

The Dominion of the Dead:
Power Dynamics and the Construction of Christian Cultural Memory at the
Fourth-Century Martyr Shrine

by

Nathaniel J. Morehouse

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Abstract

This thesis is aimed at addressing a lacuna in previous scholarship on the development of the martyr cult in the pivotal fourth century. Recent work on the martyr cult has avoided a diachronic approach to the topic. Consequently through their synchronic approach, issues of the early fifth century have been conflated and presented alongside those from the early fourth, with little discussion of the development of the martyr cult during the intervening decades. One aim of this work is to address the progression of the martyr cult from its pre-Christian origins through its adaptations in the fourth and early fifth century.

Through a discussion of power dynamics with a critical eye towards the political situation of various influential figures in the fourth and early fifth centuries, this thesis demonstrates the ways in which Constantine, Damasus, Ambrose, Augustine, and others sought to craft cultural memory around the martyr shrine. Many of them did this through the erection of structures over pre-existing graves. Others made deliberate choices as to which martyrs to commemorate. Some utilized the dissemination of the saints' relics as a means to expanding their own influence. Finally several sought to govern which behaviours were acceptable at the martyrs' feasts. In nearly every instance these choices these men advanced their own agendas. In many cases the martyr cult was a decisive tool for the augmentation and solidification of civil and religious authority.

Despite their goals these men were unable to create the uniformity they desired within the martyr cult. The meaning associated with the graves of the saints could never be determined unidirectionally. Meaning and the power to influence others through the martyr cult was the product of a dialogue. That dialogue included the leaders and the laity in the Christian community as well as a new group: pilgrims. Pilgrimage created a network within Christianity which ultimately led to a catholic Christian cultural memory surrounding the martyrs' graves. This homogenized understanding of the martyr cult enabled it to become one of the most identifiable features of Christianity in subsequent centuries.

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Introduction:
Discursive Acts and the Formation of Memory at the Graves of the Saints

“The formation and contestation of identity are fundamentally about *power*, the power to represent.”¹

“Death is the sanction of everything that the storyteller can tell. He has borrowed his authority from death”²

Through their demarcation of the deceased’s final resting place, gravestones allow the dead a chance to live in the memory of the observer. Mark C. Taylor taps into this relationship with graves in his work *Grave Matters*.³ Here Taylor presents the reader with a series of stunning black and white photographs of the graves of his important dead, the graves of the philosophers and artists that he considers to have been part of his “tribe,” his intellectual family. This book provides Taylor with an *ad Sanctos* burial of sorts, alongside his personal saints.⁴ These are the graves of Taylor’s ghosts, those who live on in his memory and whose specters haunt the words of his books. The photographs are presented almost without commentary, aside from the name of the deceased, their important dates, and the location of interment. To turn the pages of these photographs is perhaps to become a sort of pilgrim, to be in the “presence” of the graves, to see how his dead are commemorated, to continue to remember them. These photographs bring the

¹Richard Miles, *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 6.

²Walter Benjamin, “The Story Teller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov” in *Illuminations: Walter Benjamin Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, Trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 94.

³Mark C. Taylor, *Grave Matters* (London: Reallion, 2002).

⁴The last photograph is of the location he expects to be buried.

dead to mind, where they live for a moment if only through the acknowledgement of their death. The book offers a glimpse into how Taylor views himself through those he selected to include and who he omitted. He, like a number of figures discussed in this work, is able to choose which saints to commemorate and which to ignore.

Taylor's work in many respects was nothing new; it drew upon the traditions of inhumation, and the cry for remembrance (especially for those who could afford it) that predated the Christian traditions which were the foundations for Taylor's work, and will be the centerpiece of my own. Taylor was attempting to control the message of his important dead, to situate himself alongside them, and to act as a mediator for them through the presentation of their graves to his audience. At the same time he had to have been aware of the subversive acts that each individual reader brings, of necessity, to this attempt; his viewers will interpret those graves in their own way. Ultimately the meaning of the text is one that will not be dictated by its author, but one that will come from the organic struggle for the ability to influence the lives of others, the power to represent, the power to affect. This was the same endeavor in which many fourth-century Christian leaders involved themselves. They too sought to control the message, the actions, and the meaning associated with the martyr cult as it developed from its pre-Christian roots to become one of Christianity's dominant features.

The expansion of the martyr cult grew from the veneration of the remains of the martyrs as it had been practiced by local Christian populations, which in turn was an extension of the veneration that Christians and non-Christians paid to the important dead within their own family. In the fourth century, specific agents directed the way in which the martyr cult would ultimately develop. They did this through their own individual

attempts to control the sites of Christian cultural memory at the martyrs' graves. Battles over political and theological control were waged around the control of the spaces and practices associated with the important dead. Ultimately one cannot place the genesis of the martyr cult at the feet of any one individual.⁵ Rather it developed through the struggle for hegemony which played itself out between the imperial seat, the bishops, and the people who visited the martyr shrines to venerate the dead. It was only through the rise of the practice of pilgrimage to martyr shrines that there developed a degree of uniformity in the veneration of the martyrs and their relics which would lead to the practices and artifacts that are commonly found tucked in dark corners of today's art museums, and other modern day collections. Through an investigation of the way in which various important figures from the fourth and early fifth century sought to control the remains of the dead and to some extent were continually challenged, we can understand the role that those remains would ultimately play in the development of Christianity. This thesis will examine the important actors from the fourth and early fifth century in the development of control over the earliest physical sites of cultural memory: the graves, specifically the graves of the important dead. I will discuss their desire to craft the physical monuments to the dead in such a way that established their own control over the message that each monument projected to the observer.

Monuments, specifically burial monuments, provide us with our earliest non-

⁵ Cf. Marianne Saghy who credits Constantine with the genesis of said cult in Rome. Saghy, "Scinditur in Partes Populus: Pope Damasus and the Martyrs of Rome," *Early Medieval Europe* 9, no. 3 (2000): 275. See also R.A. Markus who is not as explicit with the absence of the martyr cult prior to Constantine, but does posit a fourth-century origin for it. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (New York: Cambridge, 1990), 98ff.

literary evidence for early Christianity.⁶ As such these monuments are tremendously important for our understanding of the development and self-awareness of Christianity, as projected by those in control of those locations. Valerie Hope observes that funerary monuments reflect the “rhetoric of language of the society which produced them.”⁷ Funerary monuments are non-literary works by which social memory has been formed. As a site of cultural memory, Christian graves both create and reflect ideas about the community that created them. They reflect the feelings of the community at the time of the death of the individual. At the same time they create meaning for the future, presenting an image of continuity between imagined future observers with an idealized past serving to remind the community what it deems to be important. Christian burials present images from sacred literature, reinterpreting them in light of Christianity’s current situation. They allow Christians to represent themselves to themselves. Burials serve as a reminder of Christianity’s past and point a direction for its future.

While it is true that burial monuments may reflect an idealized image rather than the “historical facts” of a society, this does not mean that they do not provide a window into the lives of those who created those monuments. The way a society recreates its own history can tell us as much, if not more, about the way that society views itself than the “historical facts” on which it bases that recreation.⁸ Burials demonstrate how a group

⁶ For a full summary of pre-Constantinian Christian archeology see Graydon F. Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archeological Evidence of Church Life Before Constantine* (Macon GA: Mercer University 1985 [2003]).

⁷ Valery Hope, “Inscription and Sculpture: the Construction of Identity in the Military Tombstones of Roman Mainz,” in *The Epigraphy of Death: Studies in the history and society of Greece and Rome*, ed. G. J. Oliver (Towbridge: Liverpool, 2000), 155-186.

⁸ Cf. Suzanne Dixon who argues that burial texts and artifacts are evidence only of burial and that they should not accurately demonstrate living society. Dixon, *Reading Roman Women: Sources, Genres and Real Life* (London: Duckworth, 2001), 17.

within society wants to be remembered, demonstrating what was important to that society. The sites for this projection of meaning in early Christian circles are the graves of the important dead especially those of the martyrs.

In the fourth century newly powerful bishops used burial locations as one way to centralize their power. There was a dramatic paradigm shift after the Edict of Milan, from the threat of martyrdom at the hands of non-Christians, to one in which the threat of persecution and martyrdom only came from within the community of Christians.⁹ Post-Constantinian Christians died for their beliefs as much as their predecessors had. However, the disputes in which they died were over issues of power as often as they were over issues of theology, if those two could be efficiently separated. Whoever controlled the past through the cult of the saints controlled the future of Christianity.

Issues surrounding power and control were clear in the peri-Nicene Church: as early Christianity developed from the small localized churches of the Pauline communities to more established city congregations, the bishops of the third and fourth century were struggling to claim their place in the empire.¹⁰ Those living during and after Constantine's monumental acceptance of Christianity were especially prone to this melee

⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus recounts in his history of Rome, that while Damasus and Ursinus were struggling for the bishopric of Rome they carried their conflict to an actual battle where Ammianus Marcellinus describes in his *Roman History XXVI.iii*, 137 people were killed in a single day in the Basilica of Sicinius. These Christians were not murdered at the hand of any Roman persecution of Christians, but rather died in a dispute between two Christians vying for the title of Bishop of Rome. Likewise Damasus was accused of hiring thugs to intimidate (which on occasion lead to the death of) his Christian opponents (*Libellus Precum ad Imperatores xxii*, PL 13, 98). See also Maureen A. Tilley, trans. and ed. *Donatist Martyr Stories: The Church in Conflict in Roman North Africa* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996).

¹⁰ See especially H. A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2002).

for positions of authority. With the advent of the fourth century, and the post-Nicene creation of Christian “Orthodoxy,” there were numerous confrontations both between Christians and their pagan neighbors, but increasingly among Christians themselves. Not all of these were necessarily even between those who espoused different theological viewpoints (although clearly the Arian “heresy” was one of the most enduring and substantial). Both the Luciferians and the Donatists were fourth-century schematics who followed orthodox Trinitarian theology. The power struggles were consequently not always about the power to determine Christian theology, but about political power within the emergent church.

The graves of the important Christian dead were not the primary front of these intra-Christian battles, yet they were one enduring facet of the battles. The pure physicality of the locations of the graves of the important dead, and later the shrines of the martyrs – whole or in pieces – ensured that they were visible to the masses in a decidedly visceral fashion. Those who controlled the locations of the martyr’s graves were able to control the cult practices that were associated with them.¹¹ The control of the cult practices ensured that the established episcopate remained in its position of power. We can clearly see this with Damasus and his ambitious usage of inscriptions to establish a tradition of a non-existent unity within the church, which served to solidify his own position at the head of that unified church. However, as we shall discuss in Chapter Four, Athanasius of Alexandria argued against the usage of martyr’s remains as cult locations, when it served his own political agenda. When he did not control the cult centers,

¹¹ See also Denis Trout, “Christianizing the Nolan Countryside: Animal Sacrifice at the Tomb of St. Felix,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 281-298. I will discuss this in detail below.

Athanasius argued that it was unnecessary. Conversely when he did control those centers, he argued that it was inappropriate to translate the relics.

The usage of burial as a means of establishing a cultural memory to cement the power of those who created the tombs was not the primary means by which bishops sought to gain political and religious power. However, those who emerged victorious, or more importantly were *remembered* as victorious, were those who crafted Christian cultural memory at the tombs of the saints.

In this work I focus my attention on the structures and the practices that developed around the physical remains of the martyrs, as well as how those remains were distributed, and ultimately how they were visited by pilgrims. To this end I use some scant archeological work, but more often have rely upon written descriptions of those structures. The textuality for the majority of this material has certain limitations, of which I am aware.¹² However as the focus of this work is not about the structures themselves, but rather the cultural memory that was created around these structures and the graves that they contain, it is entirely possible that descriptions of the monuments (even when they venture into the hyperbolic) allow a modern reader to see what was considered to

¹² Throughout the process of researching and writing this thesis, I have relied on various translations of ancient texts. In general I have opted to use these professional translations rather than my own. As there is little philological work in this thesis, I have not necessarily avoided older translations, unless there was a clear reason to have done so. At various points in the thesis I have translated excerpts myself, they will be documented in the footnotes. Generally, due to the readily available nature of Migne's *Patrologia Latina* (PL), I have opted to draw my primary sources from there rather than the *Corpus Scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum* (CSEL). However, when I have had access to a Loeb (LCL.) edition for a text I have chosen that over either of the former.

have been the important feature, which might be unavailable through a purely archeological approach. I also position these structures and the debates which surround them within their historical context. It is important to situate epitaphs on the monuments, as they would have been viewed, and witnessed. The location of these shrines, as reflective of that context, is likewise important for any attempt at determining how the early Christian cultural memory associated with them developed.

This work is a work about struggle: the struggle to control, the struggle to dominate, the struggle to determine how the graves of the important Christian dead would be used to fabricate an image of Christianity which would ultimately determine the direction of the church in the fifth and sixth centuries.

To examine the development of the power relations and the centrality of burial within the emergent church, I rely primarily on literary sources with some relevant archeological work. The focus on literary work is in part an accident of what materials have been preserved, or more importantly preserved in (more or less) their original format. It would be wonderful to be able to examine the catacombs of Rome as they were originally formed and organized. However, due to the very importance of those locations, and their subsequent beautification,¹³ it is almost impossible to glean the sort of material about how the catacombs were originally organized and utilized. Through an analysis of letters, various church histories, and sermons, we can understand how the martyr's graves were understood by those who sought to control them in the later fourth century. We can also see how those who controlled the pens that wrote those documents sought to present the activities at the shrines of the martyrs, either those that they approved of and wanted

¹³ For a brief discussion of the catacombs see chapter one, for a discussion of how Damasus utilized and beautified the catacombs see chapter two.

to see repeated or those that they deemed reprehensible or heretical.

As a part of the current endeavor deals with the desire of the episcopate to control the practices that were part of the worship at the martyr's shrines, I draw on material concerning groups only known to us by what was written about them by their opponents. Most clearly this material comes from North African bishops who wrote against their Donatist and Meletian opponents, both groups had a considerable affinity for devotion to the martyrs.¹⁴ It is difficult to claim confidence in one's ability to accurately describe the actions of a group through the writings of their opponents. However, even if we cannot claim, for example that Augustine's diatribes against his Donatist neighbors are normative regarding the actions of those same Donatists; we can tell that the authors (e.g. Augustine) of those texts believed that they were using the various rhetorical examples well. Consequently when Augustine argues against the Donatist Circumcellions,¹⁵ there are several possibilities concerning the historical veracity of these accounts.¹⁶ The first is that this could have happened, possibly as a wide spread practice, or it might have happened only sporadically. Perhaps something like it happened which was subsequently taken out of context both for veneration as well as criticism by Donatists and Catholics respectively. It is also entirely possible that it, or anything like it, never happened at all.

However there is one thing that we can know for certain: Augustine used the idea

¹⁴ They drew the boundaries between themselves and the "Catholic" church based on the latter's reincorporation of *lapsi* after the persecutions of the early fourth century, rather than any strict theological differences. See W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford, 1965); *The Donatist Church: A movement of protest in Roman North Africa* (New York: Oxford, 2000); Tilley, *Donatist Martyr Stories*.

¹⁵ According to Augustine the Circumcellions were a group that traveled from place to place and were reputed to practice self-induced martyrdom through tossing themselves off cliffs, or initiating fights so as to suffer death at the hands of those they attacked.

¹⁶ See e.g. Augustine, *Gaud.* PL 43.705ff

in his writings, as a means of criticizing his opponents. He also hoped that his argument would be convincing to whom-ever was hearing/reading it. It would have been significantly less convincing if there had been no popular idea of these things taking place. At the end of the day even if the heresiological material was a complete fabrication that too is important for the current endeavor and should not be ignored. These arguments took place surrounding discussions concerning the martyrs and their centrality to Christian identity. As such even if they were fabrications they demonstrate the role of martyrdom, martyr shrines, and the veneration of martyrs, precisely because they were meaningful to the audience that heard them. This significance alone demonstrates the power of the activities surrounding the martyr cult as the battleground for power in the fourth century. Harold Drake notes: “The martyrs won . . . a respect on the popular level which the apologist could never have hoped to achieve.”¹⁷ It was this popularity that necessitated the inclusion of a discussion about Donatist martyrs into the arguments against Augustine’s opponents, while at the same time that inclusion also further served to bolster that popularity. The usage of the past as a means of controlling the present is a recurrent theme in this work. Consequently we must also examine those pasts that may never have happened but were presented as having taken place. The presentation of these historically dubious events underscores their importance in the rhetoric regarding the martyr cult, and the desire to control the cultural memory which encompassed it.

The founder of the International Catacomb Society, Estelle S. Brettman, compiled

¹⁷ H. A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2002), 99.

an enticing volume entitled *Vaults of Memory*.¹⁸ Here, amongst the images and research of the catacombs, she presented the Roman catacombs as if they were a blank repository that simply recorded history as it was; as if within these catacombs, or indeed with any vault, any archive, there was no intentionality in the creation of those archives. The image that she created implied that the dead commemorated in the epitaphs, or of the poor un-inscribed corpses, were simply waiting for the impressions of history to be pressed upon them. However, this understanding of both the catacombs as well as the archival process ignores the active choices made by those with the power to control those archives. Indeed one thing that we know was that most frequently the things which got remembered, the items stored in a vault, were those that were intentionally placed in the vault. They were stored for safe-keeping in an archive by those who had the desire and the power to do so.

Through the analysis of any archived material one must be critically aware of the power dynamic which allowed the material to be collected and stored in that archive. While we look to the past as a means of understanding and structuring the present, it is always a mediated past that we encounter. Of course this, as with any archiving of the past, is not determined by chance. The roots of archive can be traced to *arkeion* which is also the root for architecture and archon; as such it is the house that stores the documents of power, and is related to the power of remembrance.

