian of Barcelona noted that many of his congregation were adulterers, much to his disappointment.[578] At the end of the fifth century in Gaul, Bishop Ruricius had to admonish his own son for his various affairs with women – although the son was not yet married, which reduced the charge to slightly lesser fornication.[579] At the start of the sixth century, c. 513, Ennodius of Pavia criticised a man who enjoyed calling his sexual conquests his 'wives', suggesting either that the ideology of marital monogyny was well-understood and, indeed, made a mockery of, or the opposing view that some lay Christians completely failed to

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[575] Osiek, 2003.

[576] On sex and slaves in comedy, see Amy Richlin, 'Talking to Slaves in the Plautine Audience', *Classical Antiquity* 33.1 (2014), pp. 174-226; for masters having sex with their male slaves, see Williams, 1999, pp. 27-28; for laws on unions between freemen and slaves, see Kuefler, 2007, pp. 360-62; for Roman attitudes to slavery, see Paul Veyne, 'The Roman Empire', in Veyne, ed., 1987, pp. 51-69; Harper, 2011.

[577] Osiek, 2003. Slaves lacked sexual honour by default and thus, from a Roman perspective, they could not be raped or made impure by sexual acts. See also the discussion in Witzke, 2016, pp. 260-264.

[578] Pacian, *De paenitentia* 5.2 (CCSL 69B.0017): 'Multi etiam animo haec peccata ceciderunt. … Multi adulteri.'

[579] Ruricius, *Ep.* 2.24-25 (PL 58.0104A-0105B).

understand even the basics of Christian monogynous marriages.[580] Some clerics, however, were sympathetic to the plights of men. Peter Chrysologus, Bishop of Ravenna (d. 450), lamented in a sermon given on John the Baptist's feast day that:

> If John, who was so great, so noble, and segregated from women by so vast a desert, did not escape the perils of women, who is there who lives in the midst of women and has confidence that he will escape such perils without the greatest effort and without taking the utmost precaution?[581]

Chrysologus, however, assumed that men wished to avoid women – not all did. For many men, the desire to sexually engage with multiple women was a matter of pride. In commenting on why women could refrain from adultery, but men found it difficult, Augustine said: 'Women preserve chastity, which men will not preserve; and in that they preserve it not, would wish to appear men.'[582] Augustine acknowledged what further sources support: outside the confines of the church, men obtained, maintained and promoted their masculine identity by engaging in non-marital sex. In response, ideas of chastity and abstinence from sex were promoted as masculine Christian values – yet the popularity of this is doubtful in light of evidence on polygyny here discussed.[583]

Evidence for polygyny is scattered, but it covers the geographical as well as the chronological extent of the current study. There is a problem of quantifying evidence – there would have been many Christians who did not engage in polygynous practices. To some extent this was a question of finance and expense as there were economic restrictions on who could afford slaves, prostitutes and concubines, and who could not. With these restrictions in mind, the evidence for polygyny in Christian texts ought to be recognised as a pressing issue for men of wealth in particular: the problem of public versus private behaviour has already been mentioned, indicating that much of illicit sexual behaviour happened out of sight. Sexual use of slaves or slaves elevated to a

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[580] Ennodius, *Ep.* 9.33 (PL 63.0167): 'fornicationes suas nomine vestit uxorum.'

[581] Peter Chrysologus, *Serm.* 174.9 (CCSL 24B.1064): 'Et si Iohannes tantus, Iohannes talis, tanta eremo separatus a feminis, feminarum pericula non euasit, quis est qui inter feminas uiuens euasurum se sine labore maximo, maximus sine cautione confidit, nisi is qui sancto alitur spiritu?'

[582] Augustine, *Serm.* 132.2 (PL 38.0735): 'Servant feminae castitatem, quam viri servare nolunt: et in eo quod non servant, se viros videri volunt.'

[583] For ideas of sexual renunciation as a masculine ideal for Christian men, see Kuefler, 2001, pp. 170-178.

status of a concubine were both practices that were mostly invisible to outsiders and local clerics, but I would argue that this was widespread and normative practice. We must of course be aware that moralising texts may exaggerate the problem of polygyny in Christian elite men, but its universality in our sources, spatially and chronologically, attests to its regularity, and the long tradition that supported such behaviour facilitated its continuation. The use of prostitutes, which we have already discussed, falls to the same category of invisible sexual misbehaviour that remained a pest throughout this era.

The above evidence is indicative of the extent of polygyny, the double standards of men's sexual licence versus women's, the sexual use of slaves, and the badge of masculine virility that was associated with extra-marital sex. As we have seen, Leo the Great was concerned with the proper distinction between wives, concubines, and slave women, suggesting that this was not only a matter of sex, but of legitimate marriages likewise. Ultimately, the sources reflect that influencing the behaviour of men was especially difficult. While some authors considered this to demonstrate feminine inclination to chastity, the reality was probably much simpler as even Augustine acknowledged: 'She is in fear of the laws of which you are not afraid.'[584] Augustine was right: a consideration of laws, to which we now turn, shows that women were consistently confined to monogamy and monoandry, whereas late Roman laws continued to allow and support the sexual licence given to men, thus enabling polygyny. As such, not only are we faced with cultural traditions, but traditions that were supported by the legal basis of these societies themselves. In this sense, Christianity was facing a losing battle against traditional patterns of sexual and marital behaviour.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT, OR A LACK THEREOF

Late Roman law further accounts for the continuation of polygynous practices and the resistance that marital monogyny was met with. Imperial laws on adultery mainly sought to define who could be charged for the crime of adultery, who could bring about such accusations, and what means could be used to extract confessions.[585] The crime of

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[584] Augustine, *Serm.* 132.2 (PL 38.0736): 'Leges timet, quas tu non times.'

[585] *C. Th.* 9.7.1, issued in 326 by Constantine, exempted women working in taverns from adultery due to their low status and the implication that as tavern workers they were quasi-prostitutes. *C. Th.* 9.7.2, issued by Constantine also in 326, decreed that only a woman's male relatives could bring charges of adultery

adulterium was severe as it jeopardised the legitimacy of children within the marriage, thus affecting inheritance, and it was also seen as an invasion of a male's household. The crime of *adulterium* deserved severe punishment: for instance, fourth century laws giving pardons on special occasions made a point of excluding adulterers from these pardons – that is, men who had slept with someone else's wife.[586] Indeed, in legal terms, a married woman always committed *adulterium* if she slept with anyone but her husband, whereas men only committed *adulterium* if they slept with another man's wife. As such, imperial law and Christian authorities were both concerned with extra-marital affairs, but in rather different ways as the former did not approach the matter through a religious lens.

Strict adultery laws had been established during the reign of Augustus, yet these laws have been highly contested by historians and were an ill fit amongst the Romans of the first century AD.[587] Roman laws on marital relations saw another wave of changes in the Constantinian era, and these developments have likewise been well studied.[588] The Constantinian developments made it more difficult to divorce, but a law issued by Constantine in 331 stated that while a man could leave an adulterous wife, she could only leave him if he was a murderer, a sorcerer, or a tomb robber.[589] Significantly, a man's infidelity was not grounds for divorce. Concubines, slaves and prostitutes are unmentioned, but we may presume that the wife was in no position – legally – to challenge such behaviour. In 421, Honorius and Theodosius II decreed that any woman who wished to divorce but whose case did not meet the legal justifications for a wife to do so should be sent into exile and be forbidden to remarry – if, however, the husband initiated divorce, then he could remarry immediately if he so wished.[590] Again, the different treatment of men and women is clear. Nevertheless, these laws have been

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against her. *C.Th.* 9.7.4, issued by Gratian, Valentinian II and Theodosius I in 385, allowed torture of household slaves in cases of adultery.

[586] *C.Th.* 9.38.6.

[587] For the Augustan *Lex Iulia*, which has drawn considerable scholarly attention, see Gardner, 1990, pp. 127-131; Thomas A. McGinn, 'Concubinage and the *Lex Iulia* on Adultery', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 121 (1991), pp. 335-75; Evans-Grubbs, 1995, pp. 94-96; Thomas A. McGinn, 'Missing Females? Augustus' Encouragement of Marriage between Freeborn Males and Freedwomen', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 53.2 (2004), pp. 200-08.

[588] For adultery, see Kuefler, 2007, pp. 355-357; and Evans-Grubbs, 1995, pp. 203-225.

[589] *C.Th.* 3.16.1.

[590] *C.Th.* 3.16.2.

interpreted as Christian developments as they protected marriages and emphasised how serious a charge of adultery was. However, these laws, while punishing men who slept with other men's wives, did not touch married men sleeping with slaves, concubines, prostitutes, and so forth, in any way whatsoever.

There has been little commentary on how imperial law did not stipulate on the sexual behaviour of men. We have seen that incestuous practices and male and female prostitution were all restricted in law, and as such we may expect men to find fewer suitable partners to have illicit sex with. However, Christian texts continue to raise polygyny as an issue, and imperial laws do not seem to be responding to these problems, especially within one's household. If anything, imperial law on adultery was considered too harsh: in 459, Emperor Majorian relaxed punishment for men who had slept with other men's wives from death to exile.[591] However, these laws are concerned with adultery where half of the party is a married woman. Sex with concubines, sex with slaves, do not fall under the legal idea of *adulterium*. A woman having sex with a slave of her household, on the other hand, was a capital crime: both participants were to be killed, as decreed by Constantine in 329.[592] No such law for a man having sex with his slave existed and there is no indication in any late Roman law that a man having sex with his slave was in any way a punishable act. Despite a moralising Christian discourse condemning such acts, these religious ideals were not incorporated into legislative practice.

Furthermore, not only did Roman law fail to create a more thorough legislation on adultery at this time, but also the laws discussed above received negative reactions from clerics. Firstly, there were those who considered secular laws as interfering with religious moral judgements on the matter. This is emphasised by Valerian of Cimiez: 'Neither should anyone think that his offence of adultery has been fully overlooked if he got arrested, indeed, but then went free again [due to some easy-going custom of

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[591] *N. Maj.* 9.1. See also *C.Th.* 11.36.4, issued in 339, that threatened judges who did not punish adulterers fully with punishments of their own. Again, there seems to be a sense that adultery laws were considered too harsh by contemporaries.

[592] *C.Th.* 9.9.1; see also Judith Evans-Grubbs, '"Marriage More Shameful Than Adultery": Slave-Mistress Relationships, "Mixed Marriages", and Late Roman Law', *Phoenix* 47.2 (1993), pp. 125-54.

pardoning].'[593] Secular rulings on adultery were too lax and, more importantly, without the religious gravity that the sin in question required. Legislation may have been harsh regarding cases where a man slept with someone else's wife, but Valerian's dismissive attitude suggests that adultery was not always punished as harshly as imperial legislation stated – a point further supported by the relaxation of rules discussed above.[594]

There was competition and overlap, therefore, over whose domain adultery really was – imperial legislation, however, was only interested in claiming a small portion of what according to scripture constituted as 'adultery'. The Code of Justinian, admittedly compiled after our specific range of up to AD 520 in the 530s, demonstrates that adultery remained a female crime and a male prerogative, retaining former laws that no wives could accuse their husbands of adultery and that, as described in the Augustan *Lex Iulia*, only husbands could bring their wives to trial over infidelity. *C.J.* 9.9.1 re-stated a law credited to Severus and Antoninus from 198:

> The *Lex Iulia* declares that wives have no right to bring criminal accusations for adultery against their husbands, even though they may desire to complain the violation of the marriage vow, for while the laws grants this privilege to men it does not concede it to women.[595]

This is significant because while homosexual acts may finally have been punished more thoroughly by Justinian, we do not find a similar 'breakthrough' with *adulterium* which, as attested by numerous sources, was acceptable behaviour for most men if committed with an unmarried woman – a foreigner, a slave, or so forth. Even Justinian, therefore, cannot be considered as a manifestation of 'Christianised' law on this matter – it failed to respond to a mortal sin, committed by men, protested to by clerics, but fundamentally accepted as normative by most.

A final point must be made on these legislative developments: penance. A Christian man caught having extra-marital sex was expected to perform penance, even if secular

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[593] Valerian, *Hom.* 1.3.3 (PL 52.0694A): 'Nec ille adulterii facinus praetermissum putet, qui indulgentiae lege deprehensus evasit.' Prior to this, he says the same of homicide, adding that laws are not severe enough: 'exusatum saecularis iudicii corrupti sententia absolverit.'

[594] See n. 591 above.

[595] *C.J.* 9.9.1: 'Publico iudicio non habere nulieres adulterii accusationem, quamvis de matrimonio suo violato queri velint, lex Iulia declarat, quae, cum masculis iure mariti facultatem accusandi detulisset, non idem feminis privilegium detulis.'

law did not wish to punish him. Yet the rulings on penance were inconvenient and largely impractical. Penance could be performed only once, which meant that many people waited until they were dying to do so. Any sinning committed after penance could not be pardoned, but doomed one's soul eternally. This was inconvenient for those who performed penance halfway through their lives and then wanted to resume their lives as before.[596] Demonstrative of the impracticality of such a rule can be found in a letter from c. 515-523 by Fulgentius of Ruspe, who counselled a couple where the wife, having performed penance at death's doors but having then recovered after all, should no longer have sex with her husband.[597] The husband thought this unfair as they were both young and quite keen to have marital sex, and as such the husband wrote to Fulgentius for advice.[598] Fulgentius's response was a lengthy reflection on marital continence versus conjugal sex that took a moderate stance on the issue of sex within marriage – yet in the letter, he utterly fails to say what the couple ought to do. Fulgentius stated:

> If you, with equal assent have vowed continence, preserve the quality of your love together with the fear of God, and, if any time, the weakness of the flesh troubles your mind, let your spirit hasten to the assistance of the divine pity and not give in to lust but as a believer pray to God with all humility and not give in to the carnal desire fighting against the soul but rather repel it. If, on the other hand, one of you has made a vow of continence without the agreement of the other, he knows that he has made the vow rashly and, with a chaste sincerity, let him render the debt to his spouse.[599]

It is clear that mutual vows of continence were required for a continent marriage as otherwise the spouses owed each other conjugal relations. However, abstinence after penance was a different circumstance than the one Fulgentius was reflecting on, as

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[596] For penance in the early church, see the discussions in Biller and Minnis, eds., 1998; G. H. Joyce, 'Private Penance in the Early Church', *Journal of Theological Studies* 42.1 (1941), pp. 18-42; R. C. Mortimer, *The Origins of Private Penance in the Western Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939).

[597] Fulgentius was a very mobile figure, travelling in Vandal Africa, Sicily, Sardinia and mainland Italy. He became bishop c. 507, and his writings date between this date and his death c. 532. A useful outline of his travels, as recorded in his *vita*, can be found in Conant, 2012, p. 101.

[598] Fulgentius, *Ep.* 1.2. The ages of the couple appears significant: 'You confess the incontinence of a youthful age,' Fulgentius remarks with some sympathy.

[599] Fulgentius, *Ep.* 1.18 (CCSL 91.0195): 'Proinde cuncta quae superius disputata sunt, conscientia uobis testimonium perhibente perpendite. Et si quidem continentiam pari vovistis assensu, tenorem vestrae dilectionis cum Dei timore servate, et si quando carnis infirmitas mentem pulsat, animus ad auxilium divinae miserationis accurat, nec cedat libidini, sed Deum tota humilitate fidelis exoret, et carnali desiderio militanti adversus animam non consentiat, sed repugnet. Si vero continentiam unus vestrum sine alterius vovit assensu, temerarie se vovisse cognoscat, et debitum coniugi casta sinceritate redhibeat.'

penance had imposed continence on the wife rather than it being self-sought. At this point in the letter, Fulgentius had moved to a more generic reflection on continence and marriage rather than focusing on the circumstances of the case in question, which was more religiously complex due to penance performed by the wife. The letter underlines how impractical penance – which adulterous males also should perform – was.

The nature of penance in early Christian and late antique communities is debated, with M. B. De Jong having criticised scholarship for buying into a medieval idealisation of early penance as a dramatic ritual that shook the entire community.[600] Already Innocent I of Rome, around 401, noted that rules regarding sinning had become laxer than before. After receiving baptism, Innocent noted, people continued to live a life of sinning just as before, and it was only when dying that they sought reconciliation through penance.[601] In earlier stages of the church, such sinners would have entered the status of a penitent during their lifetime, but by the start of the fifth century, these sinners could easily postpone the consequences of their sinful ways. Augustine's sermons likewise suggest complacency amongst penitents whose penitential state affected them little.[602] In other words, many lay Christians were not particularly upset about the theoretical consequences of their sins and did not seek to atone for them immediately. This may further explain the complacency that men felt as they engaged in adulterous affairs and, furthermore, may explain the attitude attested to earlier, when Augustine's imagined adulterers talked back at him: these men were not overly worried by a legal or a clerical punishment, but were annoyed by attempts at church intervention. The lack of practical Christian punishments, likewise, may have hindered the development of the same in secular law.

There is a rift between Christian commentary on married men's misbehaviour and secular rulings regarding them: late Roman laws do not reflect Christian discourse in terms of limiting men's sexual licence.[603] This should be seen, at least partially, as one

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[600] M.B. De Jong, 'Transformations of Penance', in *Rituals of Power: from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by F. Theuws and Janet L. Nelson (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 185-224. On penance as an alternative to legal punishment, see Julia Hillner, *Prison, Punishment and Penance in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 104-111.

[601] Innocent I, *Ep. ad Exuperium* 2 (PL 20.0498).

[602] See De Jong, 2000; Deferrari, 1922, p. 195.