The meaning of 'archive,' its only meaning, comes from the Greek *arkeion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded. The citizen who thus held and signified political power were considered to possess the right to make or represent the law.¹⁹

¹⁸ Estelle S. Brettman, *Vaults of Memory: Jewish and Christian Imagery in the Catacombs of Rome, An Exhibition* (Boston: International Catacomb Society, 1985).

¹⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Archive fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 2.

Furthermore: “there is no political power without control of the archive, if not memory.”²⁰

The archive, any archive, is a seat of power, a location of the documents or information that serve to establish the power of those who control the archive, and are by the very nature of the archive not random, not simply a passive receptacle. But rather he who wields the stylus that forms the lines left behind on the wax tablet is the one who has the power, the power to manipulate the memory that gets preserved. In this regard graveyards, catacombs, and churches are like archives: they are not passive receptacles, but are constructed by those with the authority to control their contents. The memory, as it is preserved in public monuments, in the seats of power, is the building material for the creation of a group’s identity and collective memory, as Richard Miles put it in the introduction to *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity*: “The formation and contestation of identity are fundamentally about power, the power to represent.”²¹

In this thesis I have been influenced by Foucault’s understanding of power. For Foucault the power to represent is a creative force, for it to exist at all it must be used. “Power is not a commodity, a position, a prize or a plot: it is the operation of the political technologies through the social body. The function of these political rituals of power is exactly what sets up the non-egalitarian asymmetrical relations.”²² Foucault directs our attention to, “an analytics of power: that is toward a definition of a specific domain

²⁰ Ibid., 4

²¹ Richard Miles, introduction to *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity*, ed. Richard Miles (NY: Routledge, 1999), 5.

²² Hubert C. Dreyfus, and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics 2nd ed.* (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1983), 185.

formed by power relations and toward a determination of the instruments that make possible its analysis. . . There is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives.”²³ Foucault presents power as a force that is proportional “to its ability to persuade, incite, influence, direct, impress or control the conduct of others.”²⁴ Yet it does not directly act upon others:

[W]hat defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future... a power relationship can only be articulated on the basis of two elements which are each indispensable it is really to be a power relationship: that ‘the other’ (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results and possible inventions may open up.²⁵

Power contains within itself the ability to produce truth and reality, but again there must be a willingness to accept that newly-minted truth and reality.²⁶ Peter Burke observes that “Speaking is a form of doing . . . Language is an active force in society, a means for individuals and groups to control others and resist such control, for changing society or for blocking change, for affirming or suppressing cultural identities.”²⁷ Due to the relationship between individuals and groups in the enactment of power, it cannot be fully subjective; one cannot simply attribute any one particular outcome to any particular

²³ Michael Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage 1990 [1978]), 81.

²⁴ Isaak Dore, “Foucault on Power,” *UMKC Law Review*, 78 (2009-2010): 738.

²⁵ Michel Foucault afterward “The Subject and Power,” in Dreyfus, *Beyond Structuralism*, 220. See also Michael Gallagher “Foucault, Power and Participation,” *International Journal of Children’s Rights*, 16 (2008): 395-406.

²⁶ See James D. Faubion introduction to *Michel Foucault: Power*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: New Press, 1994), xix.

²⁷ Peter Burke, *The Art of Conversation* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1993), 26.

individual.²⁸ However as in the case of the current work, we can see how individuals drew upon the extant rhetoric of burial so as to influence others.

The bodies of the saints, and the ability to determine what can be remembered through them, and performed in their presence, were technologies of power in the fourth century, and were utilized to great effect. However, it is important to observe that had there not been a willingness of those who were controlled to have been controlled through messages associated with the important dead, this technology would have been fruitless. The crafting of the images of the important dead, through the control of their corpses, proved to be tremendously effective in the desire to shape the cultural memory of fourth-century Christianity, especially when it was combined with an affinity for the ritual activities which surrounded that cult. The willingness of pilgrims to subsequently transmit this information, independently of the episcopate, then both reinforced and subverted the original desire of those who crafted the original meaning.

The power to represent was crucially important to the formation of identity and memory in the emergent Church. Both of these, identity and memory, were intricately tied together; without memory there could be no identity.²⁹ Or perhaps more precisely, if there was no memory, one had to be created in order to form an identity. However almost all memory was created to one degree or another – as the memory of an individual could be manipulated (either by the individual or some outside force), the collective or cultural

²⁸ Dore, “Foucault on Power,” 740. See also Caroline T. Schroeder who uses this understanding of power dynamics to interpret Shenoute’s discourses on the body. Schroeder, *Monastic Bodies: Discipline and Salvation in Shenoute of Atripe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 5ff.

²⁹ See Barbara Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2003), 1.

memory of a society too could be shifted over time.³⁰

Maurice Halbwachs, the father of modern collective memory studies, argued that memory was essentially fluid, an idea that has been contrasted by Jan Assmann and Barry Schwartz who both argue that while memory is malleable, it is not entirely flexible.³¹ In the current work I employ the latter of these positions: memory is anchored to moments in the past that were then reinterpreted in light of any particular present. One of the ways that memory can be tied to the past is through the construction of monuments, which serve to remind a population of what (they are told) is important to remember about that past. For example, when Damasus created his image of Hippolytus as a “schismatic” who returned to the fold of the Catholic Church, Damasus did not invent Hippolytus out of whole cloth, but rather re-created his memory (and the memory of others) through the addition of an elegant inscription on his tomb. The moments of history that are chosen to be remembered form the way that a society becomes visible to itself as well as to those outside of that community. Jan Assmann notes that: “Which past becomes evident in that heritage and which values emerge in its identificatory appropriation tells us much about the constitution and tendencies of a society.”³² The choices of what history people determined important enough to be remembered can provide insight into what was (or

³⁰ For a discussion of the malleability of memory see Daniel L. Schacter, *The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002). A number of New Testament scholars have also discussed the problems of memory, most notably John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (New York: Harper One, 1991).

³¹ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Jan Assmann, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” trans. John Czaplicka *New German Critique* (Spring/Summer 1995): 125-33; Barry Schwartz, “Memory as a Cultural System,” *American Sociological Review* 61 (1995): 908-927; Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

³² Assmann, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” 133.

what was hoped to be) important for any particular population. Yet in accordance with Halbwachs, all of the memory work can only occur within a community which constantly reminds itself about itself. The decision over which past to preserve was never a passive process: it was one that always involved decisions and an exertion of authority. The chosen memories also served to reinforce the power of those who had the ability to represent those memories in the first place, yet through a language that must have been available for everyone to understand.

Memories are processed through language, which provides the conventional and customary meaning that then reflects back onto the memory. Through retelling – the narrative, performative, representative, even liturgical – memory accrues meaning through discourse and embodied repetition.³³

Cultural memory, especially as it is reflected (and shaped) through monumentalization, was not something that “just happened.” Monuments did not just organically create themselves whenever an event of momentous import occurred. Rather they were created for specific purposes, by specific people in specific societies. By placing memory in monumental (plastic) form it could then be molded so as to more accurately represent the memory that individuals wanted to be remembered (not necessarily the one that is remembered at the time of the memorialization) so that memory can then be echoed back to the memorializer in the form of the monument thus creating the desired memory. When we look to the graves and monuments of the past, we long to rediscover our present foreshadowed therein.

Wulf Kansteiner observes that there are three aspects to cultural memory, aspects that I attempt to be critically aware of: a) The persistence of tradition, b) the ingenuity of

³³ Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (NY: Columbia, 2004), 11.

memory makers, and c) the interests of the memory consumers. He also cautions us to remember that collective memory is a “collective phenomenon but it only manifests itself in the actions and statements of individuals.”³⁴

In recent years there has been an increase in scholarship examining the role of burial as a means of understanding identity in the late Roman Empire. While the historian Valerie Hope presents the most interesting usage of the understanding of the “rhetoric of burial,” (that is to say that there is a specific form of language and discourse that is present in and used by burial monuments), it has become apparent that little work has been done that utilizes the advances in speech act theory as well as cultural memory theory in the analysis of these monuments to the deceased. Suzanne Dixon argues that burial representations should be understood to only reflect the evidence for the way that people wanted to be remembered in burial and that it is incorrect to draw conclusion about the living in society from those monuments.³⁵ I disagree. The way that a society chooses to represent itself can tell us how it wants to understand itself, and how it wants the future to remember it. From this we can notice trends in that society which may not afford a view into the status of an individual’s life as it was lived, but do tell us clearly how that individual (or whomever erected the monument) wants to be remembered.

Monumentalization is both a reflection of society as well as a reflection for that society, as has been demonstrated effectively by Barry Schwartz, Ian Morris, Kirk Savage and James Edward Young.³⁶ This monumentalization and creation of identity through

³⁴ Wulf Kansteiner, “Finding Meaning in Memory: A methodological critique of collective memory studies,” *History and Theory* 41(May 2002): 180.

³⁵ Dixon, *Reading Roman Women*, 23.

³⁶ James Edward Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Kirk Savage, “The Politics of Memory:

burial was especially effective for the Christian community due to the distinctly Christian association of the living with the remains of the dead, the developing cult of the dead, and *ad Sanctos* burial. It also flourished in the emergent church, due to the prevalence and importance of memorialization in the world in which it arose.

Savage points out in his essay on commemoration and freed slaves after the Civil War that public monuments do not arise as if by an act of nature to remember the past, but rather they are constructed by those who have the power to influence society to erect such monuments. This is echoed by Young in his work on Holocaust memorials. He notes that the versions of the Holocaust that are remembered in every country are often in conflict with each other. None of these monuments remember the past “as it really was.” Rather they recreate the past in such a way that casts the best light on the country doing the memorializing.³⁷ These works on monuments may be some of the best and most

Black Emancipation and the Civil War Monument,” in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R. Gillis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 127-49; Ian Morris, *Death-Ritual and social Structure in classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1992) and probably the most interesting and sophisticated work on the subject comes from Barry Schwartz, “Memory as a Cultural System” *American Sociological Review* 61 (1995): 908-927; *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

³⁷ See Young, *The Texture of memory*, for a fascinating study of the various uses of Holocaust Memorials and the way they differ from country to country. They tell us at least as much about those who wish to memorialize the Holocaust as the Holocaust itself: “In every nation’s memorials and museums a different Holocaust is remembered, often to conflicting political and religious ends” (ix). He makes an interesting point about how the very act of setting up memorials to a certain extent liberates us from the need to remember, as the memorial does the work for us. While this may be the case for the Holocaust, it seems to have been decidedly the opposite for the Martyr shrine. While both Holocaust and martyrdom were traumatic events, the horror of death is not found in martyr stories nor is it in their shrines. I do not mean to say that the stories did not contain gruesome depictions of the executions of the martyrs or that the shrines did not have imagery of that as well. Martyrs were to be remembered as examples of faith, and their death through martyrdom was, for the faithful, a wonderful event which many sought to replicate— unlike the Holocaust. Persecution then (especially after Constantine) was

explicable works on cultural memory. The works situate the creation of the monuments in a specific time, and trace the intentions of those responsible for those monuments. At the same time it is possible to see how the monuments are used in the future, by those whose memory is shaped by them. Graves, likewise, are sites of social memory and where the meaning of those recorded events are understood by a society only in light of other events, and that both what and how we remember are a function of the society in which we situate ourselves.³⁸

As we shall see in the case of the memorials and monuments set up by Constantine and Damasus, the object (in this case the remains of the martyr) is both present, and no longer mute. The addition of the epitaph by Damasus allows the martyr to speak, but only with the words that Damasus provides. The objectification of an item on display effectively does not silence that item. It might not speak fully for itself any more, but in some regards it is only through the action of display (which is not an unintentional act) that an item may be able to speak at all, even if those words are influenced by those with the power to effect that display.

Ian Morris' *Death-Ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity* uttered a call for classical scholarship to no longer forget the burial of an individual as a means of understanding social structure.³⁹ All too often, he argued, scholars have opted for either literary sources or those provided by archeology. His response was that neither one nor the other is preferable, but that scholarship should use everything available for analysis.

something that the church sought a connection to. See also his *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

³⁸ Eviatar Zerubavel, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2003), 6.

³⁹ Morris, *Death-Ritual and Social Structure*.

To this end he took a Geertzian perspective on ritual, that it is both a model *of* and *for* society.⁴⁰ Morris focused a considerable amount of energy specifically on the rituals surrounding the burial. While this was, perhaps obviously, one of the important contextual elements to consider, one must also look at what was done with the grave after the burial. How did the living continue to interact with the departed, and were they commemorated, ignored, or forgotten?

As mentioned earlier, only a few scholars have dealt with identity creation and burial in the early Church. The first of these is Ann Marie Yasin. She explores Basilica burials in Northern Africa, seeking to offer a counter example to the traditional scholarly understanding of *ad Sanctos* burial.⁴¹ She argues that Basilica burials show no organized chronological focus on being buried near to the remains of the Martyrs. While there was burial near saint's remains, those interred within the churches she examined were not buried with the earliest closest to the saint. My goal, however, is not to look at the practice of *ad Sanctos* burial per se. Rather I am going to look at it as a symptom of the usage of the remains, and the location of those remains, by the early church. This focus on *ad Sanctos* burial as a symptom is not something that I have found to be to be at the center of any of the readings that I have done on pilgrims and pilgrimages, the archeological material, nor the scholarship on martyrdom.

The second author to explore this subject is Dennis Trout.⁴² His work on the re-

⁴⁰ See also Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln*.

⁴¹ Ann Marie Yasin, "Commemorating the Dead – Constructing the Community: Church space, funerary monuments and Saint's cults in Late Antiquity" Ph.D. Diss., University of Chicago, 2000; and "Funerary Monuments and collective Identity: From Roman Family to Christian Community," *Art Bulletin* 87, no. 3 (Sept 2005): 433-457.

⁴² Dennis Trout, "Damasus and the Invention of Early Christian Rome," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 517-536; *Paulinus of Nola:*

invention of meaning associated with burial locations by Damasus focuses primarily on the inscriptions that the fourth-century Bishop of Rome left on the graves of the saints, so as to invest them with a sense of continuity with Rome itself. While this is a work that is useful for my current endeavor, my own work does not replicate Trout's as my intention is to reach beyond the desired meaning to explore how that meaning was received. His work focuses on the fourth century with both the figures of Damasus and Paulinus of Nola. In his work on Damasus he focuses a great amount of attention on the way that Damasus uses Virgilian prose to connect the new Christian presence with the traditions of Rome. While this has some importance for my thesis it does not address intra-Christian dialogue nor does it explore the broader uses of burial and identity creation.

Marianne Saghy agrees with Trout in that Damasus set about to tie the new Christian orthodoxy in with the history of Rome. She augments this with a discussion of Damasus' own "novel theology of martyrdom to the catholic spirituality of the fourth century discovered a medium of divine affirmation for his uncertain position as bishop."⁴³ This may well be the closest work to my current thesis. However this too focuses exclusively on the figure of Damasus. While Damasus is perhaps the clearest example of this manipulation of burial structures for the construction of a Christian collective memory for clearly political purposes, he is not the only one who approached burial in this way. As such he needs to be seen in the context of the development of Christian attitudes towards both the dead and the Christian community as a whole.

Life, Letters, and Poems (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); "Christianizing the Nolan Countryside: Animal Sacrifices at the Tomb of St. Felix," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3 (1995): 281-98.

⁴³ Marianne Saghy, "Scinditur in partes populous: Pope Damasus and the Martyrs of Rome," *Early Medieval Europe* 9, no. 3 (2000): 273.

Elizabeth A. Castelli convincingly examines martyr texts, hagiography and tales of their passions, and the idea of martyrdom as a central theme in the construction of Christian cultural memory in the emergent Church.⁴⁴ However her approach is one that deals explicitly with the texts associated with martyrdom, the literary aspect of the development of the cult of the martyrs. While in the current work I draw upon some of these hagiographical works, my focus is different in that I am concerned with the physical space inhabited by the corpses of the martyrs. These physical locations, perhaps due to the efficacy of the literary works, contained enough gravitational pull to draw pilgrims into their orbits. Initially this draw caught only the local population. Just as any celestial object gains mass and has a stronger gravitational pull once it has incorporated those objects closest to it, the shrines of the saints too accumulated a strong enough local following that they began to draw from a trans-local population.

Finally when one deals with any topic on the martyr cults of the late fourth century and beyond, one must acknowledge the work of Peter Brown, especially *The Cult of the Saints*.⁴⁵ Brown convincingly argues against the previously held idea that there had been a two-tiered system of belief, one of the intellectual elites and one of “the vulgar” masses (who were often influenced by their pagan background). The rise of the martyr cult, he suggests, was because of the great influx of wealth into the coffers of the church in the late fourth century and the need to spend it in a publicly acceptable fashion, rather than because of the mass influx of new converts. The control of the Martyr shrine also allowed the newly powerful Bishops of the fourth century to solidify their power. While

⁴⁴ Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*.

⁴⁵ Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

Brown does a lovely job of demonstrating how active the episcopate was in the development of the martyr cult, his work has a couple of flaws that I hope to rectify here. The first is that through his rejection of the bottom up model, he comes dangerously close to simply inverting it, in effect concluding that it was the bishops and not the “common believer” who was in complete control of the cult of the saints. Instead we need to look at the development of the cult of the saints in light of the dynamic that is always present in uses of power. The development of the cult was a dialogue which needed both the bishops and their flock to become what it did. Another issue that one encounters in Brown’s work is that he does not deal with the progression of the development of the cult of the saints, rather he presents material (seemingly effortlessly) from the third through fifth centuries, with little attempt to account for change over time.

Chapter Breakdown

Chapter one sets the stage for the development of the Christian usage of the martyr’s grave in the fourth century. To that end, it provides a basic understanding of several pertinent features of Roman burial practices: the polluting nature of the corpse, the desire of the deceased to be remembered, the importance of location, and the intentional creation of meaning through the tomb structure. I also examine the various groups that are responsible both for the care of the dead as well as for their commemoration: the family and voluntary associations. This sets the stage for an understanding of Christianity’s adaptation of these practices in the second and third century, especially the modification of the Church’s role as a new family of Christ and

how that related to their concern for their dead.