[603] cf. Homosexual acts in Section 4.1 above.

of the reasons why Christian moralistic thinking on concubines, having sex with slaves, or simply anyone not one's wife, failed to take root. There was no legal precedent to support these clerical notions when it came to men, nor were any created. It should also make us question the extent to which laws of this time reflect 'Christianisation' – as this thesis argues overall, sexual *mores* in the fifth century were evolving, partly Christian, partly not. Traditional notions of married men's polygyny as a non-punishable act continued unchanged, and law is a reflection of this wider acceptance of these social traditions. This should give us an indication of some of the key values in late Roman culture and how masculine identities continued to be constructed.

From the evidence gathered here, one wonders if it is too harsh to say that Western clerics failed in enforcing monogamy on Christian men and that laws enabled this mortally sinful behaviour just as before. There is, after all, evidence that some men attempted to lead chaster lives: the rise of monastic communities in the West cannot be ignored, even if as a percentage of the population these men were not demographically significant.[604] Neither can we ignore the epigraphic evidence suggestive of some idealism of male chastity that emerged at this time.[605] Calls to cease sinning with concubines, slaves, married women, and the message that marital monogyny was good but that continence was better, did not fall unto completely deaf ears. This was not enough, however, as we cannot discern any significant break in views of married men's adultery or in the habits or cultural norms relating to married men's polygyny.

The adultery discourse reflects the failure of battling SIM in late antique society. Yet, we should make note of the persistence of this as a source of conflict between clerics and their flocks between 390 and 520, in spite of the socio-political disturbances that marked this era. Earlier I suggested that warfare may have negatively impacted rates of marriage, as it certainly damaged pre-existing marital unions. On the other hand, polygyny marks social continuity during this era, which does not need to be at odds with the earlier suggestion: married and single men alike formed relationships, extra-marital or otherwise, with women available to them. Despite changes in moralistic behaviour elsewhere, polygyny was not a behaviour where changes can be seen,

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[604] On the development of Western monasticism, see Goodrich, 2007; Dunn, 2008.

[605] Laes, 2013.

reflecting the dominance of traditional thinking in forming ideas of acceptable moralistic behaviour. Challenges brought on by warfare did not jeopardise basic assumptions made regarding men's sexual licences. Kuefler's remarks that as socio-political power of elite men dwindled, their sexualised masculinities as *viri* became more significant are important also here.[606] Polygyny was a self-evident right and practice to many elite men and may have gained a renewed significance at a time when other traditional sources of power came under attack. We see, at least, an obstreperous battle to sustain and maintain elite men's rights to polygynous practices. Continuity in this behaviour demonstrates not only the wide acceptance of the sexual licence given to men throughout the Roman West during the barbarian re-settlement era, but also its importance and cultural value to these men themselves.

4.3 CHAPTER CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has sought to demonstrate that traditional views of sexual behaviour – dynamics of male/male sex and desire, the practice of polygyny – were an integral part of fifth century perceptions of sex. Some parts of these traditions were challenged by the clergy, but some, such as the constructions of appropriate and inappropriate male/male sex, were ingrained in clerical thinking and formed the core of their anti-homosexual argumentation. The 'Christianisation' of sexual morality was not consistent or, at times, even that Christian. Older cultural tradition overrode Christian attempts to limit the habits of men, and as such immoral acts, like extra-marital unions and homosexual acts, continued to be perceived in non-Christian paradigms. Kyle Harper has recently argued that the Christianisation of sex occurred later than is currently thought, highlighting that the process was much slower than suggested by prior scholarship.[607] The evidence discussed in this chapter supports this idea of a later period and a slow 'transformation', certainly later than 390 and 520, although I do not believe that a dating, tentative or otherwise, can confidently be given to such gradual cultural change. Sexual morality should further be seen as reflecting adaptation, as opposed to a more radical sounding 'transformation'.

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[606] Kuefler, 2001, pp. 77-81.

[607] See Harper, 2013, pp. 238-9.

Examining textual evidence for non-Christian practices and views, here, has proved most revealing, reflecting conflict within communities and even clashes with bishops who attempted to espouse stricter rules on sexually moral behaviour. The evidence is suggestive of the acceptance of a broader sexual licence than the one advocated by Christian teachings. Not only can we find this in lay reactions to moral discussions on polygyny, but also within the teachings themselves, especially in conceptions of homosexual acts. Such inability to transition from Roman ideology to Christian restrictions demonstrates that Christians of this age continued to view their sexual habits and moral markers through a Roman lens. This emphasises that religious texts such as sermons can be used in the study of everyday life and that patristic texts *should* be examined in the light of not only Christian teaching, but secular cultural views that they attest to likewise.

I have also considered law to highlight the difficulties in interpreting legal evidence as proof of 'Christianisation'. Laws are highly problematic as evidence of widespread behaviour and do not reflect normative views. Laws could clash with fundamental Christian ideas, like married men's polygyny that was abhorred by clerics but not punished legally, nor can we discern Christian ideas in homosexual legislation until Justinian's new laws in the 530s. This legal aspect is particularly crucial, as fourth and fifth century laws have been interpreted as reflecting wider Christianisation of society. The discussion here should make us sceptical of such an assumption and make us question how we may use law to discuss socio-cultural developments. We must seek evidence of 'Christianisation' of society elsewhere.

At this juncture, we have seen how contemporary pressure of warfare, ideas of purity and impurity, and traditionalistic ideas of sex moulded and defined fifth century discussions on sexual behaviour. These discussions were *ad hoc* in nature, reflecting real problems and challenges, and while discussions share characteristics with each other, they do not form overall narratives of a definite Christian view on sex. To highlight this notion of individualistic thinking on sexual morality, there is a major source that has not yet been examined that is pivotal for the current discussion: Salvian of Marseilles's *De gubernatione Dei*. Salvian included war, tradition and everyday sexual sinning into his work, and from these built his own interpretation of the moral

world of his time. Overlooked by previous scholarship, Salvian is one of our best sources for the sexual practices of the era here in question. In the final chapter, I wish to offer a new interpretation of his misinterpreted text that examines the sexually immoral behaviours of Christians in the fifth century West, basing my interpretation of Salvian on the flexible, adaptable nature of Christian approaches to sexual *mores* thus far discussed.

5. THE SELF-INSPECTING MIRROR OF SALVIAN OF MARSEILLES

In the 440s, a Gallo-Roman presbyter set out to write a treatise that would prove God's control of the world around him and others as barbarian warfare placed this in doubt. This presbyter, Salvian of Marseilles (c.400-470s), produced a work that was full of criticism and commentary on the sexual habits of peoples.[608] The work, *De gubernatione Dei*,[609] has become known for its sexual hyperboles and catastrophic depictions of uncontrolled lust and illicit sexual behaviour in the late Roman West. As such, Salvian's work is a key source for the current study, and this chapter will examine claims regarding sexual vice made by Salvian in light of the discussion in the preceding chapters: the influence of increased pressure caused by war, the negotiation of impurity and rhetoric of active vice, and the dominance of Roman ideas of sexual *mores* for clergy and lay Christians alike. Examined from these perspectives, Salvian's commentary on sexual morality finds a place in the wider network of fifth century discussions on sexual behaviour and norms.

Written in eight books,[610] *De gub.* is a lengthy, moralising work that depicts barbarian rule as divine punishment for Christian sins and, as will be discussed below, these sins are overwhelmingly sexual in nature. While Salvian's work has attracted scholarly attention as a vital source on barbarians, his discussion on sexual habits has been marked as colourful, anti-hedonistic ranting by early and mid-twentieth century historians, who heavily influenced the scholarship that followed.[611] The historiography on Salvian is sporadic and lacking recent commentary, and not a single monograph or extensive study in English-speaking scholarship exists, despite some valuable

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[608] On the dating of Salvian's death, see n. 628 below.

[609] Hereafter shortened as *De gub. (De gubernatione Dei)* (CSEL 8.001-200). All citations of the original Latin are from this volume. Translations are from J.F. O'Sullivan, ed., *The Writings of Salvian, the Presbyter* (New York, NY: Cima Publishing Co., 1947). Some translations have been altered for enhanced clarity. Any such amendments have been noted.

[610] The manuscript tradition is incomplete and the eighth book ends abruptly.

[611] See Raymond Thouvenot, 'Salvien et la ruine de l'empire romain', *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 38 (1920), pp. 145-63; F. Paschoud, *Roma aeterna: Études sur le patriotisme romain dans l'Occident latin à l'époque des grandes invasions* (Rome: Institut Suisse de Rome, 1969); and especially Pierre Paul Courcelle, *Histoire littéraire des grandes invasions germaniques* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1964), pp. 118-130. Courcelle painted Salvian as a barbarian sympathiser, who relished seeing 'the fall' of Rome, motivated by his supposed Germanic origins. While Courcelle's views are largely unfounded, his analysis was hugely influential.

unpublished studies.[612] Indeed, no study has considered Salvian's comments on sexual morality and behaviour in detail or as a product of its time, nor have attempts been made to compare his work with the mentality found in the works of his contemporaries. Sex is central to his work, but no one has posed the question why.

The study that comes closest to addressing these issues is David Cleland's 1969 thesis, in which he stated: 'The social role of sexual behaviour is important [to Salvian] as the state's well-being depends on it.'[613] Cleland, furthermore, considers Salvian's attitudes to war and rape, albeit too briefly[614] – nevertheless these preliminary efforts are notable. Cleland argues that Salvian is taciturn about war and does not provide much commentary on it, but I wish to argue that *De gub.*, as a work in its entirety, *is* Salvian's commentary on war. He states at the start of his work that his motivation for writing *De gub.* stems from people's lack of faith in God's involvement in contemporary affairs due to military conflicts and losses.[615] As such, when Salvian criticises sexual habits, he is discussing his perception of why God has allowed war to occur. Salvian's commentary on the specifics of battles and military movements may be lacking, but that does not mean that his moralising attack on the Christians of his age is not simultaneously his response to contemporary warfare.

While Cleland recognised sex but not war, later studies on Salvian have ignored the former and, largely, the latter too. David Lambert's unpublished thesis from 2002 offers the most balanced assessment of Salvian to date, emphasising Salvian's understanding

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[612] The most thorough work is Jan Badewien, *Geschichtstheologie und Sozialkritik im Werk Salvians von Marseille* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), but Badewien takes a theological approach that disregards the communal realities that Salvian includes in his work. Of more recent scholarship, significant is the unpublished David Lambert, 'History and Community in the Works of Salvian of Marseille' (University of Oxford, 2002), although Lambert fails to consider the role of sexual morality in Salvian's works on its own terms. There has also been interest in Salvian's views on ethnicity and barbarians, as seen in David J. Cleland, 'Salvian and the Vandals', *Studia Patristica* 10 (1970), pp. 270-74; Michael Maas, 'Ethnicity, Orthodoxy and Community in Salvian of Marseilles', in Drinkwater and Elton, eds., 1992, pp. 275-84; David Lambert, 'Barbarians in Salvian's *De gubernatione Dei*', in Mitchell and Greatrex, eds., 2000, pp. 103-15. Salvian's views on alms-giving have recently been considered in Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: wealth, the fall of Rome, and the making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 433-453; and lastly Salvian has been depicted as a reliable source on late Roman taxation and governmental corruption in Thouvenot, 1920, to determine the ultimate cause of 'the fall'. This latter, in my opinion, is a completely pointless exercise.

[613] David J. Cleland, 'Salvian of Marseilles' (University of Oxford, 1969), p. 170.

[614] Ibid., pp. 162-163.

[615] *De gub*. 1.1.1.

of the Christian community as a collective and active moralistic organism: '[Salvian] portrays a reciprocal relationship between Christians' collective betrayal of their duty to God and the punishment of invasion and conquest which God inflicts on them.'[616] Lambert does not discuss why Salvian emphasises sex so greatly in his work, despite an appreciation of the role that the *mores* of the community played in Salvian's perception of the world. My thesis, however, has shown the multi-layered constructions that went into creating ideas of sexual morality at this time, showing that ideas of morality were reactionary, negotiable, and that there was ongoing definition of *mores* that were being communicated to Christian communities.

Salvian will be examined in this light – not with regard to his views on ethnicity or theology or as literary hyperbole, but with regard to sex and the relationship of sexual practices with contemporary violent conflicts – a link he himself firmly establishes throughout the piece. I wish to argue that Salvian is not hysterical, but that Salvian is a crystallisation of the ideas that formed attitudes on moralistic thinking at this time, encasing the developments we have already analysed.[617] Seen in this light, Salvian ceases to be illogical – and even when excessive dramatic flair remains, we are in a position to consider why that is, rather than condemning his views outright. Indeed, Salvian's criticism of polygyny, including concubinage, prostitution, masters having sex with slaves, and even his criticism of homosexual acts finds support in other sources, which I have established in previous chapters. He should be considered as an important source on these matters, therefore, rather than being dismissed as fanciful exaggeration.

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[616] Lambert, 2002, p. 277.

[617] This is not to say that all scholarship has discredited Salvian. Some have attempted restoring his reputation, noting that he 'displays genuine humility and sincerity which make his condemnations and denunciations ring with an air of truth' in Lawrence J. Barmann, 'Salvian of Marseilles Re-evaluated', *Revue de L'Université D'Ottawa* 33 (1963), pp. 79-97, at p.82. This analysis, however, is at the other extreme of the spectrum where not enough criticism is placed on Salvian. Barmann does attempt to correct misconceptions of Salvian as a fanatic (p. 86), but he undermines his assessment with erroneous judgements such as: 'That the final century of Rome's rule was a period of great moral decay is a point which needs no proof here' (p. 93). It certainly does! Barmann does, however, challenge Courcelle's views on Salvian, arguing *De gub.* to be a rational work welcomed by contemporaries (pp. 93-95), to which I am inclined to agree. Barmann ends his analysis with a call to arms against communism, the 'barbarians' of the twentieth century – Barmann's assessment of Salvian, therefore, is further impinged by his contemporary concerns.

Section 5.1 seeks to discuss the historical context in which Salvian was writing in order to better understand the writings he left behind. I will also consider the genre of his work and the audience he wished to reach with his work. Section 5.2 analyses depictions of sexual morality amongst the Christians of Gaul, in particular in Aquitaine, and in North Africa, where we find sinful Christian communities committing acts of adultery, fornication and homosexual acts. The military conflicts of Salvian's time enabled him to discuss these vices in contrast to the habits of barbarians, and he used the advancing groups as points of laudation or condemnation. This sexualised juxtaposition of Romans and barbarians will be explored here – but not purely as a literary trope or an examination of ethnicity, but to examine why Salvian emphasised sex and how he described sexual *mores* of his time.

Section 5.3 turns to the incoming Vandals and Visigoths, studying how their sexual morality is depicted by Salvian. Again, I will assess the realism and factuality of his statements, rather than dismissing them or believing them outright. The fourth and final section draws from the discussion above and analyses Salvian's relationship with sex, discussing what may have influenced his writing about it, as well as possible realities of communal life behind the assertions that he makes. Ultimately, I will argue that disturbing contemporary events supplied Salvian with a self-inspecting mirror: the presence of an oppressive 'other' served as a fictionalised counter example of sexual life and incited Christian self-reflection during times of severe crisis.[618] In this ethos, Salvian focused on sexual vice and its effects on the Christian community.

5.1 CONTEXT OF *DE GUB.*

Before tackling a text as complicated as *De gub.*, its author requires further introduction. We know relatively little of Salvian's life, but a general chronology may be outlined: Salvian was born c. 400 in the Rhineland area, possibly at Cologne or Trier.[619] In his youth, he married a pagan woman named Palladia, who subsequently

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[618] The use of alterity as a rhetorical tool in constructing one's own identity, in both ethnic and religious contexts, has already been discussed in Section 1.4. It is worth reminding us here that in early Christian contexts, the mirror – *speculum* - was a patristic notion with a long tradition. On its history, see Ritamary Bradley, 'Backgrounds of the title Speculum in mediaeval literature', *Speculum* 29.1 (1954), pp. 100-15.

[619] For a thorough attempt at reconstructing Salvian's life, see Lambert, 2002, pp. 42-53.

converted to Christianity, and together they had a daughter, Auspiciola, prior to their move south where Salvian entered the famed island monastery of Lérins.[620] In Lérins, Salvian became a part of the intellectual network of Gallic Christian thinkers who rose to prominence in the fifth and sixth centuries. Salvian was in the intimate circles of this religious *intelligentsia* and he taught their families and dedicated works to its influential members around Gaul.[621] Gennadius records Salvian in his list of illustrious men, noting that Salvian was a prolific writer, but of the works listed only *De gub.* and *Ad ecclesiam* survive to this day.[622] On top of this, we have nine letters. Salvian had moved some hundred miles west of Lérins by the time of *De gub.*'s composition in the 440s, to the seaport of Marseilles. It is unclear when exactly Salvian moved to Lérins and when he left the island monastery for Marseilles, where he presumably entered the monastery of St. Victor, which according to legend was founded by John Cassian.[623]

The bishopric of Marseilles has a difficult history, situated near powerful neighbours: Arles and Narbonne. The two were in contest over ecclesiastical spheres of influence, and in these circumstances Marseilles itself did not rise to ecclesiastical primacy.[624] When *De gub.* was written in the 440s, the bishop of Marseilles would have been Venerius, who had been presbyter under the previous bishop Proculus – a notable and powerful bishop.[625] Venerius himself held the seat for over twenty years (431 – 452).[626] Salvian was a presbyter under Venerius; he was not a bishop like many of his contemporaries whose writings we have examined. We may only surmise why Salvian never held this post himself – Cleland has claimed that Salvian's 'tendency to extremes

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[620] Salvian, *Ep*. 4. This letter is our best source for Salvian's private life, addressed to his wife's parents, who appear to have stopped talking to them after Salvian and his wife's conversion. The letter is Salvian's attempt to make amends after a seven-year silence, prompted by his parents-in-law having converted to Christianity themselves. Whether the letter repaired the icy relations is unknown. His wife and daughter, however, appear to be living in a nunnery.

[621] On the careers of various Lérins monks, see Brown, 2012, pp. 419-423.

[622] Gennadius, *DVI* 68. Gennadius records several treatises, homilies and even verse.

[623] The accreditation of St. Victor to John Cassian is dubious at best and has sparked debate. Most recently John Goodrich has argued that the link may well be historical while Panayiotis Tzamalikos has argued against Goodrich's interpretation and supports the view that Cassian's link to St. Victor is a sixth century forgery. See Goodrich, 2007, p. 228 and P. Tzamalikos, *The Real Cassian Revisited: monastic life, Greek paideia, and Origenism in the sixth century* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 55-60.

[624] The Council of Turin in 400 ruled against Marseilles in its power struggle with Narbonne (CCSL 148.0054: Turin 400, Canon 1).

[625] *PCBE* 4.2, Proculus 1, pp. 1541-1544. On bishops of Marseilles at this time, see the summary in Loseby, 1993, pp. 96-130.

[626] *PCBE* 4.2, Venerius 1, pp. 1923-1925.

and rash statements' may have cost him entry into episcopacy.[627] There is no proof to support such a notion, however – the long episcopacies of bishops in Marseilles at this time may come closer to answering this question, as in such circumstances Salvian was never able to become the next in line. In any case, we cannot know for sure. According to Gennadius, writing in the late 460s, Salvian was still alive, and thus we know that Salvian enjoyed a long career in the church, during which he produced many literary works.[628] As a presbyter monk, he was active in writing and in engaging with his own kinsmen and his fellow clerics, writing in an intellectually challenging and ambitious ethos, amidst learned men amongst whom he did not hold a primary position.[629]

De gub. was composed sometime after 439, when Vandals took Carthage and the Visigoths defeated the Roman army at Toulouse.[630] The work is Salvian's response to Christians in Marseilles who now doubted God's provenance over His people: 'By certain men God is said to be careless and neglectful of human actions, on the ground that He neither protects good men nor restrains the wicked.'[631] Such doubts amongst lay Christians were not new challenges: Augustine's *Ep.* 111, in which Augustine sought to explain why God allowed pious Christians to be murdered by barbarians, already sought to address these problems in 409.[632] The treatise that unfolds in *De gub.* is Salvian's attempt to demonstrate that God was very much involved in earthly matters: those who were wicked were, in fact, Christians themselves who were being justly punished for their corrupt ways. The violence and devastation in Gaul by the Visigoths

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[627] Cleland, 1969, p. 12.

[628] The dating of *DVI* has entries that date from the 490s, but Gennadius himself most likely wrote in the 460s and 470s, while older entries are anonymous additions. Salvian was, thus, still alive in the 460s/470s. The argument of later additions has been put across by Alfred Feder, 'Zusätze des gennadianischen Schriftstellerkatalogs', *Scholastik* 8.3 (1933), pp. 380-99. David Lambert also supports this dating in Lambert, 2002, p. 42. There has been no extensive study on Gennadius in any language since Bruno Czapla, *Gennadius als Litterarhistoriker: eine quellenkritische Untersuchung der Schrift des Gennadius von Marseille "De viris illustribus"* (Münster: Heinrich Schöningh, 1898). A thorough re-examination of Gennadius, therefore, is long overdue and an examination of the dating of his composition would likewise be much welcome. Such pursuits, however, fall outside the current study.

[629] *Ep.* 1 is written to the monks of Lérins, to recommend his kinsman for entry into the monastery. The unnamed kinsman had arrived from Northern Gaul. In the same letter he also appeals for support for one of his kinswomen, a chaste widower now living under barbarian control in Northern Gaul. Salvian, though having embraced the religious life, was still an active and influential member of his own kinship group.

[630] Salvian details these events in *De gub.* 7.10, 7.16.

[631] *De gub.* 1.1.1: 'incuriosus a quibusdam et quasi neglegens humanorum actuum Deus dicitur, utpote nec bonos custodiens, nec coercens malos.'

[632] This letter was examined in length in Section 2.1 above.

and in North Africa by the Vandals was not proof of God's abandonment – it was proof of God's active punishment.[633] This core argument radiates through *De gub.* and is the end goal that spurs Salvian into exaggeration that has led him into being questioned as a reliable historical source.[634]

By the time Salvian was writing in the diocese of Septem Provinciae in the 440s, the south-west region of Gaul had experienced the consolidation of Visigothic power for over twenty years.[635] After the treaty of 418, the Goths strengthened their position in Southern Gaul, which was not always a peaceful process: in the mid-430s both Arles and Narbonne were under siege, but by the 440s the Gothic king Theoderic's rule was increasingly unquestioned in the area.[636] Marseilles itself was under siege in 412/3, but appears to have been unharmed for the decades Salvian lived there. In fact, Marseilles may have experienced far more comfort and safety than many of its neighbouring cities – I will return to the implications of this below. Salvian, nevertheless, often lamented the expansion of Gothic power, frequently referring to the fate of Aquitaine that to his readers symbolised a lost Gallo-Roman territory now under Gothic rule. This political unrest is evident also in Salvian's own background as a refugee from the Rhineland area.

The new rulers of Gaul were problematic not only as invaders, but also as believers: they were a mix of pagans and heretical 'Arians.'[637] Salvian, however, never uses the word Arian – he only refers to these people as heretics.[638] In order to understand, therefore, not only the barbarian rule in Gaul but also the non-Catholic dominion under which Romans now found themselves, Salvian turned his gaze inwards and asked: 'Except a very few individuals who shun evil, what else is the whole congregation of

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[633] *De gub.* 1.10-12.

[634] Salvian is 'addicted to exaggeration' in Frederik Van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop: the life and work of a father of the church* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961), p. 180. A milder approach is 'Salvien va toujours au delà de sa pensée' in Thouvenot, 1920, p. 145.

[635] For these developments, see Section 1.5.

[636] For the chronology of the Gothic kingdom of Toulouse in the first half of the fifth century, see Peter Heather, *The Goths* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), pp. 181-187.

[637] For the 'Arianism' of the Goths, see Maurice Wiles, *Archetypal heresy: Arianism through the centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 40-51. For Salvian's attitude towards Arianism, see Section 5.3 below.

[638] For instance, in *De gub.* 4.13.2, he states: 'There are two kinds of barbarians in the world, that is, heretics and pagans.'

Christians but the very dregs of vice?'[639] Salvian interpreted the barbarian rule around him as God's punishment for Christians who hardly deserved to be called such. He expounded the idea that God actively punished Christians for their sins – the state of affairs in the past few decades reflected this. We have seen this thought process in numerous other sources, and Salvian follows a long tradition of war and military conflict as embodiments of divine displeasure.

It is clear that Salvian was writing in an anxious context. He had personal experience of war as a refugee and news reached Marseilles of further barbarian advancement and victory from various parts of the West. Salvian was faced with people bordering on unbelief in the Christian God and further these people's behaviour fell short of his expectations of Christians. He was likewise part of an active literary circle of Christian monks and clerics, and these factors combined appear to have lain the groundwork for the treatise. Contemporary war, however, seems to have especially served as an inspiration.[640] The sexual acts described and criticised in *De gub.* are discussed always with absolute condemnation, but in a somewhat disorganised manner. Before we can discuss what we can learn of sexual *mores* from this discussion, it is worth considering what genre *De gub.* is.

GENRE OF *DE GUB.*

Determining the genre of *De gub.* equates to examining what the work hoped to achieve. *De gub.* has been described as a manifestation of Salvian's personal beliefs: he was 'driven by the quick passion for higher things possessing his own soul to decry in exaggerated terms the indifference and low standard of his countrymen.'[641] The work has also been called a 'moral exhortation', which allows more appreciation of its contents than describing it as simply driven by passion.[642] Thus far in this thesis, we have seen moral exhortations repeatedly. Salvian is not unique, therefore, but again is

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[639] *De gub*. 3.9.5: 'aut praeter paucissimos quosdam qui mala fugiunt, quid est aliud paene omnis coetus Christianorum quam sentina vitiorum?' Salvian's 'Christians' refers to his fellow Catholics.

[640] Loseby, 1993, p. 125: 'The recent catastrophes which had engulfed much of Gaul had proved something of an inspiration to the life of Marseilles.'

[641] Eleanor Shipley Duckett, *Latin Writers of the fifth century* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1969), p. 181.

[642] Barmann, 1963, p. 93.

a part of a long tradition of moralising discourses. He is, however, exceptional in the extent and length of his moral exhortation: eight books overall and in more detail than any other contemporary source. Indeed, no Christian author had discussed deviant sex at such length since Clement of Alexandria (dead c. 215) in the East and Tertullian (dead c. 220) in the West at Carthage.[643] Salvian sought to reintroduce the debate of what Christian sexual morals should be into fifth century Gaul in considerable length – or at least he sought to remind his audience that such a debate should be taking place. As other sources so far have shown, sexual morality was often an afterthought or saved for a few sermons – not, however, for Salvian.

The religious message of the work is fundamental to all analysis of it. As noted by one scholar, *De gub.* was written 'pour raffermir leur foi.'[644] The fragility of Christian beliefs in and around Marseilles should not be forgotten, nor its role in motivating Salvian to write the work. When Salvian discussed sexual habits, he was making a point about the extent of God's power and the type of behaviour Christians owed God. This is to be kept in mind when we consider the exaggerated nature of some of Salvian's claims, appearing to be hyperbolical or bordering satirical. We must especially be careful not to confuse the sex discussed in *De gub.* as satire, although traditionally sex was a popular satirical theme, often executed with humour and wit, and offering an array of deviant acts.[645] However, Salvian was not seeking to entertain, but rather he was hoping to strike a much more serious chord of religious preoccupation. Whether or not Salvian expected his audience to believe the contents of his work to be accurate depictions of their time, especially on matters of sex and *mores*, has been debated by modern scholars,[646] and I will offer my own interpretation of this as well.

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[643] Both of these men's works contributed greatly to the development of sexually moralising discourses in Christianity. When examining Clement of Alexandria's discussion of sex, Denise Kimber Buell has stated that amongst Clement's flock 'debates over sexual practices constituted one site of contest for those seeking to define the contours of authentic Christian identity', in Denise Kimber Buell, *Making Christians: Clement of Alexandria and the rhetoric of legitimacy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 32. Tertullian, likewise, compared the sexual behaviour of Christians and pagans alike, painting Christians as far superior. See Geoffrey D. Dunn, *Tertullian* (London: Routledge, 2004), especially pp. 27-31, 36-38.

[644] Thouvenot, 1920, p. 145.

[645] See Niall Rudd, *Themes in Roman Satire* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1998), pp. 193-225.

[646] Barmann, 1963, pp. 94-97; Cleland, 1970, p. 270.

The sexual practices of Christians were a topic that church leaders did not wish to discuss unless they had to, and even then they discussed sex with caution. Bearing this reluctance in mind, it would be misleading to assume that Salvian's discussion on the sexual habits of Romans in Gaul is satire or purely polemical. Furthermore, it would be counter-productive to shoehorn *De gub.* to one specific or clear-cut pre-existing genre, as it is a complex work that touches upon numerous topics. *De gub.* sought to expose the rotten conduct of Christians, as perceived by Salvian, and implored people to improve. As such, it is medicinal literature and aggressive in its nature.[647] It is at times convoluted and confused, and certainly at times Salvian elongates his points unnecessarily, which may speak of passion, frustration, poor editing skills, or how seriously he took the topic he was discussing. *De gub.* is a lamentation and takes on rhetorical licences to expound its message. However, the sexual hyperbole has often led to the dismissal of Salvian, yet there is no reason to believe that his audience or his readers would have been as willing to ignore him.

AUDIENCE OF *DE GUB.*

Any attempt to define Salvian's audience must partly rely on speculation. Suggestions are also hindered by obvious limitations: for instance, we do not know if *De gub.* was composed or circulated in one go or in parts. The oldest manuscripts that are dated between the tenth and thirteenth centuries do not illuminate this issue either.[648] Nevertheless, it is a very busy piece of moralising discourse: it seeks to astonish and admonish its readers, to correct and to criticise, while maintaining a sound doctrine and a strong Christian call to reform. However, a case can be made for the kind of people Salvian had in mind as the recipients of such a message, beyond his own plain statement that he was addressing Christians.[649]

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[647] Echoes of the same approaches can be found in heresiological literature. See the discussion in Berzon, 2016.

[648] The oldest surviving manuscript, MS A (BNF lat. 13385) in Bibliothèque Nationale Français in Paris is dated to the tenth or eleventh centuries. Manuscripts B (Brussels, BR 10615-729) and C (Troyes, Bib.Mun. 895), dated to the thirteenth and twelfth centuries respectively, derive from a common source, and B is the base for further medieval copies. For the manuscript tradition, see Georges Lagarrigue, ed., *Salvien de Marseille: Ouvres*. Vol. 2: *Du Gouvernement de Dieu* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1975).

[649] At *De gub*. 1.1.1, Salvian instantly says that he is addressing Christians, and as such scriptures should be enough to prove God's control of the world. He again cites his readers as Christians in *De gub*. 6.1.1.

Firstly, Salvian dedicated *De gub.* to Salonius, Bishop of Geneva, whom he had taught at Lérins.[650] Salonius was the son of Eucherius of Lyon, to whom two letters by Salvian also survive.[651] While our knowledge of Salonius is limited, we know that his father was well connected and friends with men such as John Cassian, Sidonius Apollinaris, Claudianus Mamertus, Hilary of Arles, and so forth.[652] Salvian also seems to have been on amicable terms with other bishops in Gaul, such as Claudius of Vienne, who was bishop of the city c. 440, and to whom Salvian dedicated a now lost work.[653] Salvian's inclusion in Gennadius's list of notable men is also indicative of not only of the impact of his religious writings, but of his notable position amongst Gallic clergymen at this time. Salvian was expecting *De gub.* to be read throughout Gaul by this religious elite. It is especially likely that he had the literary circle of Lérins, the fruits of which had scattered across the region, in mind when sending out copies of his work.

However, *De gub.* was not a work that was intended primarily for the clergy – quite the opposite. With its topics of taxation, *spectacula*, and sexual habits, *De gub.* is mainly discussing the lives and vices of lay Christians. He addresses them directly and often, lamenting their foolish ways in an inclusive manner, such as when he sternly says: 'No matter how bitter and calamitous our suffering, we suffer less than we deserve.'[654] Salvian is on the outside looking in on sin, but in suffering caused by this sin, he is with the rest of his contemporaries collectively. This unifying, collective nature of sin we have already noted as an important strand of hamartiological thought in fifth century texts. Furthermore, the main aim of *De gub.* – to demonstrate God's government of the world and restore faith of Christians – was directed at lay Christians specifically, as it was from their disbelief that the inspiration to write *De gub.* had come.

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[650] *De gub. praef.* See also Brown, 2012, p. 436. Neither is *De gub.* the only literary link between the teacher and pupil as Gennadius further records that Salvian also dedicated a work titled *Pro eorum praemio satisfactionis* to Salonius (*DVI* 68). A letter to Salonius also survives (*Ep.* 9), containing Salvian's response to Salonius's enquiry on the authorship of *Ad ecclesiam*, published under the name of Timothy but written by his old teacher Salvian. Salonius expressed fears that the name would mislead readers into thinking that the piece was apocryphal and criticised Salvian for the use of the pseudonym. Salonius was bishop of Geneva in the 440s, and his signature can be found in the documents for the Councils of Orange (441) and Vaison (442) (CCSL 148.0088 and 148.0102, respectively).

[651] Salvian, *Epp.* 2 and 8.

[652] For Eucherius and further bibliography, see Quasten, 1986, pp. 504-507.

[653] Gennadius, *DVI* 68.

[654] *De gub.* 4.8.1: 'quamlibet aspera et adversa patiamur, minora patimur quam meremur.'

As its addressees and objects of scrutiny, Salvian is always talking to lay Christians. Salvian uses scripture throughout to support his points and gives biblical examples of punishment, sin and salvation. He also accuses his audience of paganism, such as augury and sacrifices, despite saying he was addressing Christians.[655] People who were *incerti*, or who Salvian feared were *incerti* in their beliefs, appear to be amongst his intended audience. As such, Salvian in particular was addressing those whose conduct revealed a gap between Christian theory and actual practice. Even so, many of the main themes, such as the uncertainty of Gaul's future, would have resonated to all, making the work relevant and timely for clerical and secular audiences alike.

De gub. was written with a wide scope of readers in mind, but the focus was in the secular spheres of Gaul or, certainly, the behaviour within secular spheres. This audience may be narrowed down further from all lay Christians and *incerti* to those whom Salvian especially criticises in his treatise: wealthy and educated Gallo-Roman Christian males. He begins *De gub.* with an appeal of pagan philosophers and thinkers from Plato to Cicero, who knew as wise men that God actively governed the world.[656] Salvian expected a level of literacy and education from his readers. He also asked: 'What rich and powerful man did not live in lustful vice? Who among them did not plunge into the pit of the most sordid associations? Who returned the loyalty of his wife?'[657] These words he attached to the men of Aquitaine in South-West Gaul to account for its conquest by barbarians. Salvian had criticised the wealthy before in his *Ad ecclesiam*, which at times is known as 'Against Avarice', as it contains an attack against the rich and attempts to persuade them to give alms to the church.[658] More importantly *Ad ecclesiam* is an attack against the laxness of Christians – the increased number of believers had caused a relaxation in Christian morals: 'Your vice increase almost as much as the number of Christians increase,' and, further, 'when the people in the faith are multiplied, their faith is weakened.'[659] Similar thoughts may be found in

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[655] *De gub.* 6.2.3-4.