From this starting point, chapter two then moves on to examine how two seminal early fourth-century figures, Constantine and Damasus, helped determine the development of the veneration of the martyrs. Constantine was responsible for the construction of numerous church structures, and explicitly developed the basilica as a seat of Christian power. Many, if not all of these structures incorporated the pre-existent martyr veneration, and Constantine sought to harness that power for his own purposes. Ultimately Constantine would design his own funerary monument in Constantinople and through his translation of the relics of Stephen and Luke lay the foundation for a trans-local understanding of the remains of the important dead. Damasus, the bishop of Rome, following Constantine, sought to deal with his own issues of control by presenting a unified image of the church through the inscriptions that he placed around the tombs of the martyrs.

Once the stage had been set by Constantine and Damasus, later bishops sought to control the martyr cult as it developed elsewhere in the empire during the late fourth century. Chapter three examines how some of those bishops had their own issues of control to address (e.g. Athanasius, Augustine, Ambrose), and approached the cult of the martyrs in ways that addressed those power issues. Other contemporary bishops who did not have nearly the same political situations to contend with (e.g. Paulinus of Nola) embraced the martyr cult with less concern about their own authority within the participation of the martyr cult.

Not everyone in the empire in the fourth century was a proponent of martyr veneration and the attention that Christians paid to their corpses. Christians faced

criticism from those outside Christendom, as well as from those who felt that the practices at the martyr shrines during the all night vigils (which involved loud music, drunken revelry, and the comingling of the sexes) were extreme enough to warrant the prohibition of martyr veneration. Others felt that implicit in the cult was worship of the martyrs, which was too similar to the polytheism of the non-Christian gentiles. Chapter four examines how various groups rejected the martyr cult, as well as typical Christian responses to that rejection.

Christians traveled to specific places associated with the history of their tradition prior to the fourth century; Palestine drew Christian travelers by the late second century.⁴⁶ It was only by the end of the fourth century, however, that there was a significant rise in the number of Christians who could be classified collectively as “pilgrims.” Initially most pilgrimages were to the “Holy Land,” to visit sites associated with the life and death of Jesus. Chapter five will trace the development of the pilgrims interest surrounding such prestigious locations as those associated with the life of Jesus, but quickly also focused on martyr shrines. Pilgrimage to martyr shrines could range from traveling to the shrines outside the walls of the city on feast days, to a long distance journey to visit important shrines hundreds of miles away. Consequently, the travel of pilgrims created a network of memory associated with the martyrs. Ultimately it was the pilgrims who solidified Christian cultural memory at the graves of the saints. This new genus of Christian determined meaning for themselves and for those to whom they wrote about their travels, promoting travels both large and small to the shrines of the saints.

⁴⁶ See E. D. Hunt “Were there Christian Pilgrimages before Constantine?” in *Pilgrimage Explored*, ed. J. Stopford (Woodbridge, Suffolk: York Medieval Press, 1999), 25-40.

The current work follows a rise of interest in the cult of the martyrs and an interest in the sacred geography of Christianity in the fourth century. However it stands apart from previous work in that it attempts to trace the development of the martyr cult from its origins in Roman familial burial commemoration to the point when it becomes one of the central features of Christian churches. I will not trace the development of the martyr cult past the early fifth century (roughly 100 years after the conversion of Constantine). It was this period that would prove to be determinative in the direction that the martyr cult would take, and it was this period that the role of the martyrs (and their shrines) were established as central feature of Christian identity. The martyr cult was one of the most strongly contested battlefields for control not only of the remains of the saints, but also for Christian cultural memory. That cultural memory was squarely situated above the bodies of the important dead.

Chapter One: To Begin
The Life of the Dead is Set in the Memory of the Living

*Religiosum autem locum unusquisque sua volunante facit, dum mortuum infert in locum suum.*¹

*Viva enim mortuorum in memoria est posita vivorum.*²

For the early Christian community, burial and the care for the dead was not an explicit part of what it meant to be Christian. There is little evidence for specifically Christian burial practices in contradistinction to those of their non-Christian gentile neighbors. Yet from these beginnings Christians would eventually develop their own explicitly Christian iconography and sepulchral norms. They would also develop their own forms of the care for the dead. In the Church's treatment of the special dead, they would ultimately begin to craft their own cultural memory situated at the tomb of the martyr.

Roman burial generally was not associated with the practice of the imperial cult or the worship of a particular temple or god; rather burial practices and commemoration were primarily a private endeavor undertaken by close groups who were composed either

¹ Justinian, *Marcianas Libro Tertio Instituionum*. (*Inst. D.* 1.8.6.4) 2.1.9: "Being Religious is a quality which every single person can impose on a site of his own free will by burying a corpse in a place which he owns." qtd. and trans. in Jan H. A. Lokin, "The Work of Penelope: The Composition and Decomposition of Roman Law," in *Antiquity Renewed: Late Classical and Early Modern Themes*, ed. Z. R. W. M. von Martels, Victor Michael Schmidt (Belgium: Peeters, 2003), 25 n. 28.

²Cicero, *Phil.* 9.10: "For the life of the dead lies in the memory of the living..." trans. Gesine Manuwald, *Marcus Tullius Cicero "Orationes Philippicae III-IX"* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 285.

of family members or associations which modeled themselves on the family structure.³

Regarding burial practices Peter Brown observed, that they were:

among the most notoriously stable aspects of most cultures . . . they cannot be neatly categorized as “pagan” or “Christian,” “popular” or “superstitious.” This is because, whatever their origins may appear to have been to a modern scholar, the customs surrounding the care of the dead were experienced by those who practiced them to be no more than part and parcel of being human.⁴

For the Roman population (inclusive of the emergent Christian community) then, the question that we need to ask is: what were these practices that were “part and parcel of being human?” This chapter discusses some general aspects of Roman commemorative practices, especially those which would ultimately lead to unambiguously Christian practices in the third and fourth centuries. The locations of the remains as well as the ceremonies that ministered to the deceased’s spirit were important aspects of the care for the memory of the deceased. The care of the memory of the deceased is as important as the belief that the care of the spirits could give them peace after death. One of the fundamental aspects of this care was the regular pilgrimages made by the family (or its surrogates) to the graveside, in order to care for the dead and commemorate their life.

For Christians and non-Christian gentiles the placement of the tomb held considerable importance, both for the construction of the memory of the individual as well as for the societal collective memory. Of course the memory of the burial location would not last more than a generation or two if there was no lasting monument to mark the grave. As such the physicality of the monument, and the text inscribed thereon was of tremendous import to allow that memory to transcend the life of the individual and their

³ E.g. voluntary organizations and Christian groups, insofar as they can be separated from voluntary organizations.

⁴ Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 24.

immediate family. Some graves, especially of the important dead, gained special prominence, and were granted privileges by society (as pertains for example to location, funds for construction, visitations by non-family members). Often these graves sought to present a grander and broader image of the Roman world. The graves of the emperors were often constructed to depict the empire as the builders (either the Emperor himself or his family after his death) wanted it to be remembered, with an eye towards the future: “These monuments were unabashedly propagandic; for the most part their *raison d’être* was to promote an individual and his family, proclaiming their message through inscriptions, sculpture, and sheer physical presence.”⁵ However, it was not only the emperors who sought to project the idealized image of their life through the medium of their tomb. Many of the most elaborate tomb structures came from those who sought to claim a level of legitimacy in death (through their commemoration) that they did not have in life.⁶

The discursive act of memorializing the deceased was situated at the gravesite, and augmented by the rituals of the living for their dead. Without an observer, a spectator, a witness to the sepulture there could be no memory. The tomb addressed viewers and reflected the graves around it, while at the same time it attempted to set itself apart from those nearby monuments. Graves “performed in dialogue with other tombs of this period.”⁷ This dialogue was performed with the surrounding memorials. Without the

⁵ Penelope J.E. Davies, *Death and the Emperor: Roman Imperial Funerary Monuments from Augustus to Marcus Aurelius* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 8.

⁶ Most of Valerie Hope’s work supports this, see for instance: Valerie Hope, “Trophies and Tombstones: Commemorating the Roman Soldier,” *World Archeology* 35, no. 1 (2003): 79-97.

⁷ Lauren Hackworth Petersen, “The Baker, His Tomb, His Wife, and Her Breadbasket: The Monument of Eurysaces in Rome,” *The Art Bulletin* 85 (June 2003): 231.

passersby to listen to and interpret that dialogue the monuments would be mute. A tomb “has meaning only through those who look at it. It may speak, but it is always dependent on the passerby to read it aloud.”⁸ Consequently, location, as we shall see, was tremendously important if one wanted to be remembered: the greater the foot traffic near a memorial, the greater the chance for remembrance. However, even those who were buried in out of the way locations could count on their family and descendants making local pilgrimages at various points during the year. It was primarily the obligation of these family members to commemorate their departed. To be human meant to take care of your dead when you could, to bury, care for, and remember them.

Romans and the Afterlife: An afterlife of Memory

Honor is paid, also, to the grave. Appease the souls of your fathers and bring small gifts to the tombs erected to them. Ghosts ask but little: they value piety more than that a costly gift: no greedy gods are they who in the world below do haunt the banks of Styx.⁹

While there were images in Roman poetry of an afterlife, such as Virgil’s Limbo, Hell, and the Elysium Fields, this does not seem to have gained much of a following outside the poetic community. There is little evidence of the poetic descriptions of the

In this case: “The monument’s unconventional use of architectural form and decoration arose from a visual strategy for Eurysaces to make himself memorable.” See also Penelope J. E. Davis, “The politics of perpetuation: Trajan’s Column and the Art of Commemoration,” *American Journal of Archeology* 101 (1997): 49.

⁸ Davies, *Death and the Emperor*, 8.

⁹ Ovid, *Fasti* 2.IX.533-536: “Est honor et tumulis. Animas placate paternas, parvaque in exstructas munera ferte pyras. Parva petunt manes, pietas pro divite grata est munere: non avidos Styx habet ima deos.” Ovid, *Fasti*, trans. James Frazer. LCL. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 95-96.

afterlife in Roman burial inscription or burial art.¹⁰ Despite the lack of archeological evidence for the poetic afterlife in Roman burials, there was a general understanding of a form of spiritual afterlife: the afterlife was typically perceived to be good, with a decent degree of individuality after death.¹¹ There was also a general belief that those who had passed into that afterlife could continue to affect the lives of the living if they were not treated properly, even if such interactions were quite rare.¹² In the late Republic the mournful festival of the *Parentalis* (from February 13th-24th)¹³ was dedicated to the care of dead parents who were remembered in a state of semi-existence near the location of the burial of their ashes.¹⁴ These ashes would have also been provided with “such necessities as the soul might need after death,”¹⁵ to at least to make them feel at home, even if the deceased couldn’t use these objects.¹⁶ The *manes*, or spirits of the dead, needed regular feeding, either on the anniversary of their death or during the annual festival.¹⁷ If these offerings were not properly taken care of, the dead could become most

¹⁰ J. M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 37.

¹¹ Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 38, notes that from the end of the Republic there was a rise in the belief in individuality.

¹² “The dead subsisted, then, as nebulous, impalpable beings, perceived by the senses only exceptionally.” Franz Cumont, *After Life in Roman Paganism* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), 4. See also Edward Champlin, *Final Judgments: Duty and Emotion in Roman Wills, 200 B.C.-A.D. 250* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), who observed at least in the wills he examined there was no idea of any individual imagining him/herself as a spectral being. This is the lone voice challenging the ubiquity of the belief in a spiritual afterlife in the non-Christian Mediterranean.

¹³ Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 63, states it lasted until the February 21.

¹⁴ M. R. Ogilvie, *The Romans and Their Gods in the Age of Augustus*, Reprint (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1970), 75. Also, Toynbee *Death and Burial*, 37, and David I. Smith, *Learning from the Stranger: Christian Faith and Cultural Diversity* (New York: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 42.

¹⁵ Ogilvie, *The Romans And Their Gods*, 104.

¹⁶ Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 53.

¹⁷ Toynbee provides a detailed discussion on the ceremonies and rituals which served to let the living reap the rewards and avoid the punishments of the dead. Toynbee, *Death*

problematic: Ovid comments, writing in the early to mid-first century, that *manes* not fed properly escaped the grave to spread death and destruction throughout the city:

But once upon a time, waging long wars with martial arms they did neglect the All Souls' Days. The negligence was not unpunished; for tis said that from that ominous day Rome grew hot with the funeral fires that burned without the city. They say, though I can hardly think it, that the ancestral souls did issue from the tombs and make their moan in the hours of stilly night; and hideous ghosts, a shadow through, they say, did howl about the city streets and the wide fields.¹⁸

The funerary meals for the dead were the most universal of all Roman religious ceremonies demonstrating the widespread belief in the need for commemoration and libation for the dead.¹⁹ While participation in other rituals varied, the care of the dead was nearly ubiquitous and strikingly uniform. These important rituals were performed by the individual and the family. Despite the focus on the participation of the individual or familial group, failure to properly care for the dead could have dire consequences for the city or the empire, as we saw above. These rituals crossed religious and social divides; the care of the dead united the empire.

Not only was the soul of the common dead commemorated during the *Parentalis*, as well on the anniversary of their death, the important dead also received (should they merit it) special treatment. Upon the death of an emperor it was within the power of the

and Burial, 53. Dennis E. Smith also notes that there was a development from the Greek to the Roman understanding, in that the Roman dead were seen as able to participate in the meal in a more functional manor. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis: Arsborg, 2003), 52. See also Cumont, who hypothesizes (without too much support) that the libations of wine may have been representative of blood (or of a blood sacrifice), which was thought to sustain and revitalize the bones of the dead. Cumont, *Afterlife*, 55.

¹⁸ Ovid, *Fasti*. II.IX.547-554: "at quondam, dum longa gerunt pugnacibus armis bells, Parentales deseruere dies. Non impune fuit; nam dicitur omine ab isto Roma suburbanis incaluisse rogis. Vix equidem credo: bustis exisse feruntur et tacitae questi tempore noctis avi, peruue vias Urbis latosque ululasse per agros deformes animas, volgus inane, ferunt." 96-7.

¹⁹ Cumont, *Afterlife*, 55.

senate to deify that emperor. Herodian observes that during the ceremony of *apotheosis*, whereby an emperor was deified after his death, an eagle was released during the ceremonial “cremation” of a wax effigy of the emperor. The eagle was believed to take the soul of the emperor to the heavens, after which he was worshiped among the other gods.²⁰ Once there, the newly deified emperor was worshiped in much the same manner as heaven’s other inhabitants.²¹

The ubiquity of *Dis Manibus*,²² abbreviated DM, on Roman tombstones attested to the idea that there was a convention of sending the soul of the departed into the hands of the collective dead, no matter how the individual testator viewed his/her own soul.²³ This inscription may well have been the best article of evidence for some understanding that there was an afterlife.

Even amongst those who derided the “popular superstition” concerning the presence of an afterlife, there remained a desire to care for the memory of the deceased. The philosopher Epicurus “denied the afterlife, but in his will he provided for offerings in perpetuity to his father, mother and brothers.”²⁴ The desire to continue burial practices

²⁰ Herodian, *History of the Empire*, 4.2.10-11.

²¹ On the *apotheosis* of emperors see: Simon Price, “From noble funerals to divine cult: the consecration of Roman Emperors,” in *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*, eds. David Cannadine and Simon Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 56-105.

²² “To the Spirits of the Dead.”

²³ Maureen Carroll sees this custom as a clear refutation of the nihilistic point of view. Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead: Roman Funerary Commemoration in Western Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). This nihilism was expressed by the rare epitaph which denied the existence of the afterlife, which are most fully expressed by: “*Sumus mortales, imortales non sumus*” and “*Non fui, fui, non sum, non curo*.” “We are mortals, we are not immortals” and “I was not, I was, I am not, I don’t care.” See Toynebee, *Death and Burial*, 34.

²⁴ A. D. Nock, “Cremation and burial in the Roman Empire,” *The Harvard Theological Review*. 25 no. 4 (October 1932): 33.

and offerings for his parents overrode the fact that he claimed to know that these offerings did nothing for the departed. Even though this could have been read as a contradiction of his earlier beliefs, such an interpretation of Epicurus' actions would ultimately miss the importance of his commemorations. The offerings he provided for the dead took care of the other form of immortality which had nothing to do with the afterlife of the soul: an afterlife which existed only through the memory of the dead in the minds of the living.

The desire for the dead to survive through the memory of the living was of paramount importance. This was not antithetical to the presence of the graves, which were clearly separated from the homes of the living. While it is true that the Roman burials were an extra-urban phenomena, they were not external to the city out of a desire to hide the graves or forget the dead. Quite the opposite was the case. Should one approach a Roman city, they would have found the roads lined with tombs. Travelers were greeted by Romans long before they reached the *pomerium*; those who first greeted these travelers did so from the comfort of their final resting place. These tombs were situated so as to be as visible as possible. The tombs of emperors and others with the money or fame to warrant noticeable memorials would have been impossible to miss.²⁵

Often the tombs lining the streets called out to the passersby through their inscriptions; they beseeched the passersby to stop and read the eulogia at the tomb.²⁶ One first-century epitaph from Benevento, Italy, after describing the life of the deceased,

²⁵ On Emperor's tombs and the desire for memory see: P. Davis, *Death and the Emperor: Roman Imperial Funerary Monuments from Augustus to Marcus Aurelius* (Austin and Cambridge: University of Texas Press 2000); Catharine Edwards, *Death in Ancient Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2007).

²⁶ Michael A. Tueller, *Look Who's Talking: Innovations in Voice and Identity in Hellenistic Epigram* (Walpole, MA: Peeters Publishers, 2008), esp. Ch. 3.

called out: “You are human, stop and contemplate my tomb, young man, in order to know what you will be. I did no wrong. I performed many duties. Live well, for soon this will come to you.”²⁷ Many epitaphs caution the traveler about the advent of their own deaths, while others were concerned only with the protection of the tomb structure (offering curses and fines against those who would violate it or bury their dead there illegally).²⁸ Many simply call out to the passersby to contemplate the individual or family that is memorialized by the tomb and its epitaph:²⁹

[T]here is no mistaking the tone in either the Latin or Greek; this theme is not stereotyped, but expresses an almost frantic reaching out for some connection with the living, for a short period when someone pays attention to the dead and they are rescued for a moment of non-entity.³⁰

The inscriptions present on the tombs called out to be read. Typically Roman, “memorials to the dead were intended to be seen, read, and engaged with not only by friends, family, and descendants of the dead, but by passing strangers for generations to come.”³¹ A monument, or epitaph, “has meaning only through those who look at it. It may speak, but is always dependent on the passerby to read it aloud.”³² However the meaning of these monuments is not something that exists in a vacuum. The meaning of any monument or text is influenced by the items surrounding it as well as the particular circumstances of

²⁷ CIL IX 2128 trans. Hope, *Death in Rome*, 50.

²⁸ Although the Romans tended to be less threatening than their Greek counterparts, they tended to use the carrot instead of the stick: offering blessings on those who respected the tomb, See Richmond Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1962) 118-120. See below on the legal prohibitions against violation of tomb structures.

²⁹ Tueller, *Look who's Talking*, 65.

³⁰ Richmond Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs*, 234.

³¹ Carroll, *Spirits*, 18.

³² Penelope J. E. Davies “The Politics of Perpetuation,” 49. For a detailed discussion of one particular non-imperial monument and its attempt to affect memory see: Lauren Hackworth Petersen, “The Baker, His Tomb, His Wife,” 230-257.

the viewer, all of which combine at the location of the item (text) to be viewed.³³

The predominant fear was not of the destination of the soul, or – judging from these inscriptions – even the proper care of the spirits, but rather the oblivion of no longer being remembered. It was for this reason that many epitaphs cursed those who would tamper with the tomb structure, as opposed to the corpse. Without the monument there would no longer be any focus for the commemoration of the dead, and the memory itself would die.

The most prestigious locations of interment were those located just outside the walls of the city, the places where everyone entering or exiting the city must pass, increasing the chances that the deceased would be remembered. The abbreviation D.D. (for *decreto decurionum*)³⁴ on a tombstone meant the town fathers (the *decurionum*) voted that the deceased should be given, or allowed, a burial location in the special zone nearest to the boundaries of the town.³⁵ The location of interment, and subsequently the prestige and ability for remembrance was of such notable import that the ruling body of the town entered into the picture. The town, as a town, in this instance was responsible

³³ For a discussion on this in museum studies see Mieke Bal, *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (London: Routledge, 1996). See also Mary Jaeger, *Livy's Written Rome* (University of Michigan Press 2009), 17 who observes that meaning is determined: “jointly by the reminder, its physical context and the circumstances of each viewer.” See also Petersen “The Baker, His Tomb, His Wife” on the way that the Monument of Eurysaces works in conjunction with the surrounding monuments in order to create a more memorable memory, through its “dialogue with other tombs of this period” (231).

³⁴ Other variants include LDDD for “*loco dato decreto decurionum*,” “location provided by a decree of the decurions.” These inscriptions can be found in Roman Europe as well as North Africa. The use of this inscription is documented clearly around the end of the second century, before the end of the Antonine age. For a discussion of one such usage, near Rome, see Walter Dennison, “An Inscription of the Labicani Quintanenses,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 13, no. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1909): 125-129.

³⁵ Stephen L. Dyson, *Community and Society in Roman Italy*, 149.

for shaping the memory that was important to the town, as if to proclaim: “These are our important dead, remember them.”

Burial was not the only activity that took place close to the walls, especially of the Eternal City itself. The, “last mile or so of the Via Appia was clearly perceived as being a location of prestige and importance in the city.”³⁶ Due to the traffic entering and exiting the city, impromptu markets sprang up along the roads which intermingled with tombs and gardens, in precisely this same area.

[T]he topography of the periphery of the city was affected by considerations of prestige and political image-making as much as by a concern to exclude undesirable activities from the center; but also that the interrelation of these trends led to the creation of a complex and ambiguous urban landscape at the margins of the city which tended to subvert the political message of monumental building.³⁷

John Patterson argues that there was a deliberate attempt to display the grandeur of Rome in this last mile of the roads entering into Rome, to awe the population into submission, as well as to impress foreigners entering Rome for the first time. However, “Despite attempts by the elite at ostentation and display here, the poor and marginalized of Rome were so numerous and pervasive as to subvert attempts at grandeur.”³⁸ The number of the poor intermingling with the tombs and gardens and the presence of the markets may have substantially diminished the awesome beauty as it had been intended. The usage of the impressive burial monuments near Rome created an identity which informed both locals and foreigners of the power and might of the Eternal City.

³⁶ John Patterson, “On the margins of Rome” in eds. Hope and Marshal, *Death and Disease in the Ancient City*, 101.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 103.

Monuments

The primary way that individuals, families, or groups would ensure their immortality through memory was by means of the construction of monuments to the deceased. Monuments had a liminal stature in the Roman world. Not only did they physically surround the city, demarking the boundary between the urban and rural, they connected the here and now with the past that they recalled, as well as the future that they looked towards. They transcended time, projecting an image of the past into the future through a monument that is always in the present. This is most clearly called to mind when the epigrams call out to the reader to remember the deceased. The reader is called to look back to the life of one who has died in the past, but also often unmistakably told to look forward to their own death at some unknown time in the future (even if the epitaph does not explicitly demand that from the viewer): “from the viewer’s perspective *monumenta* link together all of time.”³⁹

Marcus Terentius Varro (116-27BCE) describes the terms associated with memory and monuments thus:

Meminisse, “to remember,” comes from *memoria*, “memory,” since there is once again movement back to that which has stayed in the mind; this may have been derived from *manere*, “to remain,” like *manimoria*. And thus the Salii when they sing “O Mamurius Veturis” signify a *memoria*, “memory” . . . From the same word comes *monere*, “remind,” because he who reminds is just like memory; so are derived *monimenta* “memorials,” which are in burial places and for that reason are situated along the road, so that they can remind those who are passing

³⁹ Mary Jaeger, *Livy’s Written* (University of Michigan Press 2009), 17. Valerie Hope also discusses the epitaph of Allia Potestas (CIL VI 37965) which at line 43 observes that the epitaph will keep Allia Potestas alive so long as the epitaph survives. See Valerie M. Hope, “Remembering to Mourn: Personal Mementos of the Dead in Ancient Rome” in *Memory and Mourning: Studies on Roman Death*, ed. Valerie M. Hope and Janet Huskinson (Oxford and Oakville: Oxbow Press, 2011), 177.

by that they themselves existed and that the passersby are mortal.⁴⁰

Again, it was through the usage of burial monuments that the dead and their family had their opportunity (with the aid of sufficient funds) to project their identity into the future. This memory, while probably tied with the actual life of the individual, clearly was a creation of the individual or their family with an aim of presenting a specific image of the deceased for eternity.⁴¹ Freedmen and soldiers often created monuments that were incongruous with their station in life.⁴² Their tombs were often more elaborate and consequently more expensive, than the tombs of those who could have afforded the monuments more easily. Both Hope and Carroll argue that this was an attempt to secure some sort of legitimacy in death that they had been unable to attain in life.⁴³

The tombs and structures that surrounded the cities and farms in the Roman Mediterranean served to create the memory that the deceased and their family wanted to

⁴⁰Qtd. in Jaeger, *Livy's Written Rome*, 15. She cites L. Spengel and A. Spengel, eds., *Terenti Varronis de lingua latina libri* (New York, 1885; reprint, 1979). "Memnisse a memoria, wuom in id quod remansit in menterursus mouetur; quae a manendout Manimoria potestesse dicta. Itaque Salii quod cantant: Mamuri Veturi, significant memoria . . .; abeodem Monere, quod is qui monet, proinde ac sit memoria; sic Monumenta quae in sepulcris, et ideo secundum uiam, quo praetere untisad moneant et se fuisse et illosesse mortalis. Abe o cetera quae scripta ac facta memoriae causa Monumenta dicta" (*De Lingua Latina* 6.49).

⁴¹ See Valerie M. Hope and Janet Huskinson eds. *Memory and Mourning: Studies on Roman Death* (Oxford and Oakville: Oxbow Press, 2011) for a discussion of an image of a woman that clearly reflected the interests of the male author of the epitaph.

⁴² See Valerie Hope, "Fighting for Identity: The Funerary Commemorations of Italian Gladiators," in *Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire*, eds. J. Berry and R. Laurence (London: Routledge, 2000), 179-95, for a discussion on Gladiators' representation on monuments. For a discussion on how soldiers presented themselves considerably more elaborately (especially those who earned their freedom through service) than their contemporaries, as an attempt to gain status in death that they did not have in life see: Hope, "Remembering Rome. Memory, Funerary Monuments and the Roman Soldier" in *Archaeologies of Remembrance: Death and Memory in Past Societies*, ed. H. Williams (New York: Kluwer/Plenum, 2003), 113-40.

⁴³ Carroll, *Spirits*, 247.

endure for perpetuity. The physical locations reminded those coming to the grave as the *telos* of their travel, as well as those who were simply passing by, about the deceased and what was deemed to have been important about his or her life. Taken together all of these monuments also informed the foreigner and the local alike about the history of those wealthy or important enough to be memorialized, creating the cultural memory through the commemoration of the dead.

Roman monuments fell into several categories. They ranged from the individual monument, with an upright stone slab, or *stelai*, to elaborate *columbaria*. The *columbaria* were large chambers with many niches set into the walls for whole bodies or cremated remains in urns. These communal burial chambers tended to be set up by wealthy householders for their families and servants, or were used by voluntary associations for the burial of their members. Between the *columbaria* and the individual monument were family tombs which were still communal in their nature, but held only a few dozen remains as opposed to the later and larger *columbaria*. Typically both the family tomb and the *columbaria* would have privileged locations for the illustrious dead, the patriarch of the family, or the wealthy individual who funded the *collegia* that used the *columbaria*.⁴⁴

In addition to these structures there were also the rectangular house tombs of the middle empire, as well as large circular and polygonal tombs, tower tombs, Ghirza (a local type of tomb found at Ghirza with temple and obelisk tombs), provincial tumuli (round low structures), and the Eastern tombs with Rock cut facades found in Jerusalem

⁴⁴ For the sheer amount of data of Roman graves and grave structures, J. M. C. Toynbee's work remains indispensable. J. M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996 [1972]), 101ff.

and Petra.⁴⁵ The tombs and crypts had great variety, ranging from a minimal plot of land consecrated for burial with an area for a picnic-like memorial meal, to full dining rooms with adjacent kitchens able to feed a large group of mourners.⁴⁶ Frequently the sarcophagi themselves were equipped with openings or pipelines leading down to the remains, which enabled the mourners to give the food offerings directly to the dead.⁴⁷

Not all monuments to the dead were situated prominently above ground, along the major roads. Romans also injected their memory into the earth through the use of *hypogea*, *columbarium*, and most famously, catacombs. The catacombs were a late addition to the Roman burial milieu. They were a “public underground necropolis of relatively large religious communities, namely those of Jews and Christians, in Rome and Italian cities outside Rome.”⁴⁸ These are not to be confused with the *Hypogea* which were small and privately owned. The Catacombs were egalitarian (even the very poor could be buried here) and sprawled out with an unsystematic design, which tended to have several layers, each one dug beneath the last. Carol believes that catacomb usage (for either Jewish or Christian communities) probably arose from the *columbaria* that were used by both burial associations and wealthy families as early as the first century BCE.⁴⁹ Radiocarbon dating has determined that the Jewish catacombs were initiated by the first century of the Common Era, which counters the belief that the Christian catacombs

⁴⁵ Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 199.

⁴⁶ See Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 119-126.

⁴⁷ For more information on the elaborate funerary meals see: Graydon F. Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life Before Constantine*, Revised. (Mercer University Press, 2003), 41; Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 62. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336*, (Columbia University Press, 1995), 53.

⁴⁸ Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 234.

⁴⁹ Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead*, 261.

predated their Jewish neighbors.⁵⁰ There is debate amongst scholars as to whether or not there was the comingling of graves, however for the most part it is accepted that in the early period there was no expectation of exclusivity regarding burial.⁵¹ This is further reinforced by the fact that there was no explicit Christian prohibition of burial with non-Christians until the time of Charlemagne in 782.⁵²

There are some 35 or 36 known Christian catacombs which line the major ancient highways that radiate from Rome, some of which are pre-Constantinian, such as the oldest portions of the Catacomb of St. Callistus (the Sacrament chapel) and part of Lucina Catacomb (the double chamber). The catacombs were used for more than the disposal of the remains of the dead. It was here that the extended Christian community gathered to remember their dead. While the idea that they were the locations where Christians hid from the Roman persecutions is almost certainly false, these catacombs were visited by the living in order to honor the dead. Despite the issues of group size (the space was limited so large groups would have been impossible), it is clear from the graffiti and structures present in the catacomb of Priscilla that memorial meals for the

⁵⁰ Leonard V. Rutgers, "Radiocarbon dates from the Jewish catacombs of Rome," *Radiocarbon* 44, no. 2 (2002): 541–547.

⁵¹ Carroll, of modern authors, is nearly alone when she argues that at least as far as catacomb usage goes there was no comingling (261). Mark Johnson "Pagan-Christian Burial Practices of the Fourth Century: Shared Tombs?," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5, no. 1 (1997): 37-59; and Éric Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, *Cornell studies in classical philology* v. 59 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), observes that the six Jewish catacombs seem to have been exclusively Jewish, but that was more likely a matter of familial decision and family burial than a religious distinction. However Daniel Boyarin, argues against a clear distinction between Jewish and Christian groups especially during the first several centuries, at exactly the period of catacomb development which could imply that even these included some Jewish Christians. *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

⁵² Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, 29.

dead were practiced there.⁵³

Catacomb burial flourished through the fourth century. However, catacombs stopped being expanded by the end of the fourth century, at which point the majority of burials was taking place in conjunction with new Basilicas. When Jerome discussed his visits to the catacombs in the fourth century, it is clear that these locations were no longer being used for interment and perhaps were only infrequently visited:

While I was a boy at Rome being educated in the liberal arts, on Sundays I used to tour the tombs of the apostles and martyrs with others of the same age and inclination and frequently to enter the crypts, dug deep into the earth, that sheltered – on the walls on either side of us as we entered – the bodies of those buried there. Because everything was so dark, so that the saying of the prophet was almost fulfilled, ‘let them descend living to the dead.’⁵⁴

The catacombs continued to be places of pilgrimage until the translation of relics of the saints caused them to be ignored and then ultimately forgotten by the ninth century.

The Foundations, Roman Burial

⁵³ Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead*, 263.

⁵⁴ Jerome’s visit in his commentary on Ezekiel: CCL 75; 556.243-557.254: “Dum essem Romae puer et liberalibus studiis erudirer, solebam cum ceteris eiusdem aetatis et propositi, diebus Dominicis sepulcra apostolorum et martyrum circumire, crebroque cryptas ingredi quae, in terrarium profunda defossae, ex utraque parte ingredientium per parietes habent corpora sepulcorum, et quia obscura sunt omina, ut propemodum illud propheticum compleatur: ‘Descendant ad infernum viventes.’” trans. in Michael Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs: The Liber Peristephanon of Prudentius* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 158-159. For more information on Jerome’s student years in Rome see J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 21-23.

*Hominem mortuum in urbe ne sepelito neve urito.*⁵⁵

There were three basic notions on Roman death and burial. The first was that death brought pollution and demanded acts of purification. Paulus observed in his *Opinions* 1.21.2 (late second or early third century CE) that: “You are not allowed to bring a corpse into the city in case the sacred places in the city are polluted.”⁵⁶ Paulus’s reasoning about the desecration of sacred locations adds an explicitly religious dimension to the prohibition against the introduction of corpses in the city as decreed by the 12 tables, specifically that the *sacred* locations of the city would be polluted. Secondly the Romans felt that that to leave a corpse unburied had unpleasant repercussions on the afterlife of the deceased, who would subsequently inflict his/her own unpleasantness upon the living population.⁵⁷ Finally, monuments were an important way for the deceased to ensure their memory lasted long after their death.

Monuments, and more importantly the corpses that they memorialized, had to be separated from the homes of the living. The most fundamental aspect of Roman law

⁵⁵ Cicero, *De Legibus*. 2.58, “A dead man shall not be buried or burned in the city.” Trans. in Valerie M. Hope and Eireann Marshall, *Death and Disease in the Ancient City* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 92.

⁵⁶ Trans. Valerie M. Hope, *Death in Ancient Rome: A source book* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 129.

⁵⁷J. M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). See also: John Bodel, “Dealing with the dead: Undertakers executioners and potters fields in Ancient Rome,” in *Death and the Ancient City*, eds. Valerie M. Hope and Eireann Marshall (New York: Routledge, 2000), 128-151. John Bodel deals with common burials and the undertakers and executioners who may have dealt with them. There may have been roughly 30,000 people who died in Rome annually, with possibly 1500 turning up annually that were unclaimed and unwanted. From 100 BCE to 200 CE then there would have been some nine million corpses produced by the city, which had to be buried in one way or another. These were unceremoniously, and anonymously dumped in a mass grave at the Esquiline hill, outside of Rome.

concerning the treatment of the dead is that it was illegal to bury the remains of the deceased inside the walls of the city. Cicero's observation: "A dead man shall not be buried or burned in the city,"⁵⁸ is from Table X of the *Twelve Tables* of Roman law. These laws were part of the very foundation of Roman civilization, consequently the prohibition against the incorporation of corpses into the city was very strongly held. As we shall discuss in Chapter Four, Christians were attacked for the appearance of violating this prohibition and bringing corpses into the city. Corpses in the Hellenistic world fit into a Durkheimian realm of the taboo, of the otherness that should be avoided, which served as a focus for rituals.⁵⁹ Those whose occupations forced them to be in frequent contact with corpses were indelibly tainted by that contact. Undertakers and executioners had to live outside of the walls of the city, so as to avoid contaminating the city with their ritual impurity. Whenever they entered the city (which was frequently) they were forced to be clearly identifiable so that the general population would not be contaminated by them.⁶⁰ The remains of Roman citizens maintained some additional sort of sanctity, as it was illegal to tamper with citizen's remains, while non-Roman remains did not carry this same prohibition.⁶¹

The landed gentry were not only interested in being buried in conspicuous locations surrounding the cities. Those who had farms were also inclined to have their bodies moved from the city, so that they could be interred on the land of their farm. This

⁵⁸ See n. 9 above.