[656] *De gub.* 1.1.2-4.

[657] *De gub.* 7.3.4: 'Quis potentum ac divitum non in luto libidinis vixit? Quis non se barathro sordidissimae conluvionis immersit? Quis conjugi conjugii fidem reddidit?'

[658] *Ad ecclesiam* 1.9-10.

[659] *Ad. eccl.*, 1.1.4 (CSEL 8.0225): 'quantum tibi auctum est populorum, tantum paene vitiorum'; 1.1.5: 'multiplicatis enim fidei populis fides imminuta est.' For similar views in Augustine, see De Jong, 2000; Deferrari, 1922, p. 195. For the same in John Chrysostom's preaching some decades earlier, see Isabella

De gub., where Salvian discusses the superiority of early Christians compared to his contemporaries – a rather popular idealisation amongst later Romano-Christians.[660] Neither is Salvian alone amongst the writers of the fifth century to mark on the diluted enthusiasm of Christians: for instance his contemporary Quodvultdeus complained about the laxness of Christians in 430s Carthage: 'Who will claim that he does all that God has commanded? No one, absolutely no one. We preach but we do not practice: you hear but do not take care to the practice.'[661]

Here it is worthwhile to reflect on the socio-political context further. Whether or not Salvian's account on the lives of the rich men of Gaul is factual, there certainly were men who had the resources to lead lives of luxury in 440s Marseilles. The unrest caused by wars between the Goths and the Romans in Southern Gaul in the 430s and 440s did not necessarily mean destruction in Marseilles itself. Simon Loseby's study of late antique Marseilles suggests that the city did well for itself: while the areas around the city reduced in size and the archaeological record suggests abandonment of some settlements, Marseilles with its siege-proof walls continued to prosper as a commercial centre throughout the fifth century.[662] Yet, it does not appear that there was a sense of security in Marseilles: locals worried and blamed God for abandoning them. Salvian's work is proof of these fears, and notably of people's reluctance to change their habits, even if they feared that wars were the result of divine wrath or abandonment.

When assessing the impact that Christianity had on the daily lives of common lay people in the late antique era, Ramsay MacMullen has rightly pointed out that the voices criticising Christians come from a minority.[663] Salvian, too, represents a minority. People now carried the name of 'Christian', but their habits and conviction could not

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Sandwell, 'John Chrysostom's Audiences and His Accusations of Religious Laxity', *Late Antique Archaeology* 6.1 (2010), pp. 523-42.

[660] *De gub.* 1.3.5. For a more diverse and less idealised image of the apostolic church, see James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: an inquiry into the character of earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1977).

[661] *De temp.* 1.1.17 (CCSL 60.424): 'Quis sibi audebit assignare quod faciat omnia quae praecepit Deus? Nemo, prorsus nemo. Praedicamus, et non facimus: auditis, et facere non curatis.' See also the commentary on reluctance amongst Christians to perform penance and their disinterest in their penitent state in Section 4.2 above.

[662] S. T. Loseby, 'Marseille: A Late Antique Success Story?', *Journal of Roman Studies* 82 (1992), pp. 165-85.

[663] MacMullen, 1986, p. 330.

be compared to that of believers in earlier centuries. This bothered Salvian, but it certainly did not bother all.[664] Taking these factors into consideration, Salvian's attack in *De gub.* should be interpreted as criticising the top end of social hierarchy that consisted of wealthy and educated male Christians, who were secular in their habits. Some of these men, furthermore, also questioned the benefits of the new religion in a world where heretical barbarians appeared to be taking over. Such an audience also explains the sophistication of the work itself: Salvian knew that even in the case of the worst sinners, he was talking to a highly educated and sophisticated male elite. As we now turn to the perceptions of sexual behaviour and its deviant forms recorded in *De gub.*, it is this multi-layered nature of the work and its intended audience that we must keep in mind.

5.2 CHRISTIAN SEXUAL DEVIANCE

While Salvian has remained a less studied figure than many of his contemporaries, his discussion on sexual behaviour is even more poorly studied, never having received exclusive in-depth examination. This oversight may be due to other scholarly preoccupations noted above, but undoubtedly also because Salvian's ideas of sexual sin are complex and embedded in numerous socio-cultural and religious ideas of appropriate sex, sexual identity, and the functions of sin. As *De gub.* progresses, sexual vice becomes the unifying factor that binds Christians of different regions in iniquity. While Salvian condemns other shared features, they do not reach the same universality: excessive taxation in the provinces is a sin committed by greedy tax collectors and not by Christians at large, and while Salvian admonishes Christians for attending the games, he acknowledges that in some cities the poverty of the age has stalled this vice for the time being.[665] What remains is sexual vice, which is ongoing, is committed by Christians across the spectrum, and although it has localised features, sexual vice binds Christians in a deadly grip of sin across Christian communities.

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[664] cf. Augustine's audiences, who appeared lax about sinning in Rebillard, 1997. This is not to say that lay Christians had no regard whatsoever towards their religious duties. For more, see the assessment in Harmless, 2004.

[665] *De gub.* 4.4, 6.8.2-3.

It is not obvious at the start of the work that sex is to be one of Salvian's main themes.[666] He begins introducing the topic in Book 3 when he attacks the Christians of his age, noting: 'You are presenting the case why we Christians who believe in God are more wretched than all the others.'[667] The sinfulness of Christians is, of course, the answer. Exploring this further, Salvian says that he does not expect Christians to follow all rules set out in scripture – only that Christians should aim to live like Christ or Paul: 'He who calls himself a Christian must himself walk as Christ walked.'[668] This is not much of a compromise as he is setting a divine and hagiographical standard. Instead of Christians imitating Christ, however, they perform numerous sins, such as planning highway robberies and acts of fornication during church services,[669] and Salvian furthermore identifies homicide and *stuprum* as the two main sins committed by rich Christian men.[670] This is the first indication that sex is to have a special role within the narrative of *De gub.*, but Salvian explores this sporadically until the full-length admonition in Book 7.[671]

Much of Salvian's criticism should not come as a surprise to us in light of the survey given thus far: we find homosexual acts, polygyny (concubines and slaves) and

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[666] To give an idea of the initial narrative of *De gub.*, Book 1 is an analysis of the proclaimed subject of *De gub.*, as it focuses to cite examples throughout history and scripture of God's involvement and active nature in forgiving, punishing and intervening in men's affairs. Book 2 is also well-focused, seeking to demonstrate the omnipresence of God, again with the help of scripture, and showing that God judges all things. This is to rebuke claims of God's disengagement with humans.

[667] *De gub.* 3.2.1: 'Causaris igitur, quid sit istud, quod Christiani, qui deum credimus, miseriores omnibus sumus.'

[668] *De gub.* 3.3: 'et qui se Christianum dicit, debet, quemadmodum Christus ambulavit, sic et ipse ambulare.'

[669] *De gub.* 3.9.

[670] *De gub.* 3.10.

[671] To give further indication of the narrative structure, Book 4 discusses God as punishing Christians and likens the relationship with a Christian and God as that of a slave and his/her master. For Salvian, sinful Christians are like misbehaving slaves that can and should be punished by their master, God. He also compares the sinning of Christians and barbarians, reasoning that as Christians possess divine law but choose to ignore it, their sins are worse than barbarian sins, as barbarians are ignorant of divine law or have a corrupted version of it. Book 5 is a lamentation on abusive taxes and the abuse of wealthy Romans who overtax the poor, again with a comparison to barbarians who, Salvian argues, do not subject each other to similar unfair treatment – thus, barbarians are superior to greedy Romans. Book 6 attacks games and *spectacula*, especially to criticise the continuation of games during wartime and after sacks. Attending games is to commit adultery, Salvian argues, as one consumes sinful acts with one's eyes. This book discusses the fifth century context extensively, listing destruction of Gallic cities, with criticism of citizens for not changing their sinful behaviour despite God punishing them with barbarian warfare. This, then, brings Salvian to Book 7, which contains most of his commentary on sexual morality in his age.

prostitution, all of which were condemned as unchristian practices, but which were to be found across western Christian communities. Here, I will examine Salvian's claims of his contemporary society and assess what credit we should give to his words.

POLYGYNY AND THE WEALTHY

The most common sin that Salvian picks out for his fellow Christians is, unsurprisingly, adultery for married men and fornication for the unmarried. This supports the criticism of polygyny by clerics that I have examined at length in Section 4.2 above. Salvian based his criticism of adultery on Matt. 5:28, thereby determining that gazing with lust is to commit adultery in one's heart.[672] In response to this, he asked, 'God orders every Christian to keep his eyes pure; how many men are there who do not wallow in the filth of fornication?'[673] By adopting the scriptural stance that even by looking – that is, by desiring – one sins, Salvian's scope of approved sexual behaviour diminished. Salvian's criticism focused particularly on wealthy Christian men, who would have had the financial means to practise polygyny more easily than others. Salvian states that while it is generally expected that slaves sin most of all, it is in fact the upper classes who were particularly prone to committing sexual misdeeds.[674] The moralistic behaviour of rich men, to which Salvian dedicates much time, had been under scrutiny before by numerous clerics from the third century onwards.[675]

Many Christian principles, such as ascetic humility, were an ill fit for lavish lifestyles that wealthier men were used to, causing tension in religious communities. As argued by Walter Scheidel, a society with socially imposed monogamy (SIM) places men in competition with each other where resource-rich males – that is wealthy men – have more access to polygyny than poorer men.[676] In Roman terms, wealthy men could afford more prostitutes and slaves and could afford the upkeep of concubines. This is

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[672] *De gub.* 3.8.7.

[673] *De gub.* 3.9.4: 'jubet Deus ut omnis qui Christianus est, etiam oculos castos habeat; quotus quisque est qui non se luto fornicationis involvat?'

[674] *De gub.* 3.10.1-5. Salvian's assessment of wealthy men's luxurious lives can be compared to Paulinus of Pella's record of elite life in Gaul, for instance. See the discussion of Paulinus in Section 4.2 above.

[675] See the extensive overview offered in Brown, 2012 and the continuation in Peter Brown, *The Ransom of the Soul: Afterlife and Wealth in Early Western Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

[676] Scheidel, 2009.

exactly what Salvian saw in 440s Gaul, and he begins with a criticism of concubinage. He addressed this clearly: 'What rich man keeps his marriage vows,' he asked, 'who among them does not plunge headlong into passionate lust? Who does not use his household as harlots and pursue his madness against anyone on whom the heat of his evil desires may light?'[677] Salvian condemns this within the frame of Christian marriage: 'Certain men who have contracted honourable marriages take additional wives of servile rank, deforming the sanctity of holy matrimony,'[678] he complains.

Salvian attests that slaves are taken up as concubines alongside the legitimate wife, creating a polygynous household. This confusion of slave-concubines with their bigamous aura was already addressed in the previous chapter. The *concubinae* of *De gub.* are not women who occupied a premarital context, but female slaves who occupied the post-marital sphere. These household slaves were considered as *alias conjuges*, elevated to a quasi-marital status by their already married masters. As elite men should be morally superior to slaves, it was even more appalling that rich men kept concubines. Again, SIM was perceived to be an ill fit for Christianised societies. Yet we should be aware that Salvian only likens slave-concubines to wives and that this still was not actual bigamy. Instead, he emphasised that this was not far away from bigamy. Such quasi-wives in a household created problems of hierarchy and undermined the power of the *domina*.[679] What, ultimately, was the difference between a favourite household slave, who may have been a long-term girlfriend of the married master, and a concubine? For Salvian, there may not have been much difference: these were different ways of describing the same adulterous relationship. In Section 4.2 we saw Salvian's contemporary Leo the Great struggle with this exact same question. By calling slave/master relationships concubinage, however, Salvian emphasised the severity and the dangerously bigamous aura of such relationships. The extent of post-marital concubinage in Christian households at this time is impossible to discern, however, yet evidence suggests that some Christian masters had wives and favourite female slaves

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[677] *De gub.* 4.5.2: 'quotus enim quisque est divitum conubii sacramenta conservans, quem non libidinis furor rapiat in praeceps, cui non domus ac familia sua scortum sit, et qui non, in quamcumque personam cupiditatis improbae calor traxerit, mentis sequatur insanam?'

[678] *De gub.* 4.5.5: 'quod quidam matrimonia honorata sortiti, alias sibi rursum servilis status conjuges sumunt, deformantes sancti conubii honorem.'

[679] *De gub.* 7.4.1.

who all lived in the same household. It would furthermore take a rich man to be able to support a wife and female slaves. As such, Salvian's criticism of polygyny, though harsh, was responding to issues well-documented in other sources.

The silence surrounding sexual use of slaves by Christians has already been discussed above. What may account for this is that sex with one's own slaves was not problematised by late Romans, and it has further been argued that in the Roman mind there was little difference between sex with a slave and masturbation: slaves were unquestioned sources of sexual release.[680] Salvian, however, is a notable exception for addressing slaves' sexual abuse, ignored by most of his contemporaries. He wrote that owners 'have come to consider [their slaves] as eyes or hands', as mere extensions of their own bodies, and he quickly warns against such use of slaves with the threat of eternal fire.[681] As this description of slaves follows immediately after the scriptural condemnation of adultery, Salvian's remark of slaves as body parts carries a sexual connotation. He further says that:

> By a kind of enforced necessity, unwilling female slaves (*famulae*) were compelled to obey their shameless masters. The lewdness (*libido*) of the masters meant the subjection of his female subjects. From this it can be understood how sordid was the mire of shamelessness where women, living against their will under the most impure masters, were not allowed to be chaste.[682]

For Salvian, the slave-shaped form of masturbation was no longer permissible as he emphasised lack of consent and the repulsion felt by the sexual objects, describing them as victims. Salvian also quotes Jer. 5:8: '[Men] were well-fed lusty stallions, each neighing for his neighbour's wife.' He attached this behaviour in particular to the conquered region of Aquitaine: 'The Aquitainians were truly post-horses not for a few only, but for all their young female slaves.'[683] These men's sexual desire for the young women in their household is described as animalistic and, by extension, uncontrolled and irrational. Not merely concubinage, but lust for slaves was an issue.

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[680] Harper, 2013, pp. 26-30.

[681] *De gub.* 3.8.10: 'his quasi oculis interdum aut manibus utamur.'

[682] *De gub.* 7.4.4: 'quia parere impudicissimis dominis famulae cogebantur invitae, et libido dominantium necessitas subjectarum erat. Ex quo intellegi potest quantum caenum impudicarum sordium fuerit, ubi sub impurissimis dominis castas esse, etiamsi voluissent, feminas non licebat.'

[683] *De gub.* 7.4.2: 'Hi autem vere ut emissarii equi non ad paucas tantum, sed paene ad omnes vernulas suas.' The O'Sullivan translation has post-horses instead of stallions as its biblical translation.

However, we should exercise caution when interpreting consent. As with concubines, Salvian pushed the role of female slaves to a concubinal extreme to emphasise its sinfulness in the context of Christian marriages. In discussing consent, he again offered an unthinkable situation to criticise masters: a slave's theoretical right to refuse, which slaves could not actually do. As at many other points in *De gub.*, Salvian has chosen a despised group in contrast to Romans to criticise Roman behaviour. Indeed, his general attitude towards slaves is negative, seeing their servitude as a sign of their innate inferiority.[684] He points out that slaves have no concubines, unlike their owners – why is this so? 'The answer, I suppose, is obvious, that slaves have no such opportunities, for they surely would take them if they had.'[685] It is only the slaves' lot in life that keeps their sexual misbehaviour at bay, and as such we should not think that Salvian had a high regard for slaves.[686]

Salvian's brief yet significant discussion on chaste slaves is reminiscent of early Christian martyrologies and hagiographies, where the same theme may be found.[687] Stories of female efforts to remain chaste in the face of oppressors remained popular also in fifth century persecution records, and we have discussed similar stories in our discussion of rape likewise.[688] Christianity enabled female chastity to be attached to religious purity and devotion, and thus Salvian is able to contrast Christian feminine piety with unchristian manly lusts. Not only this, but the innately inferior female slaves were held in higher esteem in *De gub.* than their rich male owners – Salvian turned social hierarchy on its head, challenging his audience's views of the world around them.

Salvian also attests to the use of prostitutes by Christian men, in addition to concubines and slaves. In Aquitaine, the prostitutes found in brothels were less sinful than Christian

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[684] *De gub.* 6.2.1, 4.6.2.

[685] *De gub.* 4.6.3: 'sed responderi videlicet ad haec potest, quod facere servis ista non liceat.'

[686] Salvian falls in line with a long tradition of perceiving slaves as fundamentally different from their masters, an idea already perpetuated by Plato. On elite perception of slaves as always lusting base pleasures, see Edwards, 1993, pp. 190-195; Knust, 2006, p. 27.

[687] Burrus, 2007, pp. 53-90.