⁵⁹ Especially his definition of religion: "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden. . ." Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 46.

⁶⁰ John Bodel, "Dealing With the Dead," 131.

⁶¹ Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 48, 73ff.

may have represented a strong tie between Romans and their land.⁶² The sixth century surveyor Siculus Flaccus observed that the stones that marked the boundary from one farm to another often were confused with burial monuments.⁶³ This means that it was relatively common for the taboo against mingling living areas with areas for burial remained strong even when there would have been no strict legal prohibition against it. There was no wall around the agricultural property to bury the dead beyond, yet the same customs remained even without that visual barrier. Corpses, even here, remained external, liminal; if one was entering individual property, just as when entering a public city, one was first greeted by the necropolis.

Monuments to the Important Dead

The most striking monuments in and around Rome were, and continue to be, those that were erected for the important dead: emperors and their families. These grand monuments were constructed by those with the most wealth and power, and with potentially the greatest stake in how they would be remembered. Memory for an emperor was not simply a desire to escape the oblivion of anonymity, but also had very practical repercussions for the family and their hopes for dynastic successors. Their monuments sought to cement the claims of their successors.⁶⁴

Having identified this motive for the funerary monuments design one perceives that the tomb was not simply a monument to a dead ruler, but, perhaps more significantly an ascension monument as well, erected either by the Emperor himself out of concern for his descendants or by an heir to validate his claim to

⁶² Stephen L. Dyson, *Community and Society in Roman Italy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 144.

⁶³ *De Conditionibus Agrorum*, 139.23-26.

⁶⁴ See Penelope J. E. Davies, *Death and the Emperor*, 49ff.

the throne.⁶⁵

The form of the monument may well also have been intended to force the viewer to re-enact the funerary rituals, while at the same time providing an image of the empire that the emperor most wanted to be remembered for. Trajan's column forced the viewer to circumambulate the column in order to view its frieze, which spiraled from the base towards the top.⁶⁶

The monuments to the emperors ensured a particular memory, not only of the emperor, but also of their image of Rome. For example the Mausoleum of Augustus was a tomb but also a war monument, which celebrated the life of Augustus and presented for history the military prowess of Rome. Through the association of this monument with the *apotheosis* of Augustus, the monument was a "vital means of guaranteeing his descendants divine patronage, and thus setting them above potential pretenders to the throne."⁶⁷ Likewise those emperors who died early leaving behind less than glorious memories were buried hastily, without fanfare, in tombs that may have commemorated their family but presented no image of Rome. Nero, who expressed the desire that his body should be immediately cremated so that it would not be desecrated, was interred in a family tomb in Domitii. Caligula's body was likewise cremated, and so hastily done that it was only halfway burnt, and was buried in a shallow grave. It was only later, after

⁶⁵ Ibid. 74. We will see below that for the Christians discussed in the next chapter for Constantine the construction of shrines, was a monument for himself, while the epitaphs of Damasus were an attempt to claim to be the heir to the respect and power of the martyrs.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 127ff. See also above n. 24.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 172.

his sisters returned from exile that they had it exhumed and properly reburied in a tomb.⁶⁸

It was not only the Emperors' and their family's tombs that held a special status in the minds of the Romans. There is a tradition that Virgil's tomb was venerated as a cult center and locus for pilgrimage.⁶⁹ Another report states that Pliny "was the proud owner of one of Cicero's villas, and of the ground where Virgil [slept]. He used to keep the great poet's birthday with a scrupulous piety, and he always approached his tomb as a holy place."⁷⁰

Who Cares for the Dead?

*Quae monumenti ratio sit, nomine ipso admoneor, ad memoriam magis spectare debet posteritatis, quam ad praesentis temporis gratiam.*⁷¹

Family

The family was the primary institution in charge of the burial and care for the memory of the deceased. It was up to the family, or the extended household including freedmen and freedwomen and slaves (if they could afford it) to ensure that the proper rites were carried out immediately following the death of the individual, as well as paying for the construction and procurement of a tomb, including the inscription if any.

⁶⁸ Ibid 17. For a discussion on the pitfalls cremation see: David Noy, "'Half-Burnt on an Emergency Pyre": Roman Cremations Which Went Wrong," *Greece and Rome, Second Series* 47 No. 2 (October 2000): 186-196.

⁶⁹ R. D. Williams, "Changing Attitudes to Virgil: A study in the history of taste from Dryden to Tennyson," in *Studies in Latin Literature and its Influence: Virgil*, ed. D.R. Dudley (London: Routledge, 1969), 119.

⁷⁰ Samuel Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius* (London: Macmillan, 1905), 165.

⁷¹ Cicero, *Nonius*, 32.17: "What the monument should be, as the word itself suggests, should be aimed more to the memory of posterity, than to the present time of grace." trans. mine.

The family was also responsible for the care of the tomb, and commemoration of the death of the individual. They would share meals which ranged from relatively simple offerings to the deceased, to elaborate feasts. These memorial repasts to the dead happened *at the location of the tomb*. They were not instances where the family gathered together to commemorate the loss of their loved one inside the safety of their homes, or in the comfort of their own dining rooms. Rather they traveled outside the city walls, to the specific location of the remains of their departed, in order to share the meal with the departed. It was not uncommon for sarcophagi to have openings and tubes running directly to the corpse to ensure that the meal (or at least the wine) could be viscerally shared with the deceased.

This travel of individuals or groups of family members from their homes to the specific location of the graves of their dead in order to participate in ritualistic meals should be considered a form of pilgrimage. Granted this pilgrimage did not require much sacrifice, or involve the pilgrim traveling a tremendous distance; however it did involve a shift in boundary, a transition through a limen to be in one specific location in order to engage in a specific “religious” ritual that was required of the family. The requirement may not have been decreed by law, but it was ensured by custom. As we shall see in subsequent chapters this local pilgrimage to the graves of the dead by their family was quite possibly the humble beginning of the Christian pilgrimages to the shrines of the saints to celebrate not the day of their death, but rather the day of their birth into their heavenly life.⁷²The Christian community saw themselves as the new family, and as such

⁷² See Ann Marie Yasin: “Funerary Monuments and collective Identity: From Roman Family to Christian Community,” *Art Bulletin* 87.3 (Sept 2005): 433-457; and

took an interested role in the ancestral care for the dead.

Voluntary Associations

One major obstacle that individuals and families had to overcome with the procurement of a monument to memorialize themselves and their family was related to the expense of burial. There is a degree of debate surrounding exactly how expensive it would have been to bury a corpse in the Mediterranean world. Thomas Nielsen estimated that it would be a reasonable 10-20 drachmae in the late Hellenistic period: “Even poor citizens could easily afford a grave monument inscribed with their name.”⁷³ This low estimate is contrasted by G.J. Oliver who argues that the cost of burial would have been comprised of significantly more than simply the purchase of a monument, and consequently the whole endeavor would have been priced well out of the reach of the majority of the population, somewhere in the 100-500 dr. range.⁷⁴

Due to the expense of, and the desire for individual burials (and the memorialization that came with them), a relatively new group became a prominent player in the burial of Romans in the first several centuries: namely, voluntary associations, or *collegia*.⁷⁵ These associations allowed their members to be part of an organization, and

“Commemorating the dead – Constructing the Community: Church space, funerary monuments and Saint’s cults in Late Antiquity” Ph.D. Diss., University of Chicago 2002

⁷³ Thomas Nielsen et al. “Athenian Grave Monuments and Social Class.” *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 30:3 (1989): 412.

⁷⁴ G.J. Oliver, “Athenian Funerary Monuments: Style, Grandeur and Construction,” in *Epigraphy of Death: Studies in the History and Society of Greece and Rome*, ed. G. J. Oliver (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000).

⁷⁵ Debate exists regarding the population which comprised *collegia*, and what their motivations were. Essentially the debate concerns: would the very wealthy have participated in these groups, and if they did, did they also participate in the communal burial that they offered? See Jinyu Liu, *Collegia Centonariorum: The Guilds of Textile*

when they died, that organization would take care of their burial.⁷⁶ Associations existed that were primarily focused around a particular profession, religious group, or a collection of people who took care of the burial of their members, not unlike an insurance policy, with the added benefit of getting together to eat and drink periodically in memory of the other members of the group. John Kloppenburg divides these groups into specific groups for ease of organization: the Sacerdotal Colleges (or Sacred Sodalties) and Private Associations.⁷⁷ The first of these were characterized by elite membership and were established by an act of the senate. The latter had no official function, and tended to have a non-elite membership. Furthermore there were three differing types of groups within these initial two: *Collegia tenurorum* (burial),⁷⁸ *Collegia sodalicia* (religious) and professional associations.⁷⁹ This burial may have been accomplished through a common

Dealers in the Roman West (Netherlands: Brill, 2009), 271ff. for a discussion of the debate. For a discussion on the applicability of *collegia* to Pauline communities (with a good introduction of *collegia*) see Richard S. Ascough, *Paul's Macedonian Associations: The Social Context of Philippians & 1 Thessalonians* (Tübingen: Paul Mohr Verlag, 2003); Philip Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (New York: Fortress Press, 2003); Wayne A Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*. 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003); and John Kloppenburg and Stephen Wilson eds. *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

⁷⁶ Ramsey MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman order: treason, unrest, and alienation in the Empire* (New York: Routledge, 1966), 174, discusses this as essentially burial insurance.

⁷⁷ John S. Kloppenburg, "Collegia and Thisoi: Issues in function, Taxonomy and Membership," in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, eds. John S. Kloppenburg and Stephen Wilson (New York: Routledge, 1996).

⁷⁸ There is little debate regarding the existence of voluntary associations, in Roman society, who were only formed for the commemoration of their dead members. Despite this concord, there is some degree of disagreement about how early they began to function explicitly and primarily as funerary societies. Carroll argues that there was a functioning *collegia* which existed for the purpose of the burial of its members from the Society of the cult of Silvanus (*Lex familiae Silvani*) as early as 60ce. This is several hundred years earlier than Kloppenburg asserts. See Carroll, *Spirits*, 44.

⁷⁹ See also Liu, *Collegia centonariorum*.

fund that each member paid into on a monthly basis, or it may have been an offering made by the individual members of the community once one of their brethren died.

Samuel Dill correctly notes that: “The primary object of a multitude of colleges, like that of the worshipers of Diana and Antinous at the Lanuvium, was undoubtedly . . . the care of the memory of their members after death.”⁸⁰ This work of memory was performed through the dutiful internment of the deceased as well as through the frequent (typically *at least* monthly) communal meal held by the *collegia* in honor of their deceased members. These affairs had a reputation for being, or at least descending into, drunken debaucheries. Describing similar practices amongst the Christians, Tertullian was quick to point out that the money given by Christians for the care of their members was not spent “upon banquets nor drinking parties nor thankless eating houses.”⁸¹ Philo of Alexandria likewise was critical of the drunkenness of the associations when he observed that these groups were only interested in drunkenness and “outrageous conduct.”⁸² Both of these instances were criticisms of *collegia* by those who sought to distance themselves from the tarnished reputation of these societies, primarily because of the common features (e.g. consumption of meals, burial of members) that they shared with the *collegia* which would have led outsiders to fail to distinguish between them. Consequently they were forced to draw boundaries around their practices that were not self-evident.⁸³ The Roman Varro in the first century was critical of the associations for an

⁸⁰ Dill, *Roman Society*, 259.

⁸¹ Tertullian, *Apol.*, 39.3-6. PL 1. 0740A: “Nam inde non epulis nec potaculis, nec ingratis voratrinis dispensator.” Tertullian. 1931. *Tertullian. Apology. De Spectaculis*, Trans. T. R. Glover, LCL. (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press), 175.

⁸² Philo, *In Flacc.*, 136, trans. Ramsey MacMullen, *Roman Social Relation*, 78.

⁸³ See Frederik Barth, *Ethnic groups and boundaries: the social organization of culture difference* (Long Grove IL: Waveland Press, 1998).

altogether different reason. His criticism came because of the frequency of the eating and drinking (and the subsequent increase in the prices of food and drink due to these festivities) performed by these associations.⁸⁴

These groups became responsible for the physicality of the burial and disposal of the corpses they also provided a location for the commemoration of the individual. It may seem that they had replaced the role of the family in so far as the care of the dead is concerned and this, in many regards, was the case. John Paterson, however, demonstrates that the families of the deceased were frequently still involved in the decision making process surrounding the care of their corpse.⁸⁵ There was often a good deal of co-operation between the family and the association, where either the family would contribute their input to the burial of the individual in the *columbaria* or the Association would contribute money to the family to supplement the costs associated with burial.⁸⁶

Whether burial was performed by the family or a voluntary association there was a noticeable decline in the number of grave markers toward the end of the third century.⁸⁷ Hope and Meyer each argue that this decline in memorialization could be attributed to the increasingly indiscriminate granting of citizenship to inhabitants of the Empire during this period. This, they claim, removed the need for social distinction in commemorative

⁸⁴ Varro, *De Re Rustica* 3.2.16. To the list of criticisms of the debauchery of the *collegia*, MacMullen (178 n. 4) adds negative discussion of the *seribibi* ("late drinkers" CIL 4.575) found in Pompeii, but this seems to be tangential as there is no evidence as to why we should count all of those who drink late into the night as an organized *collegia*.

⁸⁵ John Patterson, "Imperial Rome," in *Death in Towns: Urban Responses to the Dying and the Dead, 100-1600*, ed. Steven Bassett (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1995), 23.

⁸⁶ See Jonathan Scott Perry *The Roman Collegia: The Modern Evolution of an Ancient Concept* (Netherlands: Brill 1999), esp. chapter four where he collects nearly 40 inscriptions depicting such co-operation between family and Association.

⁸⁷ Ramsay MacMullen, "The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire," *The American Journal of Philology* 103, no. 3 (Autumn, 1982): 233-246.

monuments. Prior to nearly universal citizenship, those of lower classes who had gained their citizenship often proudly proclaimed that citizenship in an attempt to gain a degree of respect and authority that they did not necessarily have in life. Hope has done some fascinating work on this, looking at the monuments of both soldiers and gladiators.⁸⁸ She concludes that it was the marginalized that through their work in either arena achieved citizenship. As a result of their hard won citizenship they were most eager to proclaim that status on their memorials (or their descendants who were most interested in claiming it for them). Consequently they spent lavish sums on their memorials, significantly more than their economic peers who were citizens by birth. This echoes Hodder who states that it is “[i]n death [that] people be[came] what they [had] not been in life.”⁸⁹

One has to wonder if it was simply a coincidence that during precisely this period of decline in the general interest in memorializing the dead in the Roman Empire, we start to see the first instances of specifically Christian burials. Did the emergent Christian church, a marginalized group which was beginning to express its identity both to itself as well as to the larger Roman world, now pick up the tools that had been previously used as a means of gaining status in death that the people did not have in life? These rhetorical tools of burial fit well in the hands of the Christians who wielded them, in their own distinctive style, and in their own distinctive locations. We will now turn our attention to the development of explicitly Christian burial.

⁸⁸ E.g. Hope, “Constructing Roman identity: Funerary monuments and social structure in the Roman world,” *Mortality: Promoting the Interdisciplinary Study of Death and Dying* 2, no. 2 (1997): 103; Hope, “Negotiating status and identity: The Gladiatorial tombstones of Roman Nimes” in *Cultural Identity in the Roman World*, eds. J. Berry and R. Laurence (London: Routledge, 1998); “Trophies and Tombstones: Commemorating the Roman Soldier,” *World Archeology* 35, no. 1 (2003): 79-97.

⁸⁹ Ian Hodder, *The Present Past: An Introduction to Anthropology for Archaeologists* (New York: Pica Press, 1983), 146.

Christian Differentiation, Isolation, Self-expression

When the anniversary of their death comes around, we make ritual offerings for the dead as birthday honors.⁹⁰

There is no evidence that suggests the burial practices of the first Christians were unlike their Jewish and Pagan neighbors. They would have been cremated or inhumated as per the custom of the geographic and ethnic circles that they lived in. There is little to no reference to a specifically Christian form of burial or burial practices in the New Testament.⁹¹ Likewise the Pauline communities (at least in so far as we can tell from his letters) were not particularly concerned with how this new belief system affected the treatment of their dead. Burial of the dead throughout the Mediterranean was a common social phenomena and not one explicitly relegated to the practices of any individual cult. It was not until the end of the second century that specifically Christian sepulchral art

⁹⁰ Tertullian *Cor.* 3.3, PL 2.0079A-B: “Eucharistiae sacramentum, et in tempore victus, et omnibus mandatum a Domino, etiam antelucanis coetibus, nec de aliorum manu quam praesidentium sumimus: oblationes pro defunctis, pro natalitiis annua die facimus,” trans. in Nicola Denzey, *The Bone Gatherers: The Lost Worlds Of Early Christian Women* (Boston: Beacon, 2007), 135.

⁹¹ Perhaps the only exception being Paul's discourse in 1 Cor. 8:1ff about the consumption of food sacrificed to idols which may have been aimed at the participation of Christians in the consumption of memorial meals for the dead. See also, Charles A. Kennedy “The Cult of the dead in Corinth,” in *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East*, eds. John H. Marks and Robert M. Goods (New York: Four Quarters, 1987), 230; Wane Meeks argues that it was highly likely that these early Christian communities continued the Memorial meals: “Nothing would seem more natural than for Christians of Paul's groups, for whom common meals were already so important, to hold funeral meals for deceased brothers as well – either separately, or as part of the Lords supper,” *The First Urban Christians*, 162.

began to be produced.⁹² As we have seen, burial was a means by which an underclass could present itself as important and worthy of respect. Consequently it would be in keeping with the practices of other Roman subgroups that the early Christians would seek self-expression and perhaps more importantly legitimacy through sepulchral art.⁹³ But I would also argue that it made sense for Christians to take time in developing their own language of burial, which simultaneously cited and deviated from the practices of their neighbors. This delay would be especially noticeable, as there was no specific theological significance to their initial burial practices.

While the practices, at first, were not significant theologically, it is important to note that Christians fundamentally altered the Roman understanding of death. In the Roman context death was simply an ending. While there was the belief in the spirits of the underworld, as made clear by the ubiquity of the phrase *Dis Manibus*⁹⁴ there was never any real desire to depict the dead as “members of a new and separate afterlife.”⁹⁵ Christians, on the other hand, approached death in two distinct manners. The first of these was the idea that the individual was not dead but merely sleeping.⁹⁶ Paul first discussed

⁹² Of course it is always difficult to interpret these images concretely, see Ross S. Kraemer, “Jewish Tuna and Christian Fish: Identifying religious affiliation in epigraphic sources,” *Harvard Theological Review* 84 (1991): 141-62.

⁹³ See Valery Hope, “Negotiating status and identity: The Gladiatorial tombstones of Roman Nimes” in *Cultural identity in the Roman World*. eds. J. Berry and R. Laurence (London: Routledge, 1998); and “Constructing Roman identity,” 103. In both she argues that those who created the most elaborate monuments were not those of the highest levels of society, rather the most elaborate memorials came from those who were just below the highest level (typically freedmen) who wanted to project an air of respectability, with the hopes of claiming a respectability in death that they could not obtain in life.

⁹⁴ Commonly abbreviated “DM” on tombstones.

⁹⁵ Valerie Hope, *Roman Death: Dying and the Dead in Ancient Rome* (London: Continuum, 2009), 39.

⁹⁶ See Pieter W. Van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs: An Introductory Survey of a Millennium of Jewish Funerary Epigraphy (300 BCE – 700 CE)* (Kampen: Kos Pharos,

the notion that the departed Christian brethren are not dead, but sleeping, in the first century. This would ultimately become the standard in Christian literature.⁹⁷ Once Christian burial became more established, rather than dedicating the dead to the spirits of the underworld, they were more often proclaimed to be “resting here” or *hic dormit*.⁹⁸ In concert with this understanding was the idea that it was possible for the soul of the deceased to be in the company of God awaiting the resurrection. The deceased, and especially the martyred saint, existed in two distinct locations simultaneously: sleeping in the grave and in the presence of God in heaven. This dual nature of the dead would become tremendously important in developing of the understanding of the efficacy of being in the presence of the martyr’s remains.

The Origins of Christian Burial

Duty to remember the martyrs or duty to support the destitute, the duty to bury the dead played a significant role in the construction of Christian identity throughout the third century and the beginning of the fourth.⁹⁹

The presence of Christian burial is extremely well attested in Rome, with between 30,000 to 35,000 specifically Christian epitaphs, which come from as early as the late

1991), 118, for Jewish antecedents regarding death as sleep. Van der Horst is hesitant to conclude as to whether the deceased was to be seen as awaiting resurrection or simply should not be disturbed.

⁹⁷ Cor. 15:18ff.

⁹⁸ See Carroll, *Spirits*, 272, for a discussion of the usage of *hic dormit* in Christian epigraphy. She notes that Christian epitaphs, “do not read as pagan epitaphs often do, as bitter lamentations of the loss of life” (273). It may have been only in death that Christians believed that life began, as is evidenced by the celebration of the “birthdays” of the martyrs.

⁹⁹ Éric Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead*, 100.

second or early third-century.¹⁰⁰ Initially Christians were buried according to their familial traditions with no distinctively new Christian practices. They were buried next to their pagan and Jewish neighbors with no theological or soteriological mandates for an exclusively Christian burial or burial location. As time progressed “cemeteries” developed where Christians were exclusively buried.¹⁰¹ However, prior to the second or third century (when specifically Christian cemeteries and catacombs arose) there would not have been any hesitation to bury Christians with their non-Christian neighbors, and even after that there were no doctrinal prohibitions of private Christians who wished to be buried with those outside of the *ekkelesia*.¹⁰²

The James ossuary is possibly the earliest evidence of the burial of a follower of Jesus, if one considers it to be authentic to the brother of Jesus.¹⁰³ If we were to posit that the ossuary was authentic, then Craig A. Evans observes that there may well be four pieces of information that we have gained about Jesus, and more specifically the early church. These include the notion that Jesus and James spoke Aramaic, that James continued to live in Jerusalem, died there, and that his mourners, while followers of

¹⁰⁰ Carroll, *Spirits*, 261.

¹⁰¹ Ibid . Although the exclusive nature of Christian burial is a matter of debate, as is the clear identification of Christian iconography, see Ross S. Kraemer “Jewish Tuna.” Also note the issue of exclusivity is not as clear cut as it might have been. Mark Johnson in his work on the possibility of Pagans and Christians being buried together provides a good introduction to the various canonical laws, or more specifically the lack thereof, surrounding the specifics locations of Christian Burial. Johnson, “Pagan-Christian Burial Practices,” 38 examines exclusivity in both Christian and Jewish and concludes that it was more likely a matter of a close group being buried together than an issue of theological importance.

¹⁰² Cf. Carroll, *Spirits*, 161.

¹⁰³ See Craig A. Evans, *Jesus and the Ossuaries: What Burial Practices Reveal about the Beginning of Christianity* (Waco TX: Baylor University Press, 2003) for a discussion of the Authenticity of the ossuary. While Evans seems to side with its authenticity, it is not necessarily his main point.

Jesus, still followed Jewish customs regarding burial. While the first three items are not necessarily important for the present work, the last point is significant: that the first Christian community, made up of the family and followers of Jesus continued to practice the *exact* same traditions as their Jewish neighbors. It implies that the practice of burial was not, at least at this point, used to demarcate the boundaries of the initiates versus those outside of the Jesus community.¹⁰⁴ As such we should look to other analogous groups who also collectively cared for their dead, namely voluntary associations.

Christianity as a Voluntary Association

Much of the modern scholarship that has looked at the relationship between voluntary associations, or *collegia*, and the emergent church has been done by scholars of the New Testament and has focused almost exclusively on Pauline communities.¹⁰⁵ Even if the comparison between the emergent Church and voluntary associations is not perfect, the comparison aids us in our quest for a greater understanding of both the world in which these communities developed as well as how these communities viewed themselves in general, and how they were viewed by outsiders with regard to their burial practices in particular. The analogies between *collegia* and the early church, both Pauline and working into the second and third century, far outweigh the minor divergences that have been demonstrated between these groups.¹⁰⁶ I am inclined to argue that those who

¹⁰⁴ See Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, on constructed boundaries and social self-identification and cohesion.

¹⁰⁵ For a discussion on this see: Ascough, *Paul's Macedonian Associations; What Are They Saying About the Formation of Pauline Churches?* (New York : Paulist Press, 1998). See also above n. 71.

¹⁰⁶ E.g. in Meeks, *The first Urban Christians*.

dispute the similarities may be attempting to shield the early church from the taint of association with non-Christian gentile practices.

Ann Marie Yasin takes that stance that the analogous structure that we should compare the early Christian groups to is not *collegia*, but rather the family.¹⁰⁷ However as we have seen, especially regarding burial, this is a false dichotomy. Both the early Christian communities and those who joined in voluntary associations sought to replicate the role of the family in the remembrance and the commemoration of their dead. It is true that the relationship between the early church and *collegia* is not precise, neither is it exact between the church and the family. While the church took care of many of the functions of the family, it was not as if participation in the church eradicated all familial loyalty. Ramsey MacMullen dismissed Yasin's notion that the collective identity of the group outweighing familial identity was unique to Christians, through his observation of the "ubiquity of *mausolea* and *hypogea* built close to basilicas by families that could afford them, keeping themselves to themselves."¹⁰⁸ The truth seems to have laid somewhere in between: the church provided a focus for burial, in much the same way that the *collegia* did. However in neither case did the group practice completely eliminate the desire for individual memory. When they had the money, the individual or their family, sought to distinguish themselves from the larger population for the preservation of their own memory. We will discuss Augustine's analysis of *ad Sanctos* burial in chapter

¹⁰⁷ Ann Marie Yasin, "Commemorating the dead," Cf. Maureen Carroll, *Spirits*, 264; and Valeriy A. Alikin, *The Earliest History of the Christian Gathering: Origin, Development and Content of the Christian Gathering in the First to Third Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 17.

¹⁰⁸ Ramsey MacMullen, "Christian Ancestor Worship in Rome," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129, no. 3 (2010): 610. Cf. Ann Marie Yasin, "Funerary Monuments and Collective Identity: From Roman Family to Christian Community," *Art Bulletin* 87 (2005).

three, however it is worth noting that for Augustine the only thing that burial near the saint did for an individual was allow them to be *remembered* (and prayed for) more than if they had been buried elsewhere, due to the number of pilgrims who would pass on their way to the saint's grave.

Yasin too quickly claimed both that Christian identity overwhelmed the desire for the individual to be remembered as an individual, as well as the idea that this was a unique feature to Christianity. However, MacMullen too quickly dismissed the idea that Christians saw themselves as a new family and structured their burial around normative behavior for the familial unit. Even within familial *hypogea* and the larger *columbaria* there were locations of more or less prominence. These conspicuous locations went to the important dead of the family. Similarly in many, if not all, Christian catacombs and burial basilicas there were locations where the important dead (martyrs, saints, bishops) were interred. The important feature that both the early Christian burial practices and those of the *collegia* shared was the fact that they collectively took care of their dead. They venerated them collectively which exceeded the previous Roman tradition of hereditary tribute.

One complicating factor surrounding *collegia* and the early Church is the question of whether or not Christian groups saw themselves as voluntary associations. One theory asserts that it was possible that they may have intentionally organized themselves as *collegia* in order to gain legal status for the administration of their cemeteries, although this is most likely not the case.¹⁰⁹ We can also see in the few instances where Christians explicitly make reference to *collegia* (and burial within that group) the Christian authors

¹⁰⁹ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, 47.

attempted to define the boundaries between these groups by casting the non-Christian groups in a negative light. Even then, however, there were no absolute prohibitions against a Christian being a member of other *collegia*. Cyprian complained that in addition to offering sacrifices to idols during the persecutions in the mid third century, Martialis (a Spanish bishop) also visited the *collegia* and ate at their banquets. Not only did Martialis dine with these groups, but he also buried his sons “among profane sepulchers,” in essence burying them with those outside of the Christian community.¹¹⁰ Here we have a Christian bishop, Martialis, who frequented the banqueting of the *collegia*, and buried his son there. While Cyprian was not pleased with this behavior, it was only once Martialis became a *lapsi* and sacrificed to idols that he needed to be removed from the episcopal seat. His association with *collegia* was looked down upon, but was not sufficiently inappropriate for his removal from office. One can conclude from this, that it was not expected that burial of Christians, in the middle of the third century, had to be with their own group, or even that the church would take care of the burial of all of its members (whether they liked it or not). Christians (even bishops and their family) were free to bury their dead however they pleased; it was noteworthy (but not forbidden) when they ignored their Christian family and buried them “among profane sepulchers.”¹¹¹

The Burial of the Important Dead

¹¹⁰ Cyprian, *Ep.* 67.6 Cyprian refers to these groups as “strangers” however if Martialis had been feasting with them, it is unlikely that he meant strangers in the sense of the unknown, but rather in the sense that they were not part of the Christian community. This is also echoed in the contemporaneous *Inst. Com.* 2.29.12-13, See Rebillard, *Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, 51.

¹¹¹ Elsewhere Cyprian observed that the clergy were responsible for the burial of the martyrs. *Ep.* 12.2.1.

Many recent works have covered the place of martyrdom in emergent Christianity.¹¹² The origin of Christian martyrdom, like many origin stories, is one that is shrouded in debate, and is not necessarily a debate that I am interested in engaging too fully at the moment. The history of Christian martyrdom traces its roots to the ad hoc persecution of Christians by Nero, and then the subsequent and more systematic persecutions in the ensuing centuries. For the purposes of this work we will focus primarily on what is done with the martyrs' corpses after their death. This will include references to martyr acts; however it will not focus primarily on those passion narratives beyond what they can tell us about the desire to commemorate the martyr, the centrality of the remains for that commemoration, and subsequent supplication.

Our earliest martyr account, although it does not necessarily include the death itself, comes from Ignatius in his epistle to the church in Rome. In this letter Ignatius wrote of his desire to be thrown to wild beasts.¹¹³ This passage depicts knowledge that his co-religionists might have an interest in his remains, and his subsequent desire not to bother anyone with that burden. In his retelling of the events Eusebius observes that his wish to be cast to the beasts was honored, and that the reason for that desire was not. After he was torn apart by the beasts the faithful gathered together “the harder portions of

¹¹² Indeed almost any work that deals with the formative events of the third, fourth, and fifth century has to touch on the topic to one degree or another. Many relevant works are cited elsewhere in this paper. However for a representative sample see: Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les Origines du Culte des Martyrs* (Bruxelles: Bureaux de la Société des Bollandistes 1912) which is still considered one of the best works on the subject; W.H.C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford, 1965); Glen Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God*.

¹¹³ Ignatius, *Ep. ad Rom.* ch. 4.

his holy remains.”¹¹⁴ Subsequently they were taken to Antioch where, wrapped in linen, they were seen as an “inestimable treasure.” In many, if not most subsequent martyr narratives, this desire by the Christian community to gather the remains (even soaking up the blood) of the martyrs would become a central feature.

Those who could not be martyrs themselves were inundated with stories and tales of martyrs. They were discussed as early as the second century in Revelations 6:9 where the author describes seeing the souls, under the altar, of those who had died violently as a witness to Jesus. It is interesting that John places a connection between martyrs and the altar at such an early date as it was not until several centuries later that there was a consistent connection between altars and the graves of the martyrs,¹¹⁵ as intimated most spectacularly by the translation of martyr relics by Ambrose. But even before the physical presence of the martyr was felt in the church structure, martyr accounts were being read to Christian congregations in the second century.¹¹⁶ By the middle of the third century, Cyprian observed that it was the responsibility of the clergy to care for the burial of the martyrs.¹¹⁷

The martyrdom of the individual transformed violence and death into a means of creating meaning and order in a universe in desperate need of having order imposed on it: “by turning the chaos and meaningless violence into Martyrdom, one reassert[ed] the

¹¹⁴ Eusebius, *M. Ign.* Ch. 6 trans. Alaxander Roberts James Donaldson and Athur C. Coxe, eds. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325 Volume I - The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus* (New York: Costimo Classics, 2007 [orig 1885]), 131, PG 5.987b-988a.

¹¹⁵ It was possible that the Eucharist was performed at the graves of the martyrs at least as early as the late second century. See Valeriy A. Alikin, *The Earliest History*, 103.

¹¹⁶ *M. Pol.* 20, *M. Perp. et Fel.* 1.5, denote the reading of these tales within the church. See also: Alikin, *Earliest History*, 171.

¹¹⁷ *Ep.* 12.2.1.

priority and superiority of an imagined or longed-for order and a privileged and idealized system of meaning.”¹¹⁸ This system of meaning was produced through the retelling of martyr acts, it was also fashioned through the construction of martyr shrines, which may have been the first Christian building endeavors. Initially these shrines were small memorial chapels, or *cellae memoriae*.¹¹⁹ However the first graves to the martyrs were not necessarily elaborate structures, but were more likely indistinguishable from the graves for the common Christian.¹²⁰

As the common Christian’s graves were indistinguishable from the common Roman graves, these early martyr graves would have been easily overlooked. Indeed Ambrose’s discovery of the graves of Protasius and Gervais in 386 corroborates the idea that Christians (at least in Milan) did not believe that all of their martyrs’ graves were well marked. Aside from the Arians, who had political reasons for not trusting Ambrose, there appeared to have been no hesitation amongst his congregation to accept that bodies from unmarked graves were truly those of martyrs.

Martyrs were also buried in the Christian catacombs, once they began to be constructed. Here too martyrs were laid in simple graves without apparent elaborate inscriptions or decoration. There is some evidence of pilgrim graffiti surrounding various niches, and others would eventually have inscriptions placed over them, even if they did

¹¹⁸ Elizabeth Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 34; Stephanie L. Cobb, *Dying to Be Men: Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts* (Columbia University Press, 2008). See also Lucy Grig, *Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity* (London: Duckworth, 2004), who pushes that date back through the fourth and fifth centuries.

¹¹⁹ Gillian Mackie, *Early Christian Chapels in the West: Decoration, Function and Patronage* (Toronto: University of Toronto press, 2003), 9.