[688] Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis Africanae Provinciae* 1.10, 5.1, translated in John Moorhead, *Victor of Vita: history of the Vandal persecution* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992). This source will henceforth be referred to as *HP*.

men who visited them, as prostitutes were not committing adultery. These prostitutes were of course sinful, but ultimately their clients were more in the wrong for breaching Christian marriage.[689] Salvian also selected Carthage as a city particularly overrun by prostitutes and used the city to envision a world in which prostitution no longer existed, contrasting this with the sinful and lewd life that Carthaginians had enjoyed before.[690] From his mentions of prostitution, we again see that Christian men practised polygyny in the traditional ways that a pagan Roman male may have done centuries earlier. As the same issues – slaves, concubines, prostitutes – have been recorded by other clerics of the era likewise, such as Augustine, Leo, Maximus, Valerian, and so forth, I cannot find a persuasive reason to question the validity of Salvian's basic comments on the nature of polygyny and his view of who committed such acts. Some Christian men only had sex with their wives, but many continued to have sex with other women, too. Salvian's commentary on this should not be questioned as such, but rather his view of its extent should be.

Indeed, if something is said to be amiss, it is Salvian's regionalised perceptions of vice: did men of Aquitaine truly have more extra-marital sex than men in other regions? Such behaviour cannot be quantified, neither could Salvian have quantified it from the confines of Lérins or Marseilles. However, an exaggerated sense of Aquitainian sexual vice explained to the readers of *De gub.* the conquest of the region and supported the narrative created by Salvian that divine punishment was inspired by sexual sinning. However, polygyny was not the most serious sexual crime that Salvian attached to the Christian men of his age. The greater the fall, the greater the sins committed had to be: it is in this context that Salvian turned to North Africa and the sexual sins committed by Christians there.

THE APOGEE OF SEXUAL SIN: NORTH AFRICA

North Africa holds a special place in the narrative of *De gub.*, and the shock of the fall of Carthage in 439 contributed to the lengthy discussion North Africa receives in the treatise. Having criticised Christian men for lustfully gazing at women, for having sex

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[689] *De gub.* 7.3.3.

[690] *De gub.* 7.20.8-21.7. Discussed at length in 5.3 below.

with their slaves and with prostitutes, and for living in polygynous households in which men placed slaves at par with their wives, Salvian focused on the sins of the people of North Africa. As Augustine was prompted to write *De civitate Dei* in response to the Gothic sack of Rome in 410, so Salvian wrote *De gub.* in the aftermath of the Vandal conquest of Carthage and the defeat of the Roman army at Toulouse in 439.[691] Between the years 410 and 439, barbarians had breached two of the greatest cities in the Western Empire, and as news of these events reached congregations, clerics attempted to place them in a Christian understanding of divine intent. Salvian's discussion of Africa demonstrates his need to interpret contemporary events as acts of God, which stem from the need to punish Christians for sinning.

The move to North Africa places Salvian's discussion of sexual sin in a region that had a very different experience of barbarians than Gaul did. When the polyglotic and multi-racial group of people, called the Vandals by their contemporaries, crossed into North Africa in 429 from Southern Spain, their numbers were recorded at 80,000 people out of whom some 16,000 may have been warriors.[692] In the following decade the Vandals progressed eastwards on the North African coast, strengthening their hold of the province, and when Salvian wrote *De gub.* in the 440s, the Vandal king Geiseric was expanding his control of North Africa further.[693] The Arian Vandals subjected the local Catholic population to a religious persecution unparalleled in other parts of the West. This persecution left many of the clergy dead and many in exile, enabling Vandals to take over church buildings and property.[694] Furthermore, the new rulers sought to replace the local ruling classes with their own people – unlike in Gaul, for instance, where the old elite found new ways to reinstate themselves at the top end of the changing social and political hierarchy.[695] The relationship between the Vandals and

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[691] While the compositions of *De gub.* and *De civ. D.* were inspired by barbarian victories and Roman defeats, a study of *De gub.* does not suggest that Salvian had read *De civitate Dei*, although Salvian was likely to have been aware of it. See David Lambert, 'The Uses of Decay: History in Salvian's *De gubernatione Dei*', *Augustinian Studies* 30.2 (1999), pp. 115-30, at pp. 128-129.

[692] Schmidt, 1953, p. 149. The figure of 80,000 is given by Victor of Vita, *HP* 1.1.

[693] Merrills and Miles, 2010, pp. 60-70.

[694] *HP* 2.8; Victor of Tonnena, *Chronicon* 51 (CCSL 173A.0016). The severity depicted in these accounts, however, is dictated by their religious agenda. See Danuta Shanzer, 'Intentions and Audiences: History, Hagiography, Martyrdom, and Confession in Victor of Vita's *Historia Persecutionis*', in Merrills, ed., 2004, pp. 271-90.

[695] Mathisen, 1993, pp. 89-104; see also Mathisen's work on inter-marriages in Mathisen, 2009, pp. 145-6.

the local African population, therefore, was decidedly different from other such situations in the West at this time. The persistent violence and long-lasting aggression speak of a much more systematic persecution and takeover than in Italy, Spain or Gaul.[696] In other words, as Salvian turned his attention to Africa, he was entering a world where the experience of barbarians had been more violent and more oppressive than in other regions. The sins of North Africans had to be proportionate to these developments.

Salvian begins the denouement of his work with a scrutiny of North Africans to explain why a region once so great was now victim to Vandal control and heretical persecution. For Salvian, the sins of the Africans were the natural explanation for their plight, just as Gallic sins had served the same function in his discussion on Gaul. He lamented that North Africa was once the richest of all provinces, but now was at the point of destruction – many of Salvian's contemporaries shared this sense of horror that sprung from North Africa's fate.[697] Already prior to the Vandal conquest, however, North Africans had been full of greed, avarice and pride, they committed frauds, forgeries and perjuries, and Salvian knows 'of no wickedness that did not abound there.'[698] Once again, however, Salvian chooses sexual behaviour as the overriding feature of North African sinfulness: being African, he said, equated to being unchaste.[699]

Carthage is singled out as a hub of sin. Salvian is descriptive in his discussion of the city, the citizens of which 'reeked … with the stench of lust, all inhaled the fetid odours of their mutual impurity.'[700] This description is reminiscent of Augustine's *Confessiones*: 'To Carthage I came, where a cauldron of unholy loves bubbled up all around me.'[701] Both men describe the city as an animate object that 'reeks' and 'bubbles', giving it agency as an organism of its own, which serves as a reminder of the

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[696] Collins, 2000, pp. 121-130.

[697] *De gub*. 7.14.2; Quodvultdeus, *De temp.* 2.5.4-5; *Chronicle 452* 108, 129 (MGH AA 9.0658-660); Prosper, *Chronicon*, s.a. 439 (MGH AA 9.0477).

[698] *De gub*. 7.15.2: 'nullam enim improbitatem scio, quae illic non redundaverit.'

[699] *De gub*. 7.16.2: 'tam infrequens enim est hoc et inusitatum, impudicum non esse Afrum, quam novum et inauditum Afrum non esse Afrum.'

[700] *De gub*. 7.17.2: 'faetebant … cuncti urbis illius cives caeno libidinis, spurcum sibimet ipsis mutuo impudicitiae nidorem inalantes.'

[701] Augustine, *Confessiones* 3.1 (PL 32.0683): 'Veni Carthaginem et circumstrepebat me undique sartago flagitiosorum amorum.'

vibrant nature of the largest city in the province of North Africa. The city remained true to this reputation of bustling, sinful life up to the moment of its fall as Salvian contrasts extreme corruption with inevitable demise: as the barbarians reached the walls of Carthage, the Christian citizens within were in the circus and the theatre, too preoccupied with their filthy pleasures to protect themselves.[702]

Salvian's depiction of Carthage feeds into the reputation that the city had in shared cultural memory. It was a centre of Roman pleasures: for instance, the circus in Carthage seated around forty thousand viewers and was the largest building in the province.[703] From an early age, Christianity had struggled to find a balance with public amusements in this region that placed strong social and cultural traditions on them: already Tertullian had addressed the problem of Christians attending the ever-popular games in Carthage.[704] Neither did the Vandal takeover stop these traditions as the circus and theatre continued to be popular well into the sixth century.[705] Such a city was a good setting for criticism far beyond mere game attendance, and Salvian added to perceptions of Carthage as a city of excess and luxury.

Having adequately set the scene for sin, therefore, Salvian introduced extreme sexual deviance that fell easily into place with the promiscuous, lust-filled city he had described. Having already argued that the many forms of sexual vice had brought divine wrath on Gaul, in Book 7 he introduced the worst deviance of all: homosexual acts.[706] He begins by quoting Rom. 1:27-28, often seen as the Pauline condemnation of homosexual behaviour. Our discussion on homosexual acts in the previous chapter showed that Romans was, fundamentally, underused by clerics in the fifth century when condemning sex between men. Salvian introducing the passage immediately for his own discussion for homosexual acts is notable. It is also worth noting that Salvian quotes only Rom. 1:27-28, omitting Rom. 1:26, which is the only mention of sex

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[702] *De gub.* 6.12.2.

[703] John H. Humphrey, *Roman Circuses: arenas for chariot racing* (London: Batsford, 1986), p. 303.

[704] Tertullian, *De spectaculis*. Amongst the accusations is Christians attending games and returning possessed by the evil spirit in *De spect.* 26.

[705] Daniel Van Slyke, 'The Devil and His Pomps in Fifth-Century Carthage: Renouncing *Spectacula* with Spectacular Imagery', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 59 (2005), pp. 53-72, at p. 54.

[706] *De gub.* 7.17.6-20.6.

between women in the Bible: 'their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural.'[707] His selective use of Romans highlights his preoccupation with men and reinforces the interpretation that for *De gub.* sexually illicit Christian men were the main audience. His use of Romans 1 is also indicative of his attitude toward homosexual behaviour as a whole: he did not seek to pick out nuances in sexual relationships with men, as many of his contemporaries did. Instead, Salvian sought to condemn overall – this is, at least, how his comments first appear.[708]

Salvian was quick to point out that Paul's criticism of those practising homosexual acts was not aimed at barbarians, but at Romans themselves.[709] Yet the extent of this vice in Carthage was much more complex than clear-cut sexual acts. Salvian's criticism is worth quoting in full:

> In a Christian city, in a church which the apostles founded by their teachings,[710] which martyrs had crowned by their passion, men took upon themselves the functions of women, without any shame to cloak their action, without the shield of modesty; as if their sin would be too slight if only the authors of these evils were stained by them, through the public knowledge of their vice it became the wrong-doing of the whole city. The entire city saw this and suffered it, the judges saw and condoned it, the people saw and applauded, and thus when fellowship in disgraceful lust was spread through the city, the general consent made it common to all. But, you say, perhaps there was at length an end to the evil and some emendation of the wrong. Who could believe or even hear calmly that men converted to the feminine not only their natural functions but even their looks, their step, their clothing and everything characteristic of the male sex and appearance? So completely was nature reversed in them that although nothing should be more shameful to men than to seem to have any feminine characteristics, nothing seemed to certain of these men more disgraceful than to seem in any respect masculine.[711]

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[707] For full discussion, see Brooten, 1996, pp. 197-214. This omission is interesting. Surely this was the perfect opportunity to criticise women who had sex with other women, but Salvian pays no attention to this.

[708] In reference to earlier discussion in this thesis, it is also worth noting Salvian's interpretation of Sodom. In *De gub.* 1.8.3-4, he retells the story of Sodom to show God's active concern for, and punishment of, sinners. Salvian only comments, however, that 'we see how excessive were their crimes, how infamous their vices, and how obscene their lusts.' Salvian's commentary on Sodom is problematic and does not offer a clear interpretation of the events or what crime was committed. Salvian's Sodom, though wicked and obscene, does not offer a clear homosexual reading.

[709] *De gub.* 7.17.3.

[710] By the fifth century, Carthage had established a claim of apostolic origin for its Christian community, although there is no evidence to support this claim.

[711] *De gub.* 7.18.2-3: 'in urbe Christiana, in urbe ecclesiastica, quam quondam doctrinis suis apostoli instituerant, quam passionibus suis martyres coronarant, viri in semetipsis feminas profitebantur, et hoc sine pudoris umbraculo, sine ullo verecundiae amictu: ac sic, quasi parum piaculi esset si malo illo

For Salvian the most horrendous act, therefore, was not only sex between men, but male gender deviance that was publically performed. This deviance took the form of female dress and female mannerisms, thus going beyond sexual acts themselves. The gender blurring caused by effeminate behaviour had a long history in causing anxiety in Roman male authors and may have been a motivating factor for fourth century imperial laws on homosexual acts likewise, as discussed in the previous chapter.[712] While the section of Romans that Salvian quotes spoke of men *relicto naturali usu feminae*, which was followed by the lust men felt for each other, Salvian went much further than the passage that seems to focus on sexual acts alone. By arguing that God had not only created man and woman as sexual counterparts biologically, but that God was also behind what we would consider to be a part of one's gender – mannerisms, speech, clothing – Salvian expanded the scope of the scriptural passage. These men's abandonment of their masculinity was more complete than the deviance expounded in Rom. 1:27-28 and thus worse.

While initially Salvian seems to depict a city where all men preferred same-sex acts, he clarifies that this was not the case:

> I should not say … that most of the people there were *molles*,[713] but that the softness of the few was the corruption of the many. Even if there are few who live disgracefully there are many who are stained by the filth of the few. As one harlot makes many commit fornication, so the abominable unions of the *molles* infect the vast majority of the people.[714]

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malorum tantum inquinarentur auctores, per publicam sceleris professionem fiebat etiam scelus integrae civitatis. Videbat quippe hoc universa urbs, et patiebatur: videbant judices, et adquiescebant: populus videbat, et adplaudebat: ac sic diffuso per totam urbem dedecoris scelerisque consortio, etsi hoc commune omnibus non faciebat actus, commune omnibus faciebat adsensus. Sed finis aliquando forsitan mali aut emendatio aliqua labis istius fuit. Quis credere aut etiam audire possit convertisse in muliebrem tolerantiam viros non usum suum tantum atque naturam, sed etiam vultum incessum habitum, et totum penitus quidquid aut in sexu est aut in visu viri: adeo versa in diversum omnia erant, ut cum viris nihil magis pudori esse oporteat quam si muliebre aliquid in se habere videantur; illic nihil viris quibusdam turpius videretur quam si in aliquo viri viderentur.'

[712] See p. 175, n. 509.

[713] *molles* – soft. Some translations, including O'Sullivan's, use the word 'effeminate' as a translation, but I find this to be inadequate. Ancient and modern ideas of 'effeminacy' contain a great number of characteristics whereas *molles* – 'the soft ones' – is more specific, referring to the perceived emotional and physical quality of women as less hard than their male counterparts (*molles* does not refer to all aspects and ideas of effeminacy as a whole, therefore).

[714] *De gub*. 7.19.2: 'quamvis ego illic non modicum de hoc malo, sed nimis fuisse dicam; non quia molles plurimi fuerint, sed quia mollities paucorum, labes est plurimorum. Nam etsi pauci sint qui dedecorosa sustineant, multi sunt qui paucorum sordibus polluantur. Sicut enim una meretrix multos

This passage is particularly interesting for two reasons. Firstly, Salvian attests to the idea of infectious vice and how sexually sinful behaviour could spread like a disease from one to many. This active, contagious nature of vice has been central to much of the evidence examined in this thesis, and it is crucial in understanding Salvian likewise. Secondly, in his commentary on Carthaginian men, Salvian appears to attack the typical *cinaedus* of the Roman world: a man who acted and dressed in effeminate fashion, and who was marked by the assumption that he enjoyed and sought anal penetration by other men, although he was likewise capable of seducing other men's wives likewise.[715] This effeminised male is in contrast to Salvian's use of Pauline scripture, which condemns sex between men as a whole and does not focus on either party specifically.

The tradition that was so dominant in other clerics' discussions of homosexual activity is to be found in Salvian likewise. Indeed, even when Salvian quotes Pauline scripture that condemns both the insertive and receptive parties, Salvian emphasises the receptive male more.[716] Salvian sees receptive males as leading other men astray. This is a curious interpretation of sexual dynamics between men as it seems to suggest that active desire to penetrate another man existed only when the opportunity was actively offered by the receptive half. In other words, every man in Carthage had a dormant homosexual desire within him that was waiting to be prompted. Without meaning to, Salvian is testifying to a mutual homoerotic discourse of desire in which the softened men desire more masculine men, and the feeling is mutual when the opportunity arises. By this logic, homosexual acts would be permanently extinguished if the *molles* were done away with – without their presence, no man would desire another. In Salvian's interpretation, therefore, homosexual behaviour is circumstantial but dormant in everyone. This, likewise, is in concurrence with the homoerotic desires that we explored in Chapter 4, where desire was seen as a natural part of homosocial relations.

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fornicatores facit, sic ferme plurimam populi partem inquinat paucorum effeminatorum abominanda permixtio.'

[715] Williams, 1999, pp. 175-176.

[716] Salvian also quotes 1 Cor. 6:9-10 in an abbreviated form in *De gub*. 7.19.2: 'Neither … male prostitutes [nor] sodomites … will inherit the kingdom of God.' The NRSV edition has the word 'sodomites' for ἀρσενοκοῖται, which should be instantly dismissed as a suitable translation.

What can one make of Salvian's discussion of homosexual behaviour? Should it be seen as satire working with hyperbolised ideas that fit a city with a lustful reputation? Furthermore, is Salvian evidence of cross-dressing men in Carthage, or was this his vision of proportionate deviance to account for the capture of a great city? Here the physical distance between Gaul and North Africa, not to mention any potential difficulties of communication between these provinces due to recent warfare, becomes significant. The reputation of Carthage certainly offered Salvian leeway in adding a flavour of sexual misbehaviour in his treatise with the hope that his audience would deem it plausible. Yet to claim that Salvian chose North Africa as the home of deviance merely because his audience did not know any better would be an oversimplification. As discussed above, Marseilles continued to be a successful trading centre in the fifth century and, importantly for us, the trade between Marseilles and North Africa continued and African products began to take on a growing share of the market in Marseilles during the fifth century.[717] Communication therefore continued between these regions even amidst ongoing conquest at both ends. News and stories of the events in North Africa reached Marseilles and, presumably, the locals had access to eyewitnesses in the form of merchants and exiles. The people who had access to such newcomers included Salvian and members of his audience. Salvian did not presume that the readers of his work would take him at face value.

Salvian's depiction of Carthage should instead be interpreted as a premonition: Gauls were already committing sexual vice, as Salvian had detailed earlier in *De gub*. North African Christians had committed all of these sins and even worse ones, for which they had now been struck down by God on an unprecedented scale. The purpose of Salvian's rather bizarre discussion of homosexual behaviour in North Africa was to show Gallic Christians a future which may take place in Gaul too if his audience did not correct their ways. A life of luxury and sexual indulgence was a slippery slope – Gauls in areas not controlled by barbarian forces still stood a chance of avoiding the fate of North Africa or Aquitaine. Moreover, Salvian undoubtedly expected his vision of gender deviance to strike a chord with his audience: even in traditional ideas of male/male sex, men dressing up as women and mimicking their movements and mannerisms was

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[717] Loseby, 1992, p. 172. African economy overall seems to have done well under Vandal rule. See Merrills and Miles, 2010, pp. 141-176.

scandalous. While Salvian, therefore, envisaged North Africa as a cesspool of depravity, which manifested itself in the forms of homosexual acts and gender deviance, his cautionary vision was intended to threaten Gaul with a bleak future, rather than prove a history for North Africa.

The dubious realism of Salvian's account of North Africa is highlighted further by a comparison with works that were written at the source itself. Quodvultdeus (390s – c.457),[718] who wrote in the 420s and 430s as a deacon and became bishop of Carthage c. 437, offers an alternative depiction on the conduct of Christians there.[719] The surviving works from Quodvultdeus come from very different stages of his life: his earliest works date to mid-430s Carthage, whereas his later works come from a decade later when he had been exiled to Naples by the new Vandal rulers.[720] His Carthaginian writings reflect his experiences as a local religious figure while the last of his works are his attempts to prove that the world was going to end in sixty years' time – a stance that seems to have sprung from Quodvultdeus's own hardships.[721]

Yet in his writings, which likewise blame African Christians themselves for the calamities they have experienced,[722] Quodvultdeus does not single out sex as the principal sin. Rather he focuses on greed and other non-carnal worldly pleasures as the cause of God's wrath, made corporeal in the form of the Vandal conquerors: 'You pile up your money for your own temporal welfare. After a little while, a fever comes along and you are forced to die. Where is that which you bought?'[723] This criticism of worldly habits was a recurring theme in the writings of Quodvultdeus.[724] Salvian is therefore right in his own way: there was tension within the Christian community of Carthage about how they lived and how they behaved as Christians, but Salvian was mistaken in

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[718] *PCBE* 1, Quodvultdeus 5, pp. 947-29.

[719] For Quodvultdeus, see Van Slyke, 2003; Finn, 2004.

[720] For Quodvultdean works, see the summary in Quasten, 1986, pp. 501-503.

[721] Van Slyke, 2003, pp. 140-141.

[722] *De temp.* 1.4.11: 'What such a good thing, dearly beloved, have we done; or rather, on the contrary, what evils have we not done? […] This was no work of an enemy, of barbarians, rather of each man himself.' = 'Quid tale, dilectissimi, fecimus, immo e contrario quae mala non fecimus? […] Nec ab hostibus, nec a barbaris, sed a se ipso … consentiendo.'

[723] *De temp.* 2.9.5-6 (CCSL 60.0481): 'pro salute tua temporale pecuniam congregas. Post paululum febre adveniente exire cogeris. Ubi est quod emisti?'

[724] *De symbolo* 1.2.1-10 (CCSL 60.0307-0308).

its identification, or the two men had differing opinions on sins committed by lay Christians and which sins were the most damning or relevant. The sexual habits of Christians in Gaul, in other words, spurred Salvian to imagine sexual deviance elsewhere.

Yet Salvian and Quodvultdeus also shared opinions. Very akin to Salvian, while still in Carthage, Quodvultdeus questioned: 'Where is Africa, which for the whole world was like a garden of pleasures? … Was she not chastised more sharply, the more unwilling she was to take on discipline to remedy those evils, when other provinces had reformed themselves?'[725] The notion that Africa had suffered more than other provinces was not out of place – as noted above, the Vandal occupation of North Africa came with more violence, more persecution and more distress on the local population than the coming of barbarian peoples in other parts of the West. Tellingly, once Quodvultdeus had relocated to Italy, he found it difficult to convince the local audience of the disasters to come, perhaps due to Italy's comparably better political stability that enhanced people's confidence in the future there.[726] In a similar way, Salvian was attempting to convince his audience at Marseilles and the rest of Gaul of his vision of history, current affairs and the future. Quodvultdeus and Salvian agreed that God had brought the heathens upon them as punishment for Christian sins – what these two clerics thought these sins of Africans were, however, differed.

The excessive depiction of homosexual acts in North Africa, as given by Salvian, is the peak of his moralistic attacks. This sexual vice cannot be outdone by any other crime,[727] and Salvian finished *De gub.* with a concluding chapter in which he reminded Christians that by their actions they were the masters of their own fate.[728] As mentioned above, the end of Book 8 is sadly lost. Yet, in this final book, redemption and salvation were attainable by changing one's ways, reinforcing the interpretation given here that Salvian's discussion on homosexual acts in Carthage sought to be a warning for his

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[725] *De temp.* 2.5.4-5: 'ubi est Africa, quae toto mundo fuit velut hortus deliciarum? … Nonne tanto haec acerbius castigata est, quanto aliis provinciis emendatis ista corrigendo noluit suscipere disciplinam?'

[726] Van Slyke, 2003, pp. 105, 199-200.

[727] cf. Augustine's comments that homosexual acts were the ultimate sin, of which one could not even speak in *De bon. conj.* 8 (CSEL 41.0198) as well as the discussion in Section 4.1 above.

[728] *De gub.* 8.1.2.

Gallic audience of excessive sexual licence. After all, polygyny was already rife. Here one is reminded of Maximus, examined in 2.1, who voiced similar views of Christians being able to influence their fates by more pious behaviour. As with Salvian, also Maximus was speaking in reaction to war.

To summarise, the account Salvian gives of the sexual vices of Christians offers a varied picture. His complaints of polygyny are in line with evidence of polygyny in other sources – only his regionally specific claims should be disputed. His assessment of homosexual acts in North Africa, however, are harder to view as historically accurate, yet this does not mean that homosexual acts were not to be found in fifth century North Africa. Indeed, our discussion below will suggest otherwise. The exaggeration of homosexual acts is rooted in having to explain how a city as mighty as Carthage could fall – only a mighty sin could explain such a catastrophe. Trauma theory applied to authors elsewhere in this thesis is not amiss in a reading of Salvian either: he needed to re-interpret the world around himself in order to understand shocking events. Yet, Salvian did not only discuss the sexual behaviour of his fellow Christians, but he also explored this topic amongst the Goths and Vandals, and it is to this contrast that we now turn to further analyse sexual *mores* in his work.

5.3 *PUDICI BARBARI:* SEXUAL MORALITY AND THE BARBARIANS

The sexual conduct of the Vandals and Visigoths who took over much of the political landscape of the fifth century West did not go undiscussed in *De gub.*, but forms an important part of the discussion offered in the treatise. The idea of a mirror image is at full force here: Salvian placed his ideas of ideal sexual conduct on barbarians to discuss the behaviour that he found lacking in Roman Christians. When looking for outright fabrication in *De gub.,* it is to be found here, as there is no evidence to support Salvian's claims of barbarian chastity. This will become particularly apparent as I compare his allegations with those of his contemporaries, who also made observations on the sexual behaviour of barbarians.

When discussing the sexual habits of outsiders, Roman writers had always preferred extremes: a tribe was known to be either completely depraved or commendably chaste. For instance, Lucretius described barbarians as being promiscuous to the point of free

love, and Strabo identified the people of Ierne (Ireland) as prone to incest with their mothers and sisters. For people north of the Rhine, depictions varied. Diodorus Siculus claimed that German peoples took pleasure in various homosexual acts, and Ammianus Marcellinus, writing in the late fourth century, agreed by stating that young male warriors of Germanic tribes were forced into sex with older men unless they killed a bear with their own hands, an act which exempted them from the ordeal of forced copulation.[729] In contrast, Tacitus identified Germans as generally being content with only one wife, which for him was remarkable amongst barbarian nations.[730] Sexual behaviour had a long history in the construction of 'the other' for an audience that often had not seen the barbarians that these authors were writing about.[731] These discussions are not necessarily entirely fictive: smaller states, chiefdoms, bands and tribes statistically have lower percentages of monogamy and a wider use of polygyny than larger states.[732] For Roman and Greek authors, therefore, barbarian sexual norms may have been different than the SIM of their own societies.

The physical distance between the intended audience and the mythicized object vanished when barbarian groups moved to occupy parts of the Roman Empire. The 'other' was no longer on the fringes – the other was within. Salvian's approach to these barbarians was to show them as the counterpoint of Roman Christians. From this follows that in *De gub.*, if Christians committed adultery, fornication and engaged in same-sex acts, the Goths and Vandals did not. Salvian wished to show that these people, who were either heretics or pagans, still managed to be superior to Romans even without knowledge of divine law. The role of divine law in *De gub.* is crucial. Salvian perceived divine law to be what differentiated the culpability of Roman sinners from barbarian sinners. As barbarians did not know the true divine law, their sinning was always less bad than that of Romans, who *did* possess knowledge of divine law.[733] This goal is further demonstrated by Salvian's leniency towards 'Arianism': he excuses the Goths of their heresy by stating that their only fault had been listening to corrupt

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[729] Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 5.925-1090; Strabo, *Geographica* 4.5.4; Diodorus, *Bibliotheca historia* 1.5.23; Amm. Marc., *Res gestae* 31.9.5.

[730] Tacitus, *Germania* 1.18. See also Gruen, 2011, pp. 159-178.

[731] Edwards, 1993, pp. 20-21.

[732] Scheidel, 2009, p. 283.

[733] See *De gub.* 4.13, 4.19, 5.1-3.

teachers blindly.[734] The more likely reasoning behind Salvian's tolerance towards Arianism is, however, literary. Salvian never fiercely attacks the Goths for their religion but rather finds an excuse for their ignorance as his underlying goal is to paint the Goths as fundamentally superior to Catholic Romans. Furthermore, Salvian's decision to choose North Africa as the setting for the most depraved forms of sexual acts may have been motivated by a desire to recreate the barrier that historically had existed between the example of otherness and the audience. However, as is discussed below, recreating this barrier would have been difficult in mid-fifth century Marseilles.

Salvian further claims that the people of Gaul preferred Gothic rule to that of Rome, which had been inherently corrupt.[735] This claim of life being better under barbarian rule was echoed by other fifth century figures – for instance, some fifteen years earlier Orosius wrote that as barbarians settled down and turned from warfare to agriculture, the Romans preferred this new life to the old one.[736] However, it also has been noted that Salvian was largely ignorant of Goths, their culture and their customs, as his focus was on Romans, and his attitude towards barbarians is ultimately conditioned by his negative views of his own people.[737] Here I will examine Salvian's assertions of sexual habits amongst barbarians, interpreting these as literary constructions that intended to discuss Roman habits, and which do not reflect barbarian realism. This same consideration should be given to his assertions that life under barbarian rule was preferable as the situation was undoubtedly more nuanced than Salvian's discussion of it.

SEXUAL HYPERBOLE AND SURREALISM

As we have seen in Salvian's discussion on slaves, one of the tools he employed in *De gub.* was the elevation of social inferiors to criticise Roman behaviour. This same

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[734] *De gub.* 5.2.4.

[735] *De gub.* 5.8.3.

[736] Orosius, *HAP* 7.41.7. In the East, see also Priscus, *fr.* 11.2, translated in R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus, and Malchus* (Cambridge: Francis Cairns, 1981), pp. 268-269: '[the Greek] now enjoyed a better life than he had previously. He continued, saying that after war men amongst the Scythians live at ease, each enjoying his own possessions and troubling others or being troubled not at all or very little. But among the Romans, since on account of their tyrants not all men carry weapons, they place their hope of safety in others.'

[737] Cleland, 1970, p. 271.

dynamic is found in Salvian's assessment of barbarians. He applauded the Goths in Gaul for their modest sexual behaviour, claiming that 'the barbarians themselves are offended by our vices. Among the Goths no one is permitted to indulge in fornication; only the Romans in their land, by national and titular prerogative, are allowed this vice.'[738] He went on to criticise Romans for being proud of fornicating, complaining that some men call fornication 'a distinction and an ornament'[739] – indeed Salvian seems to hint that sexual virility beyond the marital bed continued to be a mark of manhood amongst Christian Gauls, as Augustine and others likewise said for men in their communities.[740]

When discussing the Vandals, conversely, Salvian went even further than an end in fornication: he claimed that sexual vices had been completely abolished by the Vandals in North Africa.[741] He argues that homosexual acts had never crossed a Vandal's mind and indeed such activities ceased upon their arrival: 'They entered the wealthiest cities, where such vices [homosexual acts] were common, and … they have abominated the illicit acts of men.'[742] Once the barbarians had settled in North Africa, enjoying its wealth and riches, 'not one of them was rendered soft (*mollis*),' Salvian marvelled and added, 'Does that seem a small matter? Certainly the Romans of noble birth made this softness a regular practice. What more have I to add? Not one of the Vandals was polluted by the incest[743] of the soft Romans about him.'[744] Not only does Salvian return to his attack on the wealthy, but in this passage he also returns to the notion of homosexual acts as a form of Roman self-indulgence. According to Salvian, these pleasures would have been foreign to the Vandals, and even when surrounded by Romans they did not adopt their questionable sexual habits.

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[738] *De gub.* 7.6.2: 'offenduntur barbari ipsi impuritatibus nostris. Esse inter Gothos non licet scortatorem Gothum: soli inter eos praejudicio nationis ac nominis permittuntur impuri esse Romani.'

[739] *De gub.* 7.6.2: 'discrimen est apud nos decus.'

[740] See the discussion in Section 4.2.

[741] *De gub.* 7.21.2.

[742] *De gub.* 7.21.1: 'qui ingressi urbem opulentissimas, ubi haec omnia passim agebantur … abominati enim sunt virorum impuritates.'

[743] *incestum* – an impurity. A better translation would read: 'Not one of the Vandals was polluted by the impurity of the soft Romans.'

[744] *De gub.* 7.20.4: 'Igitur in tanta affluentia rerum atque luxuria nullus eorum mollis effectus est. Nunquid parum videtur? Certe familiariter etiam nobiles hoc fuere Romani. Sed quid adhuc addo? Nullus vel qui Romanorum illic mollium pollueretur incestu?'

Salvian's contemporary Prosper of Aquitaine (d. 455), however, hints otherwise. According to Prosper, the Vandal king Geiseric (428-477) had a favourite youth when in Africa, by the name of Paulillus, who 'was wholly agreeable to the king on account of his fine body and refined nature.'[745] Geiseric tried to convert the boy to Arianism but in vain, after which Geiseric had the boy beaten and enslaved. Prosper's commentary on the matter is fleeting and is not found in other contemporary sources – the reliability of Prosper, therefore, is questionable, but what is significant is that while Salvian was praising Vandal chastity, another writer based not far from Salvian was circulating rumours that the Vandal king appreciated the beauty of young men and had picked out favourites.[746] Prosper's note on both the physical beauty of the youth as well as his intellectual capacity are wholly in line with pre-Christian Roman views on the appeal of young men as sexual partners.[747] The name of the youth – Paulillus, the little one – also further seems to suggest the boy's submissive character and his role as the object of sexual desire. As was discussed at length in the preceding chapter, we may again observe how Roman ideas of sex were incorporated into the writings of Christian men, such as Prosper.

If Prosper were to be believed, it would seem that the Vandals were not as immune to Roman views on sexual conduct and social moralism as Salvian would like us to think. Furthermore, assimilation takes time, and when Emperor Justinian's forces set out to reconquer Africa in 533, sixth century historian Procopius noted that the Vandal elite had enjoyed luxurious lives of banquets and abundant sex during their time in North Africa.[748] Excavations of late antique structures in Carthage also suggest sustained use of amusements under Vandal rule, including venues of entertainment such as theatres and circuses, but also the townhouses and large villas of the Carthaginian suburbs,

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[745] Prosper, *Chronicon,* s.a. 437 (MGH AA 9.0476): 'pro elegentia formae atque ingenii admodum regi acceptus'. Murray's translation is somewhat misleading: 'very dear to the king'. The Latin appears more neutral than this ('admodum … acceptus') and I have altered the translation accordingly.

[746] Prosper studied in Marseilles in the 420s, and moved to Rome in the 430s. On his life, see Steven Muhlberger, *The Fifth-century Chroniclers: Prosper, Hydatius, and the Gallic Chronicler of 452* (Leeds: F. Cairns, 1990), pp. 48-55 and N. W. James, 'Leo the Great and Prosper of Aquitaine: A Fifth Century Pope and His Advisor', *Journal of Theological Studies* 44.2 (1993), pp. 554-84.

[747] For more on Roman views on sex with young men, see Section 4.1 above.