¹²⁰ Joseph Alcherms, “‘Cura Pro Mortuis’ and ‘Cultus Martyrum’: Commemoration in Rome,” (Thesis [Ph.D.], New York University, 1989), 10.

not initially have inscriptions when the corpse was interred.¹²¹ Despite the evidence for martyrs' graves in the catacombs, "the martyr cult developed more above the ground in special edifices called *martyria*."¹²² Initially these were housed in small buildings, which both marked the grave of the martyr and provided room for the local community to gather.¹²³ Graydon Snyder describes two pre-Constantine *martyria*, one in Bonn, Germany, and the other in Salona, Croatia. The martyrrium in Bonn was a small roofed room (3.25m by 2.55m) which contained two *mensae*. From the incorporation of a bowl into one of the *mensa* as well as pictorial representations, it is clear that food was shared with the community, living and dead. The food was also distributed to the poor. While no martyr's body was discovered at the martyrrium in Bonn, Snyder observes that it was most likely built next to a non-masonry building which housed the martyr's tomb.¹²⁴

The site at Salona was built around the graves of several martyrs which were believed to have been killed during the Diocletian persecution (c. 304). The initial graves were not elaborately decorated, however the subsequent *ad Sanctos* burials were inscribed with various notations indicating that they were buried in that location in order to be next to the graves of the martyrs. A small structure was erected in order for the *refrigerium* meals to be celebrated. Snyder observes that it is difficult to date the construction of the building, however due to the distance from Rome he is skeptical that it was an imitation of Constantine's building endeavors.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Alchermes, "*Cura Pro Mortuis*," 34.

¹²² Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 164.

¹²³ Gillian Mackie, *Early Christian Chapels in the West: Decoration, Function, and Patronage* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 9.

¹²⁴ Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 164-166.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 166-171. See also J. B. Ward-Perkins, "Memoria, Martyr's Tomb and Martyr's Church," *Journal of Theological Studies* 17 (1966): 20-37.

Eventually *martyria* would serve two purposes: not only did they mark the location of the graves of the martyrs (and thereby preserved their memory), they also organized the space around that grave for the function of the pilgrims (initially from the surrounding country side) who visited those locations.¹²⁶ I want to suggest then that the martyrs served in the early church as the important dead of the community, and consequently should be viewed as an extension of the Roman important dead. Prior to Constantine they did not have the status that the deceased emperor may have had, rather they were the important dead within a familial unit. As the Church came to fill, or even replace, the functions of the family, so too then did the shrines of the martyrs become the center of those family units as they continued their traditional role of commemorating the dead. The veneration of the saints in this regard was not something radically new to the Christian community, but rather continued previous Roman practice. However, now it was not only the biological family that visited the graves of their important dead, but the larger spiritual family of the Christian community as well. The care of the dead was an important enough aspect of the life of the third century Christian community that Valerian (according to Eusebius) prohibited the gathering, or even entering, of Christians in “cemeteries.”¹²⁷

Burial of the Poor

¹²⁶ See Andre Grabar, “From Martyrium to the Church: Christian Architecture, East and West,” *Archaeology* 2:2 (1949): 97.

¹²⁷ Eusebius *H.e.* 7.11.10 See also, Rebillard, *Care*, 97.

The last and greatest office of piety is the burying of strangers and the poor.¹²⁸

Early Christians focused a good deal of attention on the burial of the important dead; they also set up common funds for the burial of those who could not provide for their own burial. The early second century text *The Apology of Aristides* observed with pride the fact that not only did Christians give to the poor, they buried them as well.¹²⁹ Aristides noted here that Christians contributed to a communal fund for the care of the poor, including burial. He was also quick to observe that their burial was taken care of carefully. Even the indigent Christian was afforded a proper burial; he/she was not unceremoniously dumped into the communal mass grave at Potter's Field as were the many unwanted corpses of Rome. Tertullian argued in his *Apology* that burial of the poor was an act of charity commensurate with other acts of kindness toward those who cannot take care of themselves. The money was not spent on drinking: "but to support and bury poor people, to supply the wants of boys and girls destitute of means and parents, the aged veteran, or to relieve the shipwrecked sailors, those who have been banished to the prisons in the Metellan islands on account of their faith."¹³⁰ In much the same way as it

¹²⁸ Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* 6.12.25, PL 6.633B: "Ultimum illud et maximum pietatis officium est, peregrinorum et pauperum sepultura." Translated by William Fletcher. *From Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 7. Ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886.)

¹²⁹ Aristides, *Apol.*, XV.

¹³⁰ Tertullian, *Apol.* 39.3-6, PL 1.467b-468a: "istas distribuere in usum sepulturae, aut ad alendos egenos, orphanos, senes emeritos, aut ad refocillandos naufragos, vel ob fidem in metella, insulas, carceres relegatos." trans. mine. Despite these passages which discussed the burial of the common Christians, John Bodel argued that bishops prior to Constantine were not interested in the burial of the common poor. See John Bodel, "From Columbaria to Catacombs: Collective Burial in Pagan and Christian Rome," in *Commemorating the dead: texts and artifacts in context: studies of Roman, Jewish, and Christian Burials*, eds. Laurie Brink and Deborah A. Green (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 182.

was a function of a family to provide for the burial of its members, so too did the Christian community care for its members. The Christians were concerned with the care of the corpses of their most destitute members, not with getting well fed and drunk. Despite this, we shall see in chapter three that those opposed to the reverence paid to martyrs at their tombs, and even those who sought to promote that reverence, were quick to point to the drunkenness of the crowds as detrimental to the martyr cult. Tertullian was drawing a boundary between the practices of the church and other groups with their own common funds (i.e. *collegia*), which may not have been clear to the outside observer.¹³¹

There is one other early text which clearly demonstrates the understanding of a communal burial location, and specifically notes the presence of the poor, as well as an episcopal participation in the distribution of funds for the burial of the poor. The *Apostolic Tradition*, although it is an anonymous text, is typically attributed to Hippolytus.¹³² Chapter 40, which deals with burial, does not exist in the Latin manuscript, so is probably not from the earliest layer of the text. However the translation from the Sahidic states:

Do not let them overcharge people to bury a man in the cemeteries. For it is the property of every poor person. Only let the one who digs be given the wage of the worker with the price of the tiles. And those who are in that place, who take care [of it], let the bishop support them, so that is [the burial place] shall not become burdensome to any who come to those places.¹³³

¹³¹ See Barth, *Boundaries*, 9.

¹³² *The Apostolic Tradition* went through a complex editing process including several layers and consequently does not represent the practices of any one early Christian community. See Paul F. Bradshaw, Johnson and Philips, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), xi.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, ch. 61, 192. Similar content is found in both the Arabic and Ethiopic versions of the text as well as the two derivatives the *Cannons of Hippolytus* (generally thought not to have been written by Hippolytus) as well as the *Testamentum Domini*. The latter includes discussion of grave cloths as well the possibility that it was individuals who provided burial locations, but *if* the church had a burial location it should give it to the

We can see in all of these accounts that the general focus for the burial of the poor was not out of a particular interest in burial as a specifically Christian phenomenon, but rather an act of charity.¹³⁴ The Church became the benefactor or patron of those members who could not afford burial on their own. As we have seen, not all Christians by the third century were buried by or with their Christian brethren. However the burial of the important dead, the martyrs and bishops, as well as the destitute was performed collectively by their coreligionists. The locations of these interments and the ownership of the locations in the second and third century is far from clear.

Koimeterion Debate

From at least the time of Tertullian and Hippolytus there was a notion that Christians may have seen to the burial of their dead. This being the case we need to ask, where it was that these early groups buried their important and indigent brethren. Typically we think of groups burying their dead in a cemetery that was collectively owned by that group for the burial of their dead. Eventually this would become the norm for the Christian community both in catacomb burial as well as in later basilica burial. However the idea of a cemetery as we think of it is decidedly anachronistic and cannot accurately be used in the Roman context. The term “cemetery” itself developed out of

use of the poor. The idea that *if* the church had a burial location implies that there must have been (at least on the part of the author) a large readership for the text, and that there were some church communities that did not have a common burial location, but there were others (emphasis on the plural) that did. In other words he was writing to groups who both had and did not have communal burial plots.

¹³⁴ Aristides, *Apol.*, XIV, notes that some of these practices were performed by Jewish populations as well.

usage by early Christians, although the meaning that they ascribed to the term, especially in the second century, is by no means clear. The earliest usage of the term can be found in Tertullian and Hippolytus, although it is clearly picked up by the fourth century as exemplified in Eusebius.

It was in the diatribe *Philosophumena* (often translated as *Refutation of all Heresies*) against Callistus that we saw the first recorded instance of the possibility of a Christian cemetery. In book IX of his *Philosophumena*,¹³⁵ Hippolytus recounted how the then Bishop Zephyrinus – having apparently been duped by the trickster Callistus – turned to Callistus for help with the clergy, and also set him in the position of overseer of the cemetery (*koimeterion*¹³⁶):

After [Victor's] falling asleep, Zephyrinus having had [Callistus] as a coadjutor in the management of the clergy, honored him to his own detriment, and sending for him from Antima, set him over the cemetery.¹³⁷

Here we see the succession of Episcopal authority: going from Victor's death ("falling asleep") to Zephyrinus who acted quickly in appointing Callistus to oversee the *koimeterion*. This is generally considered to have been the first instance of recorded discussion of what may have been corporate ownership of an exclusively Christian burial ground; not only corporate ownership of Christian burial locations but also Episcopal control, and importantly an Episcopal interest, in the burial of Christians. Indeed ever since Giovanni Battista de Rossi it has been assumed that the *koimeterion* discussed here is the catacomb that bears the name of Callistus, which includes the important "Crypt of

¹³⁵ A text that had previously been attributed to Origen, but seems now to be universally attributed to Hippolytus.

¹³⁶ See also Carroll, *Spirits*, 3.

¹³⁷ Book IX, Hippolytus, *Philosophumena* vol. II trans. F. Legge FSA. (Richard Clay and Sons: Suffolk, 1921), 128.

the Popes.”¹³⁸ This catacomb is generally considered to date to the latter half of the second century or the first half of the third.

It is also possible that Hippolytus was casting aspersions against Callistus when he connected him to the burial locations of Christians. This could have been a way of denoting that Callistus was unclean or ritually polluted, as would have been the case with previous Romans who dealt with death. Tertullian testified to a tradition of sorcery (especially surrounding those who died violently) which took place at the tombs and sepulchers of the dead. It was believed that in the presence of the remains of the dead, one could – through demonic means – retrieve the souls of the departed.¹³⁹ Hippolytus refers to Callistus as a sorcerer elsewhere and this may also have been part of his justification for this claim.

This then was considered the clear origin of the catacomb the bore the name of Callistus, believed to be the oldest of the extant catacombs, along the Appian Way outside of Rome. If this was the case (that the formation of the first catacomb was decreed to be overseen by a church authority) then the care of the dead and the role of the catacomb was clearly important to the third-century church. As such it would have been long

¹³⁸ Giovanni Battista de Rossi, *La Roma sotterranea cristiana* (Rome: Cromo-litografia pontificia, 1864). Amy K. Hirschfield calls a good deal of de Rossi's work into question, arguing that the use of the catacombs was a trope for justifying and creating a cultural memory specifically for 19th century Christians. She observes: “The authors of much of the past academic and popular writing about the catacombs viewed them as sites of connection to a venerated religious past that could be used to legitimize the religious present,” in her chapter: “An Overview of the intellectual history of Catacomb archeology” in *Commemorating the dead: texts and artifacts in context: studies of Roman, Jewish, and Christian burials*, eds. Laurie Brink, Deborah A. Green (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 12. In the 19th century they created their understanding of the past as a way of bolstering the religion of their time, consequently modern scholarship must take a good deal of their conclusions with a healthy grain of salt.

¹³⁹ *De Cor.*, 57. See also: Andrzej Wypustek, “Magic, Montanism, Perpetua, and the Severan Persecution,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 51, no. 3 (Aug., 1997): 283-4.

before the cult of the Martyrs was in full bloom, but it undoubtedly laid the seed for burial to have been an ecclesiastically controlled phenomenon.¹⁴⁰

However this convenient reading of the *Philosophumena* has been called into question on a number of grounds. Eric Rebillard convincingly argues that, not only was there no Episcopal oversight of the care of the dead at this early date, but also that the De Rossi was philologically lazy.¹⁴¹ *Koimeterion*, the Greek root for the Latin *coemeterium*, never referred to what we think of as a cemetery. Rather it was the individual tomb where the individual Christian rested (slept).¹⁴² Through an analysis of Tertullian's *Apologia*¹⁴³ and *De Coemeterio et de cruce*,¹⁴⁴ where John Chrysostom at Antioch used the *koimeterion* to refer to one tomb out of many possible tombs, Rebillard concludes: "In the middle of the fourth century, for the Christians of Antioch, it is clear that the word *koimeterion* does not mean 'cemetery.'"¹⁴⁵ This does not mean, clearly, that there were not some dead who were overseen by Callistus, only that it was not the entirety of the catacomb now known as that of Callistus. There was the possibility that this property was that of the family of Pope Zephyrinus that may have been given over to community use

¹⁴⁰See Graydon F. Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life Before Constantine*. Revised (Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 2003), 159 for an acceptance of this point of view. Snyder states that this was clear evidence of "The first public appearance of Christianity" and that the church had property was a matter of public record, 159.

¹⁴¹ Rebillard, *Care*, 2ff.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 4-7.

¹⁴³ However in this case it seems clear that 39.5-6 notes that while there may not have been explicit Episcopal oversight of burial, there was a common fund for charitable giving, and part of that fund was to be used for the burial of the poor. This problematizes the idea that the burial of the common dead at the end of the second century was entirely left in the hands of the family of the deceased.

¹⁴⁴ John Chrysostom, *coemet*. PG 49.393.

¹⁴⁵ Rebillard, *Care*, 7; Carroll, *Spirits*, 261, looks to the same texts specifically Tertullian *Ad Scap.*, 3.1 and *Apol.* 39.5-6, as well as Origen's *Hom. Jer.*, 4.3.16, to determine that there were Christian cemeteries in Alexandria during the third century.

through the traditional Roman understanding of Patronage.¹⁴⁶ This is a distinction without a difference. Either way Hippolytus demonstrated that Zephyrinus was primarily concerned with the resting places of (at least) the important dead and was establishing Episcopal control over them, through the appointment of Callistus to oversee the *koimeterion*.

Tertullian first used the term *koimeterion* for the Christian location for burials in his treatise *On the Soul*.¹⁴⁷ He recounted a story, that he proclaimed to have been “well known,” of a corpse making room in a “cemetery” for another that wished to be buried there.¹⁴⁸ The meaning of the term *koimeterion* is an item of not insignificant debate. Traditionally the term has been translated as “cemetery” although its roots more strongly imply a resting place, or dormitory. This term then was incorporated by Christians as it dovetailed nicely with their understanding of death, as a new birth with the corpse waiting, or sleeping, until it will be woken at the time of the resurrection. One problem with Rebillard’s argument, concerning the idea that *koimeterion* only referred to the resting places of the important dead, is that in the evidence from Tertullian no mention is made of the mobile corpse being noteworthy for any reason other than the fact that it made room for a partner.

Likewise when Eusebius discusses the *koimeterion* he does not explicitly refer to martyrs or *martyrium*. According to Eusebius, Valerian (reigned 253-60) forbade

¹⁴⁶ Carroll, *Spirits*, 261; Bradshaw, *The Apostolic Tradition*, 191; Carolyn Osiek, “Roman and Christian Burial Practices and the Patronage of Women” in eds. Brink and Laurie, *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context: Studies of Roman, Jewish and Christian Burials* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 246.

¹⁴⁷ See Carroll, *Spirits*, 2. Tertullian, *An*.

¹⁴⁸ Tertullian, *An*. 51, for other early uses of the term, see Hippolytus, *Dan*. 4.51; Origin, *Jer*. 4.3.16.

Christians from gathering or entering what are so called cemeteries, it is often assumed that this prohibition was quite possibly out of concern for the cult of the martyrs.¹⁴⁹ However, given Eusebius' enthusiasm for the cult of the martyrs, one would expect him to have made reference to the martyrs in the *koimeterion*; if the only usage for *koimeterion* was in reference to the resting places of individual martyrs, yet he did not.

Rebillard cited at length a text from John Chrysostom, which makes explicit reference to a gathering at a *martyrium* and then notes that the place is also called a *koimeterion* due to the fact that the corpses are not dead, but resting.¹⁵⁰ Here it would appear that the conflation of these two terms might not be as clear cut as Rebillard would like. However, even if *koimeterion* did not refer exclusively to the burial locations of the special dead, we must be careful not to equate the term with a walled and isolated cemetery in a modern city.

John Bodell agrees with Rebillard's conclusion that Christian burial in the third century could not have been something that was sought to be performed outside of the confines of traditional Roman burial.¹⁵¹ That is to say that there must have been comingling of Christians and Pagans in the same burial compounds due to the sheer numbers of Christian dead in the third century.¹⁵² Also there was no corporate ownership of cemeteries by Christians: "There were no official Christian funerary societies or indeed specifically funerary *collegia* of any sort, and the notion of a central 'church' at

¹⁴⁹ Eusebius, *H.e.* 7.11.10.

¹⁵⁰ Rebillard, *Care*. John Chrysostom, *coemet.* PG 49.393

¹⁵¹ John Bodell, "From Columbaria to Catacombs," 179.

¹⁵² For a discussion of the legality of burial mingling, and the conclusion that there could have been no legal prohibitions of such see: Mark Jeffrey Johnson, "Pagan-Christian Burial Practices of the Fourth Century," 37-59.

this date, let alone of an official cemetery ‘owned’ by a church is doubtful.”¹⁵³ I am not entirely convinced by his conclusions that there *must* have been co-mingling of graves in the catacombs in equal portions during the third century.¹⁵⁴ He himself doesn't seem too convinced of this when he notes that people associated with a particular cult, “might band together in death in collective cemeteries.”¹⁵⁵

As we have seen, what distinguished early Christian burial churches from other types of ancient collective funerary monuments is the nature of the community commemorated. Inclusion in the group was based not on blood ties, rank, offices, or profession but on membership in a church. The collective memorials, whenever they developed, and by whomever they were owned, did not merely commemorate individual departed Christians but reinforced the collective identity of the church community. The individuals expressed their new identity, their new “family” in *memorium* through their choice of burial locations.