[748] Procopius, *Bella* 4.6.5-9.

which would have been occupied by the Vandal elite.[749] These reconstructions do not depict the Vandals as the uncorrupted believers that Salvian makes them out to be, nor do the Vandals seem immune to Roman culture.

Salvian's account of Vandal moralism is problematic on further points, namely in his discussion of prostitution in North Africa. After having praised Vandals for not having sex with other men, he makes note that they did not fornicate with women either, making no use of brothels.[750] From this, he moves onto a curious claim: the Vandals had done away with prostitution by forcing harlots to marry and, in this way, these women's excessive desire for sex had been successfully limited to marital intercourse.[751] This view of the prostitute as a woman who has chosen her occupation because of her excessive and uncontrollable desire for coitus corresponds to what some historians have described as a type of sexuality in ancient and medieval perceptions.[752] However, Salvian does not say to whom these prostitutes were married to. Indeed, one cannot immediately think of men who would volunteer to marry women, who were seen as polluting and inferior. No option seems likely: did local men marry these women or did Vandal warriors? Salvian does not say. David Lambert has pointed out that, whatever may have happened in North Africa at the time, the Vandals were a devout people as their persecution inadvertently demonstrates, so they very well may have had purity laws of their own.[753] However, further study into this topic suggests that even if such laws had existed, of which there is no proof, they certainly were not observed.

The sexual licence exercised by the Vandals may be attested in further sources where neither chastity nor purity may be found. From the letters of Leo the Great, we find evidence of sexual violence in Vandal Africa. One of Leo's earliest letters is addressed

[749] Frank M. Clover, 'Carthage and the Vandals', in *Excavations at Carthage 1978, Conducted by the University of Michigan*, ed. by John H. Humphrey (Ann Arbor, MI: Kelsey Museum, 1982), pp. 1-22. Reprinted in Frank M. Clover, *The Late Roman West and the Vandals* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1993).

[750] *De gub.* 7.21.1: 'plus adhuc addo: abominati etiam feminarum, horruerunt lustra ac lupanaria, horruerunt concubitus contactusque meretricum.'

[751] *De gub.* 7.22.4-5.

[752] David M. Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 66-68; Ruth Mazo Karras, 'Prostitution and the Question of Sexual Identity in Medieval Europe', *Journal of Women's History* 11.2 (1999), pp. 159-77, at pp. 161-3.

[753] Lambert, 2000, pp. 111-112.

to the bishops of Mauretania, in which he advices the local clergy on how to deal with women who have been raped, and we have examined this letter already above.[754] This letter dates to 446, seventeen years after the initial crossing over from Spain. Leo laments that barbarians have raped women – we do not know which barbarians are in question, but they may have been Vandals. If the rapists were Vandals, then the letter is telling of continuing social disturbances seventeen years after the invasion as the rape of local women by Vandal men remained a source of conflict between the invaders and the local population.

On a more dubious note, we also have Victor of Vita's account of the Vandal persecution. While the vast majority of the horrors recorded in Victor's work take the form of brutal violence, he also has anecdotes that focus on sexual abuse and humiliation. He tells the story of a Vandal man who forced two of his Catholic slaves to marry one another, not knowing that the Catholic female slave had vowed to preserve her chastity. On their wedding night, the girl Maxima convinced her new husband to refrain from sexual intercourse, and he subsequently converted to Catholicism along with his friends. The slaves then ran away to monasteries and a nunnery respectively, but their angered master captured them. The Vandal then tortured them by forcing them to have sex with each other.[755] In a later chapter Victor relates the story of nuns who underwent a physical examination by male Vandals and female midwives 'to inspect and feel their private parts', which was followed by torture as the Vandals persistently demanded confessions that the Catholic bishops were having sex with the nuns 'and their clerics too.'[756]

Unlike Leo's letter on rape victims, which was a response to an enquiry that stemmed from real events, Victor's writings serve a different agenda. His *Historia* is an attempt to demonstrate the horrors of the persecution, perhaps in hope to elicit outside intervention in North Africa, and at least partially intending to continue the tradition of

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[754] Leo, *Ep.* 12.8.

[755] *HP* 1.10 (CSEL 7.0013-15).

[756] *HP* 2.7 (CSEL 7.0033): 'Praecepit deinde sacras virgines congregari, dirigens Vandalos cum suae gentis obstetricibus ad inspicienda et contrectanda contra iura verecundiae verecunda pudoris, ubi nec matres aderant nec aliqua matronarum. … Quibus inter supplicia dicebatur: "dicite quoniam episcopi vobiscum concumbunt et clerici vestri.'

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North African martyrologies.[757] By contrasting Salvian's account of Vandal sexual purity with other fifth century sources, therefore, we begin to see the fallacy painted in *De gub*. Salvian was not very interested in any kind of accuracy when depicting the Vandals – in fact, his writings demonstrate what has been called 'a lack of interest in Germanic society.'[758] Salvian was not asking what these barbarians did in their provinces – he asked what they could do for *him* as a Christian moralist. It is clear from a collective scrutiny of sources that any high praise for exceptional chastity is fiction.

The disruptions caused by barbarian presence posed real problems for everyday life as Leo and Victor attest to, and Salvian's vision of a world free of prostitution speaks of his vision for an ideal Gaul rather than any events that we can prove were happening in North Africa. In the background of *De gub*. is a series of complex confrontations and tensions in Gaul, reflected in Salvian's attack on the people there. It is in this ethos that Salvian focused on modest sexual behaviour not only as a requirement for divine benevolence, but as what he argued should have been a badge of Christian behaviour by default – he marked sex as a marker of Christian identity, and through a discussion of barbarian *mores* was able to critique those of his own people.

Central to Salvian's praise of barbarian sexual habits, finally, is the continuation of illicit sex in Gaul during wartime. The crisis that warfare had inflicted on Gaul had not changed the sexual sinning that had previously occurred there, and this vitality of sin in otherwise dire circumstances particularly bothered Salvian. He could not see how calamities failed to conform people to a more pious life. He lamented: 'Among chaste barbarians, we are unchaste.'[759] This juxtaposition emphasises the religious goal of *De gub*., as a call to reform was timelier than ever due to socio-political developments. When lamenting the fate of Trier, which perhaps was Salvian's hometown and the most important city in Gaul, and which was sacked several times during the first half of the fifth century, Salvian added: 'What followed [after sacks]? What I say is incredible. The continuance of calamities in that city caused an increase in crimes there.'[760] This

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[757] Shanzer, 2004, pp. 272-3; Merrills and Miles, 2010, pp. 186-188.

[758] Clover, 1982, p. 6.

[759] *De gub*. 7.6.2: 'inter pudicos barbaros impudici sumus.'

[760] *De gub*. 6.13.5: 'sed quid plura? Incredibile est quod loquor. Adsiduitas illic calamitatum augmentum illic criminum fuit.'

is reminiscent of Maximus of Turin's complaints examined in Section 2.1, where the pillaging and raiding in Turin caused locals to blackmail and steal from each other. Perhaps something similar had occurred in Trier. Communal breakdowns of these types caused chaos and anxiety, and neither did such circumstances encourage desperate people to act piously. Contexts such as these, caused by warfare and violent aggression, lie at the heart of *De gub.*, accounting for the depiction of barbarians' sexual habits: these depictions reflect the behaviour of Christians, but not of barbarians.

The barbarians in *De gub.* should not be viewed as active participants in Salvian's narrative, but rather as passive objects that Salvian used for his own ends. There is no historical factuality in Salvian's depiction of the sexual chastity of the Goths and Vandals that we may discern, and other accounts contradict his views on these peoples. In terms of Christians, however, we find evidence of their illicit sexual habits in numerous other Christian texts – all seeking to moralise and thus perhaps exaggerate problems, but as attested in this thesis much of the discussion on sexual ethics was placed in real sources of tension in Christian communities. One half of Salvian's observations are on his own community, and the other half is fabrication, and as such we may now ask ourselves why was sex so important for Salvian? This question may be answered by studying Salvian's ideas of Christian chastity and the nature of sin.

5.4 SALVIAN'S SEXUAL IDEALISM IN CONTEXT

The discussion above has shown the ways in which the recurring theme of sex in Salvian's writings worked as a complex and multi-layered literary tool. As Salvian interpreted political events in a cause/effect formula, he sought to determine what the cause had been. In answering this question, Salvian highlighted sex. However, this conclusion was not necessarily self-evident when assessing contemporary events, as shown by Salvian's contemporaries who considered other faults as the cause, like Quodvultdeus who emphasised greed instead, or writers whose accounts on sexual behaviour amidst Romans and barbarians were less extreme than the version given by Salvian. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Salvian also discussed excessive taxation, corrupt officials, *spectacula*, as other main types of sinful Christian behaviour. Here, I have focused on his vision of Christian and barbarian sexual *mores*, and will now discuss why this topic was so important to him.

For Salvian, sexual vice was contagious and active. 'We know clearly that very often one bad man is the destruction of many,' he said as a warning.[761] He also used the medical imagery we have come across before, likening Christians to patients who make their own condition worse through vice, but blame the doctor for their woes.[762] Sex was not the only type of vice that could spread, as the sinful euphoria of the games also could cause this, turning people ogling at displays into adulterers – even in these sins, therefore, the aura of sexual sinning remains.[763] Controlling the sexual habits of people was an impossible task, and because sexual crimes could be committed in secret, it in particular posed a threat of contaminating vice. Salvian considered secrecy to be a problem when discussing homosexual acts in North Africa, but almost wistfully says that if the vice had been contained to private quarters, it would not have polluted as many as it did.[764] He concludes that 'even if they who live indecently are few, there are many tainted by the baseness of the few.'[765] Because of the active, contaminating nature of sexual vice, sex had to be addressed in order to save Christians from it. This approach we have seen in many of his contemporaries.

A further factor influencing the discussion of sex is warfare – indeed, it is unrest that has prompted the anxiety that in turn has inspired Salvian to write the treatise. As military action represented divine wrath, it was unthinkable to Salvian that in response Christians had not changed their ways. 'No portion of the Roman world or of the Roman name, however gravely struck by heavenly punishment, was ever fully corrected.'[766] A time of crisis had highlighted the areas in which Christian conduct was lacking, but this crisis did not correct behaviour. In this thesis I have discussed the importance of tradition in Christian moralistic discourses – in shaping it and in being the base for all Christian commentary on it. Salvian's comments on lack of change attest to this. The

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[761] *De gub.* 6.1.2: 'evidenter agnoscimus etiam unum saepissime malum hominem perditionem esse multorum.'

[762] *De gub.* 5.1.3.

[763] *De gub.* 6.3.5.

[764] *De gub.* 7.18.1.

[765] *De gub.* 7.19.2: 'Nam etsi pauci sint qui dedecorosa sustineant, multi sunt qui paucorum sordibus polluantur.'

[766] *De gub.* 6.16.1: 'Neque ullam penitus Romani orbis aut Romani nominis portionem, quamlibet graviter plagis caelestibus caesam, umquam fuisse correctam.'

presence of barbarians thus enabled a moralising discourse that attempted to re-enforce ideas of Christian sexual conduct, as envisioned by Salvian. Lastly, Salvian discussed sex because it was a pre-existing source of conflict between Christian idealism and everyday sexual reality, of which Salvian was very aware.

Yet we can take the sex in *De gub.* further than this by considering the context in which it was written – albeit this discussion will be largely hypothetical, but it allows us to explore the text from new angles. As such, let us briefly discuss Marseilles and its experience of war.

MARSEILLES AND WAR

Salvian is often considered outside the context of his surroundings. This is not entirely surprising, considering how little we know of his life and how little information he gives on contemporary Marseilles. However, I would like to bring into this discussion what we know of Marseilles in the mid-fifth century. An understanding of the city will enable us to make some suggestions on Salvian's inspirations for writing *De gub*.

Firstly, Marseilles did not partake in the warfare that has been so central to much of the discussion here. The most useful study on late antique Marseilles has been conducted by Simon Loseby, whose work has studied the city's developments from the fourth into the sixth century.[767] Marseilles was besieged in 412/3 and was adjoined to the Visigothic Kingdom in 477 by the Visigothic king Euric. Between 412 and 477, however, Marseilles enjoyed a relatively peaceful era. This may be surprising considering the decrepit depiction of the world given in *De gub*., but perhaps this connection is significant. Since Marseilles flourished during this time, as the archaeological evidence suggests, Salvian may have been prompted, in part, by the laxity and comparative comfort of the local populace. Indeed, comfortable conditions in Marseilles in contrast to news of destruction elsewhere may have prompted anxiety over the different circumstances. This is a suggestion, yet, I would argue, that we must note the contrast of his treatise, prompted by wartime suffering, with the fact that

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[767] Loseby, 1993.

Marseilles itself did not appear to suffer much during this time. Salvian clearly thought that the people of Marseilles *should* be suffering *more*.

Secondly, suffering must nevertheless have been visible to the local populace of Marseilles by an influx of refugees. After all, Salvian was a refugee himself and he is unlikely to have been the only one to relocate in or around Marseilles. During the time of *De gub.*'s composition in the 440s one of Salvian's contemporaries, Quodvultdeus of Carthage who has been discussed above, was also a refugee, moving to Naples from Carthage – fleeing the city that Salvian depicted in such negative terms. Speculation has occurred as to whether Salvian himself ever visited Carthage, but of this there is no proof. His comments on Carthage are mainly polemical and moralising and do not offer any level of detail that would suggest that he was familiar with the city himself. However, we cannot rule out that some refugees from Carthage post-439 resettled in Marseilles, as indeed throughout the 430s people had fled North Africa in response to the Vandal advancement.[768]

The above also helps us appreciate the attack on wealthy men in more nuanced ways. Lascivious lifestyles may have felt particularly out of place when other parts of Gaul were devastated and when refugees were arriving in Marseilles. Salvian also may have used these realities to offer a reading that like Carthage, which had enjoyed prestige and comforts up to the very moment of its capture, Marseilles could become under attack despite having enjoyed relative comfort. Carthage, therefore, served as a warning for the people of Marseilles. Neither was Salvian the only person to fear this as his work testifies to the fear and anxiety in his own community over contemporary affairs: thus, at least some were frightened over an uncertain future. The unique circumstances of Marseilles itself are significant for the complex analysis of contemporary society in *De gub*. The sex in *De gub*., likewise, is most illustrative of sexual *mores* in Marseilles itself than anywhere else.

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[768] See Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen, 'Displaced Peoples: Reflections from Late Antiquity on a Contemporary Crisis', *Pacifica* 24.1 (2011), pp. 29-42.

Referring back to Salvian's use of Matt. 5:28 for his definition of adultery being committed by lustful gazes, he added that from this passage 'we can fully understand how chaste our Saviour wished us to be.'[769] Salvian did not want to see any lingering gazes on the streets of Marseilles. The Christian ideal in *De gub.* is strict, especially if we choose to accept that Salvian wrote in a society where many men still exercised pre-Christian sexual licence. At the end of Book 7 of *De gub.*, Salvian makes a final appeal to Christian marital monogyny, by first stating that Romans are still entrapped in their desire to fornicate but not, of course, the admirable Vandals who wished women 'to be wives to none but their husbands' and, furthermore, Vandal men had sex only with their wives, thus basing their laws[770] after the pattern of the divine law.[771] In this way Salvian marks the boundaries of licit sexual conduct, summarising clearly for his audience what kind of sexual behaviour was allowed within the new religion. Yet this was not the end of his treatise, for he still added a telling remark: 'I know what I say may seem intolerable to some, but I must act according to the reason of things, not to the whims of wishes.'[772] The problems of polygyny, adultery, fornication, sex with one's slaves, and so forth, which Salvian speaks of, were the sexual licences taken for granted by Gallic men.

The extent of actual sexual deviance may not be gauged, and most certainly Salvian exaggerated when he condemned all Romans of a behaviour or an entire region of a behaviour. Yet Salvian's audience also needed to relate to his work in order for it to have any real effect, and the true value of *De gub.* is not in its depiction of Christians as fornicators, but of Christians at a crossroads: in a society that was being increasingly defined through Christian values, people found themselves between a more relaxed secular life and a stricter Christian one. In other words, Salvian's work is demonstrative of a struggle between old habits and new ideals. The limitations that Christian *mores*

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[769] *De gub*. 3.8.6: 'hinc intellegere plene possumus quam castos nos esse salvator iusserit.'

[770] On the hypothetical existence of Vandal purity laws, see discussion in Section 5.3 above.

[771] *De gub*. 7.22.6: 'qui et feminas nullis volunt esse feminas nisi maritis suis, et viros nullis volunt mulieribus esse masculos nisi uxoribus suis; qui evagari obscenas libidines extra legitimum torum non sinunt, leges suas scilicet ad divinae legis regulam dirigentes.'

[772] *De gub*. 7.23.1: 'Scio quia intolerabilia quibusdam videntur ista quae dicimus: sed ratione rerum agendum est, non libidine voluntatum.'

had placed on the sex lives of lay Christians were being met with resistance, and Salvian knew that his call to reform would be met with opposition. But for Salvian divine laws were not optional: change had to come. Reflecting on the lives of Christians who did not follow divine commands, Quodvultdeus had predicted eventual doom: 'The world that they love cannot remain.'[773] This was Salvian's stance likewise as he wrote in 440s Marseilles, where the time of sexual liberty had not yet passed in practice, although from the point of view of a presbyter monk it certainly should have. *De gub.*, therefore, is a telling piece of an on-going conflict between Christian idealism and the sexual habits of lay Christians.

The barbarians at first seem far removed from these aims, but Salvian's work functions by inverting social hierarchies: the wealthy believe themselves to be superior to slaves and indeed they should be but in fact they are not, just as Romans believe themselves to be better than barbarians and indeed again they should be, but again they are not. In this topsy-turvy world, sin escalates within the hierarchy – the closer to the top one is, the greater the number of sins committed, especially sexual ones. As has been argued here, it is in the most privileged class that Salvian appears to have seen the most reluctance to conform to a Christian way of life, and especially to Christian sexual ethics. Elite men were still enjoying their traditional sexual privileges allocated to them by traditional SIM, and *De gub.* used divine wrath to demonstrate how these actions bore consequences in the world around them. *De gub.* is not only intending to be moralising; it is seeking to be corrective.

It is in this quest for correction that Salvian's barbarians are invaluable: their presence provides Salvian with a new medium of social criticism. As seen above, the most extreme form of this discussion was located in North Africa, where Vandals were glorified as perfectly chaste while Romans were busy sinning with each other. Here Salvian has employed alterity as a corrective tool: sexual behaviour, which had a long history in the construction of otherness, was traditionally used to juxtapose lowly barbarians with the rulers of the classical world to highlight Greco-Roman superiority. Salvian's judgement of his own people changed this dynamic on its head, and by projecting Roman patterns of behaviour on the outsiders and vice versa, he was able to

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[773] *De temp.* 1.4.19 (CCSL 60.0430): 'non potest stare mundus quem amaverunt.'

discuss sexual deviance in a compare and contrast formula. In this sense barbarians provided Salvian with a medium of communication for issues that clerical figures found difficult to discuss. Having the Vandals and Goths as points of contrast enabled Salvian to write a treatise of internal examination, which sought to explain the calamities and upheavals that both the author and his intended audience had experienced. Sex was a common, everyday affair, as were its illicit uses – choosing alterity to highlight these issues was relatable and able to reach a broad audience.

Salvian was not writing in a time of *pax romana* – he occupied a world of warfare and crisis, and *De gub*. demonstrates how in this environment the importance of Christian sexual behaviour came to the fore. Salvian wanted the readers of *De gub*. to become convinced that God was actively punishing the world for Christian sins, at the very heart of which he had placed sex. Salvian's idealisation of barbarian sexual *mores* was not based on any historical fact that we may find, but his depiction of the shortcomings of Roman sexual practices, even if exaggerated, finds support in other texts. In light of this, one cannot conclude that Salvian wanted to relish in descriptions of sex for shock value alone, which neither seems likely nor would be congruous with the rest of his works. Instead, his work addressed real problems and problematised them in a context of sin, warfare, and conquest.

5.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSIONS: SALVIAN RE-INTERPRETED

Salvian has been the victim of his own passions, causing him to be dismissed, neglected, and misrepresented by scholarship. His commentary on sexual *mores*, in particular, has largely been ignored. Yet this is one of the most significant driving forces of his work, and here I have attempted to answer why this is. Viewed in the context of other discussions on sexual *mores*, Salvian remains exceptional: he gives us the most extensive, most explicit and most damning account on sexual *mores* of lay Christians at this time. Yet Salvian is not discussing these issues in a void, but rather we can place his commentary on adultery, polygyny, homosexual acts, concubines, and all the other sore spots amongst the discourses that numerous other clerics were likewise having. What sets Salvian apart is his dedication to these problems and his own personal conviction of their importance to the religious collective. We will never know why

Salvian was so bothered by sex, but he reflects the general clerical discontent that is tangible in numerous other sources of the time.

If Salvian is guilty of something in *De gub.*, it is not hysterical hyperbole, but rather it is his inability to be concise and his inability to stop his narrative from going to unnecessary lengths. Indeed, he often has to excuse himself for going off-topic, and reintroduce the main theme, and when he focuses on the main theme, he does so extensively – and perhaps even with unnecessary length. Some of his statements are clearly unfounded, such as claiming that the people of Gaul were so numbed by their sins that they did not even fear the barbarian threat or try to protect themselves against such threats.[774] This, as we know from numerable other sources, including Salvian himself who says people in Marseilles were anxious over their futures, was simply not true. However, these moments when Salvian's polemical narrative against his own people passes the point of credibility should not discredit all of his other points – even less so as the vices that he records are attested by his predecessors and successors likewise.

Ultimately, we are left with Salvian's self-inspecting mirror: a moralistic discourse on Christian society and its flaws as understood and depicted by him. The barbarian presence had forced Christian Romans to question their place in the world and their relationship with God. The political and social identity of Romans had been undermined by the usurpation of power by outside forces, and Salvian depicts this as a crisis of identity, which requires internal examination. Those familiar with Foucault may be reminded of the care of the self – however, far from a philosophical exercise, Salvian's self-care was rooted in communal discord, wartime pressure and undue Christian laxity. Salvian can be placed amidst the ranks of Christian moralists representing a minority in the societies in which they wrote, but Salvian's work also speaks of him as an individual. Salvian made the choice to obsess over sexual habits, and the fact that *De gub.* contains the most extensive lamentation of sexual morality in any fifth century source is telling of this preoccupation. Salvian offers a unique interpretation of an

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[774] *De gub*. 6.14. He contradicts himself on the matter only shortly after in *De gub*. 6.18: 'The old Romans were feared; [now] we are afraid.'

ongoing crisis in fifth century West that is laden with ideas of sex, its variations and its functions in Christian society.

As Roman control of Gaul disintegrated, a new unifying identity was needed to fit in the void: the Christian one. It was therefore more timely than ever to re-enforce the behaviours that made one a Christian and to dismiss and condemn behaviours that were not. To this end, Salvian spoke out. His misunderstood comments on sexual vice were perfectly in line with the aspects of moralistic discourse we have thus far examined, both in the vices recorded, but also in the ideology that he applied to sinful sexual behaviour. Amongst his contemporaries, Salvian would not have been perceived as a lone fanatic making ridiculous claims about sex, but rather his rhetoric and criticisms would have been recognised as timely and on-point in mid-fifth century Western Christian discourse.

6. CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have examined the interactive, reactionary and multi-layered developments towards more unified and comprehensive ideas of Christian sexual *mores* in Western discourses between AD 390 and AD 520. This research has showcased how components of moralistic thought can be analysed through contextualised and comparative close readings, resulting in more nuanced understandings of moralistic discourses. Unlike previous studies, which have examined views of individuals or have provided extensive overviews of several centuries, I have here presented results from a strict geographical and chronological era to show that by doing so we can identify contemporary and local influences in discussions of sex. I have identified three major forces as influential to evolving Christian ideas on sexual *mores*: contemporary military conflict, the perception of sexual vice as active and contagious in light of Christian ideologies, and lastly the dominance of traditional sexual *mores* that shaped norms for sexual behaviour for Christians, non-Christians and *incerti* alike.

Instead of focusing on the most famed individuals, I have brought together a spectrum of writers of the age to demonstrate the breadth and extent of this discussion across regions and the time span covered. Appendix 1 at the end of this work offers an overview. From the works of these authors, we may observe that defining sexual moral codes for Christians was often an individual, reactionary exercise: Avitus's incest case, Maximus's fictive prostitute, the raped women of Leo's Rome, or the kidnap survivors of Gelasius's Rome, all played their part in clerical articulations on sex, sexual behaviour, and the rules regarding them. Furthermore, while ideas of sexual behaviour were undoubtedly being expressed in Christian terms – in relation to sin, Christian marriage, one's relationship with God or one's relationship with the Christian church – this transformation was gradual, complicated, and a contextually motivated historical development that relied on Roman tradition, rather than an overarching narrative for late antique societies or a dramatic Christian transformation.

At the start of this thesis, I established that the military disturbances and warfare in fifth century West influenced clerical discussions on sexual morality. Military campaigns and loss of Roman territory translated into a clerical reaction in discussing trauma, sin, martyrdom and vice, and in this discourse sex was also discussed. We have seen how

ideas of secular marriages and rape were re-considered under troubled and anxious circumstances, and in response to wavering faith. Ideas of sexual *mores* – what was acceptable, what was not, who was accepted, who was not – changed in response to the times and the needs of these times. In these circumstances, Christian views on rape and second marriages departed distinctly and swiftly from traditional narratives, and there is no doubt that warfare was a catalyst for these changes. I have interpreted these developments by discussing the effect of war, rape and death on Christian communities as depicted in the sources, and in this analysis the use of trauma theory has offered an explanation of why clerics went against Roman law and century old traditions to create new ideas of acceptable behaviour. Bishops and their congregations were affected by turbulent military contexts, and an increased contextualisation of source material allows us to develop more fully rounded discussions on contemporary influences and motivations. In this light, sexual *mores* and the clerics who articulated ideas of them have revealed themselves to be adaptable and reactionary.

Christian ideas of how sin functioned and was committed is crucial for an appreciation of why sex was considered important. Perceptions on contaminating sexual vice could be and were tailored for Christian communities in response to local needs or shortcomings, as our discussion on incest and prostitution showed. Yet sinfulness and contamination could be negotiated: Avitus's incest case is a prime example of this. Ideas of sexual norms were again reactionary. This flexible nature was also demonstrated by our reflection on prostitution and the literary fabrications of prostitutes: pollution, sin, and contamination could be washed away for the greater good of a more unified Christian collective. In this exchange, the role of religious leaders – bishops, presbyters, monks – was crucial, but situations amongst the laity are equally crucial. We can, and should, use textual evidence penned by clerics to reconstruct lay behaviour.

It may perhaps seem self-evident to state that Christian ideas of sex were conditioned by pre-existing Roman cultural traditions, but this is, in reality, a highly complicated relationship to study. My analysis of homosexual acts in particular has underlined how dependent on cultural traditions Christian clerics were – these men were, nearly always, Roman elite males themselves. The extent to which all their works and views were

Christianising needs to be questioned rather than assumed. Furthermore, a significant proportion of late Roman society remained polygynous to various degrees. We cannot quantify this statement, but objections to polygynous habits are universal enough to testify that polygyny amongst Christians continued to be widely practised. This needs to be reintroduced into traditional narratives of late Roman and early Christian societies, their households, and masculine and feminine identities. An articulation of chastity does not reflect a chaste world, and we should not confuse a fifth century society to be more chaste than, for instance, a third century society that was still largely pagan.

The above also emphasises that the period between 390 and 520 was witness to something new. The circumstances that emerged in the fifth century were, in many ways, unprecedented: not because barbarian peoples were new, or because military conflict was new, or because questioning the role of religion or divine intent in times of crisis was new. Rather, what created unforeseen problems for clerics was the era of Christian legitimacy, which sets the fifth century apart from fourth century discussions. Warfare undermined and diminished both Roman and Christian power: the damaged socio-political authority of the Empire in the West may have caused elite men to object to further limitations of their traditional rights, such as polygyny, while having Christian communities come under attack damaged the relationship and faith that many lay Christians had with the church. As warfare and divine intent became a discussion of Christian behaviour and misdemeanours, sexual acts formed into an active force of causal sin, understood through a lens of Christian universality and idealised chastity. No longer could an elite man be polygynous without this having an effect on the collective morality of his congregation – these were new ideas and new statements, more far reaching in the fifth century than in the centuries before. These ideas were met with opposition by those they attacked, and they were articulated by clerics who were unsure of the rules themselves. As such, idealised collective chastity, combined with socio-political unrest and a gradual increase in the roles and functions of clerics created unique circumstances for fifth century notions of sexual vice and virtue.

I have also questioned the validity of imperial laws as proof of a Christianising society. This type of evidence is particularly complex to work with – when laws restrict sexual freedom, Christian influence is cited, yet the complete lack of legal commentary on

men having sex with slaves, concubines and the fact that married men having sex with such people was never legally considered to be *adulterium*, has not raised discussion that late Roman law could also enable behaviour that was completely at odds with Christian idealism. This is an ill fit for argumentation that law influenced Christianity, and that Christianity influenced law. The situation is more nuanced than this and needs to be approached with more criticism than is currently the norm in scholarship. When a case can be made that a law undoubtedly reflects Christian ideology, this is not necessarily reflective of grass-level practices. Only by a cross-regional, multi-authored examination of the past can we attest to glimpses of everyday sexual behaviour, and appreciate the difference between idealised behaviour and the behaviour considered acceptable or normalised by cultural norms outside of these texts.

Lastly, I offered a new interpretation of Salvian of Marseilles's *De gubernatione Dei*. When I first read this work in the last year of my undergraduate degree and was prompted to look into the treatise further, I was instantly struck by how little studied and overlooked Salvian's commentary on sexual habits was. To me, his comments on sexual *mores* were some of the most puzzling pieces of his work, yet no scholarship at my grasp offered commentary on them. Having studied Salvian extensively now, I know that such commentary simply does not exist. As such, I hope to have rectified some of this scholarly oversight here by showing the value of Salvian's remarks to discussions on late Roman moralistic discourses and late Roman society and culture overall. Salvian's observations on sexual morality hit the nerve of a very specific time and era: it was aggravated by military conflict and by uncertainty of the future, and at its centre lay pre-existing conflicts between lay habits and Christian idealisms. When we examine the core criticisms in Salvian, we find a society that did not trivialise the licences that it took on sexual habits, but military aggression had brought this comfort into question.

What unifies Salvian with his contemporaries are his assertions of the types of sexual sins that were committed, his linkage of sins with military aggression, his testament of conflict between clerics and lay Christians over sexual habits, and of conflict between people's ideas on sexual behaviour and on the consequences of such behaviour. All sources here discussed, however, should be considered to represent points of

ideological change on a spectrum, and we as historians must acknowledge and appreciate that any source can combine any set of older and newer elements – or, indeed, ones independent of others and unique to their author. The discourses here included are important because they paved way for later ideas, highlighting as they did that much work still needed to be done and that much confusion remained over approved and disapproved sexual behaviour for late Roman Christians.

The approaches of individual study, contextualisation, identifying new ideology versus pre-existing notions of sex, all of which have been employed here, would do well to be applied elsewhere. By considering other contexts – regions, time periods – to discern how ideas of Christian sexual morality were constructed there, we could find further local characteristics and conflicts. In this way, we may be able to map developing religious ideas of sexual behaviour in greater detail than ever before. Two developments outside the chronological limits of this study may suggest that something new was soon about to take place: the appearance of penitentials in Anglo-Irish religious communities in the sixth century, carefully outlining and detailing sexual vices and their respective punishments for Christians, as well as, perhaps, the laws of Justinian from the 530s onwards, self-identifying as Christian laws, that condemned homosexual acts, prostitution, incest, concubinage, much more clearly and with clearer Christian ideology than anything our legal sources here examined have been able to vocalise. The sixth century may be suggestive of a new era in approaches to sexual *mores*, therefore. Perhaps the rich and multi-factorial constructions of sexual morality discussed here can be applied to these developments that further institutionalised ideas of sex – but an in-depth study of sixth century insular and eastern contexts may reveal a complex set of regional factors independent of the observations here made. Focused studies, therefore, like the one presented here, are much needed to improve our understanding of gradual socio-cultural changes in order for us to assess how they relate to each other.

Sex is a part of daily existence for all societies and cultures throughout history, shared by all people regardless of gender, religious belief or social status. Enforcing a unified code of sex for late Roman Christians was an idealistic and unrealistic aspiration and a continued source of conflict. In a context of crisis when Christian superiority became questioned and under attack, as it did in the long fifth century, discourses on moral

behaviour and sex changed and evolved in relation to this context. Unity, success or harmony of thought cannot be found in this era. The fifth century could not, nor I would doubt any century before or after that, bring about a harmonised universal agreement on sexual conduct.

It is therefore perhaps fitting to end on Salvian, whose *De gubernatione Dei* embodies so many of the changing ideals examined in this work, especially highlighting how sexual behaviour was debated and questioned. When studying his own troubled community, Salvian observantly realised that *maxima enim causa est discordiarum diversitas voluntatum* – 'the greatest cause of discord is the diversity of desires.'[775] Nothing is truer, nor, indeed, more apt.

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[775] Salvian, *De gub*. 8.4.3. Translation own.

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APPENDIX 1

Latin Christian authors (AD 390-AD 520) referenced in this thesis

Author	Active	Position	Genres
Pacian	?-390/1	Bishop of Barcelona	Treatises
Maximus	390s-410s	Bishop of Turin	Sermons
Augustine	380s-430	Bishop of Hippo Regius	Sermons, letters, treatises
Orosius	390s-c.418	Ecclesiastical historian	History
Innocent I	401-417	Bishop of Rome	Letters
Sulpicius Severus	390s-c.420	Gallic hagiographer	History
Peter Chrysologus	400-c.450	Bishop of Ravenna	Sermons
Valerian	fl. 430s	Bishop of Cimiez	Homilies
Quodvultdeus	430s-c.450	Bishop of Carthage (exiled)	Sermons, treatises
Salvian	430s-440s	Presbyter monk at Marseilles	Treatises, letters
Paulinus of Pella	?-c.459	Gallic Christian layman	Autobiography, poetry
Prosper of Aquitaine	?-460s	Chronicler, secretary of Bishop of Rome	Chronicle
Leo	440-461	Bishop of Rome	Sermons, letters
Sidonius Apollinaris	450s-489	Bishop of Clermont	Letters
Gennadius	fl. 460s-470s	Theologian in Marseilles	Biography
Faustus	fl. mid/late 400s	Bishop of Riez	Treatises
Gelasius I	492-496	Bishop of Rome	Letters
Victor of Vita	late 400s	Ecclesiastical historian	History
Ruricius	?-c.510	Bishop of Limoges	Letters
Avitus	c. 490-520s	Bishop of Vienne	Letters
Fulgentius	c. 502/507-527/533	Bishop of Ruspe (exiled)	Letters