Conclusion

As a site of cultural memory, burial locations and the sarcophagi contained therein both generated and reflected ideas about the community that created them. They indicated the feelings of the community at the time of the death of the individual. At the same time they constructed meaning for the future; these iconographic representations of comfort and rebirth served to remind the community what deemed (or those with the power or

¹⁵³ John Bodel, “From Columbaria to Catacombs,” 202-203.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 186.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 192.

money) to be important.¹⁵⁶ They presented images from sacred literature, reinterpreting them in light of their own current situation and representing them to themselves, to serve as a reminder. As the emergent church drew upon the practices associated with the commemoration of the dead, through the catalyst of persecution at the hands of the Romans, it began to place an increased emphasis on the remains of the martyrs.

By the third century and the construction of the Catacomb of Callistus, the body and its burial may not have played a central role in Christian theology. It did play a strong role in the popular practice of Christians.¹⁵⁷ The location of the grave was the location of the bodies of the fallen brethren, and occasionally the location of the remains of the martyrs who had died as a witness to their faith. “The graves of the saints – were privileged places wither the contrasted poles of Heaven and earth met.”¹⁵⁸ It comes as little surprise that these privileged locations would then have been the location of the creation of a Christian identity, of the seat of the Christian cultural memory, as well as a place through which earthly issues of power were negotiated. However, it must be emphasized that this seat of memory was not a uniquely Christian innovation. The location of burial and the structure of the monument had been an important means by which Roman society had sought to (re)create the memory of their loved ones, as well as

¹⁵⁶ Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 26ff. Snyder lists 12 signs used by Christians prior to the fourth century, most of which are symbols of comfort: the lamb, anchor, vase, dove, boat, olive branch, Orante, palm, bread, Good Shepherd, fish, and vine with grapes. Of course Kraemer, “Jewish Tuna,” argues that many of these are also seen on Jewish graves. Consequently clear identification is more difficult than simply identifying a fish.

¹⁵⁷ See Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 2, on the hazards of putting too strong an emphasis on a two tiered construction of ancient Christianity. This is not my intention here. The body of the martyr and commemoration thereof may have been important to the episcopate (as it developed). It was not, however, something that they felt was their responsibility to care for until such a time as the martyr cults themselves were perceived as a rival locus of religious power. At which point they embraced it so as to control it.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

structure their own history with an eye towards the future. We shall see in the subsequent chapters how this location of cultural memory underwent dynamic changes both in the grandeur of the monuments and also in the contest for what behaviors were seen as appropriate at the grave and shrine.

Chapter Two: To Build Up The Erection of Shrine and Reputation

The stars that held the attention of a fourth-century Christian were the tombs of the Martyrs, scattered like the Milky Way throughout the Mediterranean.¹

All the Temples of Rome are covered with soot and cobwebs, the city is shaken to its very foundations, and the people hurry past the crumbling shrines and surge out to visit the martyrs' graves.²

Beginning in 303, Emperor Diocletian initiated Rome's most dedicated persecution of Christians: confiscating their property (including cemeteries), imprisoning many, and making martyrs out of others. These persecutions served only to further solidify the idea amongst the Christian community that theirs was a religion destined to suffer, and they were destined to suffer with and for it. Out of that suffering Christians hoped to secure their place in Heaven. During this time many followed the instructions that Tertullian laid out over a hundred years earlier, earning the "crown of martyrdom" rather than offering incense to the emperors or handing over their sacred literature.

On April 30, 311 Emperor Galerius issued an edict in Nicomedia which granted an indulgence to Christians, freeing them from further persecution and granting freedom to those in prison.³ However Galerius neither returned the property that had previously been confiscated, nor could he stop all of the persecutions which continued under

¹ Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 100.

² Jerome, *Ep.* 107.1, PL 22.677: "Movetur urbs sedibus suis, et inundans populus ante delubra semiruta, currit ad Martyrum tumulos." trans. in Cynthia White, *The Emergence of Christianity: Classical Traditions in Contemporary Perspective* (Santa Barbara: Fortress, 2010), 107.

³Lactantius, *Mort.* 34.

Maximinus in the east (Egypt, Palestine, and Asia Minor). It was not until two years later that Christian properties were returned to them, when Lincinus and Constantine issued the Edict of Milan.⁴ When Constantine defeated Maximus later that year, persecutions effectively came to an end throughout the Empire.

Prior to the early fourth century, martyrdom was held up as an exemplary way to die, something that ordinary Christians were urged by their leaders to seek or accept willingly. The bloody and graphic accounts of their deaths were read aloud in churches so as to inspire others with the dedication and faith of the martyrs. How then were the Christians to retain their identity as a persecuted church, once Christianity became the religion of empire?

Many have argued that the role of the ascetic monk may have eventually taken the place of the martyr, as an ideal and the heir to the image of overcoming the obstacle of the physical body. This, however, did not fully happen until the fifth to sixth century.⁵ To see oneself as being part of a group that is no longer being persecuted, but has been persecuted in the past, is not necessarily the same as overcoming the obstacle of the physical body. The martyrs epitomized the Christian ideal of resistance and struggle

⁴Ibid., 48. See also Eusebius, *v. C.* 2.39-40. It is worth noting that Eusebius presents Lincinus as a despised villain and not the one who issued the edict restoring both churches and (explicitly mentioned) property that was not used for worship but was still owned communally by the churches. Eusebius was an ardent proponent of the cult of the saints and as such explicitly discussed the return of the glorious martyr shrines to the Church.

⁵ See R. A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80-101. For Markus it was precisely the rise of the holy ascetic that served to mark the end of "Ancient Christianity." See also James E. Goehring, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert: Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1999).

against persecution, and their remains became objects of veneration both at the time of their death, and especially once the persecutions came to an end.⁶ This cult of the martyrs predates the persecutions of the fourth century. In Rome the cultic activity surrounding Peter and Paul can be dated prior to the mid third century, both through archeological and textual sources.⁷ Eventually even the sacred relics of the ascetic would be venerated at shrines. The style of that veneration came directly from the previously established cult of the martyrs. The fact that the style of veneration drew upon the martyr cult denotes the importance of the martyrs and their shrines in the lives of Christians in the fourth through sixth century.

Graves and other *memoria* became the newly decorated archives of the bygone time, the glorious age of the Christian heroes: the martyrs. The cult and the places around which the cult centered came to be one of the primary locations that powerful Christians exerted their control over the construction of Christian cultural memory in the fourth century. The “speech acts” performed at the graves of the martyrs carried more weight due to the presence of the martyr; the monumental nature gave them (and their originators) tremendous authority, and the power to craft memory around these sites. Those who built these shrines and inscribed them with meaning would ultimately mimic the martyr, not in their death, but in their intercessory role (by claiming that power for themselves). Just as the martyr was believed to intercede with God on behalf of the

⁶ See *M. Poyc.* as an early example of the veneration paid to martyrs and martyrdom.

⁷ For an overview of the literature on the shrine to Peter and Paul on the Apian Way see, David L. Eastman, *Paul the Martyr: The Cult of the Apostle in the Latin West* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 71ff. Inscriptions have been found and dated to prior to 260 discussing banqueting in honor of Peter and Paul on the Appian Way near the Catacombs. These inscriptions demonstrate the desire that the Apostles would intercede on behalf of the banqueters.

Christian, offering prayer to that martyr (in effect bending the ear of God to the plight of the worshiper), so too those who built the shrines made the martyr accessible to those who wished to venerate that martyr. The role of intercessor was tremendously important, and one that would live on in the memory of the community. Aside from the spiritual power that this role provided, it also granted political and social control.

This chapter will examine two of the most important early figures to tap into the power of the martyr cult in the fourth century, figures who would set the stage (in differing ways) for the full development of the Christian use of the physicality of the remains of the important dead. Both Emperor Constantine and Damasus, Bishop of Rome, had to deal with divisions within the church. One of the ways that they did this was through control of the physical spaces associated with the martyrs. Through the control of the physicality of the martyrs' remains, they were able to craft the cult of the martyrs into something that allowed them to be the speakers for the dead. They spoke for the dead in both the way that they crafted Christian architecture around the dead, and in the way that the remains became, to a degree that had not been seen previously, the *foci* of the Christian community. These remains, newly and elaborately enshrined, in turn solidified the power of those who laid claim to them. The graves, tombs, and shrines which were erected for the dead were fashioned by the living to elicit a specific response in those who were living when they were created, and also with an eye towards future generations who would come there to worship. What Constantine and Damasus created at the martyr shrines would, in fact, shape the way martyrs were revered in the future. Additionally, the future power dynamics of the Church and Empire as a whole were directly influenced by the actions of Constantine and Damasus through their use (and

promotion of) the shrines of the saints. Constantine and Damasus began to use the bodies of the important dead as a means of expressing and solidifying their power, as well as cementing the cultural memory that they personally crafted for a Christianity which heretofore had no single memory to cling to. Through their usage of the memory of the martyrs, Constantine and Damasus were able to shape the very nature of Christian belief in a way that supported their own personal role within Christianity. This would ultimately allow them to influence political, social, and economic forces. This framework set the background for the changes that developed in the latter part of the century with Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, and Paulinus, all of whom built upon the substructure laid by Constantine and Damasus.

Despite their role in the rise of the cult of the saints, Constantine and Damasus did not create the cult from whole cloth. I will argue, contrary to Marianne Saghy who asserts that it was because of the basilicas built by Constantine around the tombs of Peter, Paul, and Laurence that caused the cult of the martyrs to flourish in Rome. She argues that, “Constantine did not build upon a living and vigorous tradition of celebrating the martyrs. Rather it was his imperial 'judgment halls of God' . . . which triggered an interest in the martyrs and created at the same time a convenient spot for glorifying them.”⁸ While it may be true that the elaborate physical structures surrounding the cult of Peter, Paul, and Laurence, were Constantinian additions, there is considerable evidence for the cult of the saints in previous centuries.⁹ Prior to the fourth century there was a long established interest in the graves of the important dead, and a desire to care for them and associate

⁸ Marianne Saghy, “*Scinditur in Partes Populus*: Pope Damasus and the Martyrs of Rome,” *Early Medieval Europe* 9 no. 3(2000): 275.

⁹ See Ch. 1 above, for the Pauline Cult in Rome see also Eastman, *Paul the Martyr*.

with them, both in traditional Greco-Roman religion as well as in the Christianity that developed out of it. When he centered his basilicas on the tombs of the martyrs, Constantine was drawing upon the traditions of his Roman predecessors, as well as the importance that the martyrs and saints had in Christianity prior to his reign. Peter Brown reminds us that when we are dealing with Rome, “[w]e are dealing with a very old world. In it, changes did not come as disturbing visitations from outside; they happened all the more forcibly for having been pieced together from ancient and familiar materials.”¹⁰ Constantine integrated the familiar materials which surrounded the care of the dead in Rome, as well as those which developed surrounding the commemoration of the primarily local martyrs in Christianity. This was not an innovation on his part, as per Saghy. He explicitly drew upon the histories of both (previously opposing) groups and created a new focus for the construction of Christian cultural memory at the tombs of the saints. Likewise, Damasus drew upon Roman epigraphical technique as well as evoking the great Roman poet Virgil in his inscriptions over the martyr’s graves. Through this he sought to tie the Christian Rome of his present to its illustrious pre-Christian past. He also sought to replace Remus and Romulus with another pair of founders: Peter and Paul.¹¹ Through this act he attached the reputation of Rome to the illustrious founders who

¹⁰ Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity*, 8. This is also echoed by Marcus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, 88-95. Ann Marie Yasin states that, “Such material [as Saint Peter’s Basilica] constructed directly over the even earlier tombs or memorials of Christian saints bridged the temporal gap between the present of imperially sanctioned and economically ascendant church and its own heroic past of persecuted and victorious martyrs.” Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean: Architecture, Cult, and Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1

¹¹ Dennis Trout, “Damasus and the Invention of Early Christian Rome,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33.3 (2003), 521.

suffered martyrdom there. These actions helped to the centrality of Rome in Western Christendom.

Even as Constantine drew upon previous traditions, his grandiose buildings and focus on the remains of the dead became instrumental in the way that the cult developed later in the century. We can see in both Constantine's building endeavors, and eventually in the epitaphs of Damasus, actions aimed at preserving (or re-creating) the memory of the dead. This recollection of the dead also served to facilitate the creation of the collective memory for the future of Christianity through their commemoration of the cults of the saints. Constantine and Damasus displayed the martyrs, put them *on show*.¹² They created an image both of the martyrs and more importantly of themselves in relation to those martyrs. These acts conveyed a message of harmony and unity arising from the discord and chaos of the past.

Constantine

Public monuments do not arise as if by natural law to celebrate the deserving; they are built by people with sufficient power to marshal (or impose) public consent for their erection.¹³

¹² This was done in much the same manner that the Museum of Natural History in New York City put exhibits on show which prompted Mieke Bal's essay on the power of demonstration and those who have the authority (or claim that authority) to present material, "On Show Inside the Ethnographic Museum," in *Looking In: The Art of Viewing (Critical Voices in Art, Theory and Culture)* (Amsterdam: Routledge, 2001), 117-160. In both instances, Constantine or Damasus filled a similar constantative role as the museum architects and curators where they presented information as the one who possesses knowledge, the one who can inform the viewer about "the truth."

¹³ Kirk Savage, "The Politics of Memory: Black Emancipation and the Civil War Monument," in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R. Gillis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 135.

One dare not approach the subject of the power dynamics and their relationship with collective memory present in the fourth century without addressing the abrupt and cataclysmic shift early in the century, ushered in through the conversion of Constantine and subsequent legalization of Christianity. Susan Alcock observes that: “while social memory is never inert or static, manipulation of the past is most pronounced at times of marked social, religious, or political change.”¹⁴ Constantine initiated such a trifecta of change. It is not surprising, then, that during this period of upheaval, manipulation of the Christian social memory was evident both in Constantine’s basilica building endeavors, which were primarily focused on the cultic locations of the martyrs, as well as in his self-proclamation of apostolic identity through his mausoleum church.

Obviously Constantine’s interaction with the Church and its bishops did not begin or end with his construction of church structures. It is not the purpose of this chapter to deal with the nuances surrounding every aspect of Constantine’s involvement with the Church.¹⁵ However in the midst of his dealings with the Church (if indeed one could posit a singular church at this point) he was responsible for the construction of their first grand structures. The majority of these surrounded the remains of important martyrs and other important graves. One of the ways that he was influential in the development of Christianity in the fourth century was through these architectural achievements which bridged the divide between previous Roman monuments to the important dead and the

¹⁴ Susan Alcock, *Archaeologies of the Greek Past: Landscape, Monuments, and Memories (W.B. Stanford Memorial Lectures)* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 32.

¹⁵ For further elaboration on Constantine’s relationship with the Church see H. A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2000).

Christian focus on the cult of the martyrs. Through these structures Constantine situated himself as a patron of the martyrs, as well as amongst the ranks of the apostles themselves through his own choice of burial locations.

When Constantine addressed an assembly of Christian leaders, recorded by Eusebius as Constantine's "Oration to the Saints," he briefly discussed the veneration given to martyrs: songs and hymns, a temperate memorial meal of thanksgiving, without the need for frankincense and fires, but only pure light for the assembled worshipers of God.¹⁶ This was a message which challenged anyone to dispute that the martyrs, through their sacrifice, could not be seen as exemplary in their faith in God. Concerning this passage, H. A. Drake observed, that: "Constantine's treatment of the martyrs suggests, then, that despite its theological veneer the oration may be read for signs of a more immediate, more political, conflict – for control of the message."¹⁷ It would be convenient, for this work, to posit an early date for this speech, from which we could speculate about a shift in Constantine's attention – subsequently directed towards the martyrs. However it is nearly impossible to date the "Oration" to any specific date, or even period in the life of Constantine.¹⁸ Despite the ambiguity surrounding the date of the speech, Drake could have talked (although he did not) as easily about Constantine's architectural treatment of the martyrs in exactly the same way that he treated them in the "Oration to the Saints." That is to say that Constantine sought to control the message of

¹⁶ Constantine, *OC*. 12.

¹⁷ Drake, *Constantine*, 305.

¹⁸ For the problems of dating this speech see H. A. Drake, "Suggestions of Date in Constantine's Oration to the Saints," *The American Journal of Philology*, 106, no. 3 (Autumn 1985): 335-349.

the martyrs, and thereby also sought to control the immediate political message through his architectural endeavors surrounding those martyrs.

As a religious structure the basilica was a Constantinian innovation which drew upon previous Roman tradition for its inspiration. Constantine's use of the *genes* of the basilica for his early Church structures was a deliberate way to raise the status of Christianity to the highest levels of the Empire. He did not present the Christian basilicas as new temples, indeed the physical presence of a Christian Church building was not seen as fundamentally the same thing as a Temple. The disparity between temple and church was primarily because the Christian god was not believed to reside in the church, while the god of the temple was believed to be present therein. Constantine deliberately chose the form of the basilica for two reasons, both of which dovetailed nicely with traditional Christian practices. The first of these reasons was the open floor plan of the basilica served admirably as a meeting hall, both for congregational worship but also for the funerary function that would eventually become tremendously important for many of the "funerary basilicas" (essentially "U" shaped covered cemeteries).¹⁹ Secondly, as the basilica was also the seat of imperial power by incorporating the basilica with Christianity Constantine established the church as the "throne room of the Emperor of Heaven, comparable to the sanctuary where the living god-emperor received the obeisance of his subjects."²⁰ Eventually Constantine (in 333) would proclaim that any

¹⁹ See Ramsey MacMullen, "Christian Ancestor Worship in Rome," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129, no. 3 (2010): 601; and Richard Krautheimer, "The Constantinian Basilica," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 21 (1967): 115 – 140.

²⁰ Krautheimer, "The Constantinian Basilica," 127. For more on Constantine's construction in general see: Richard Krautheimer *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*. 4th ed. (New York: Penguin, 1986); Richard Krautheimer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae* 5 vols. (Vatican City/ New York: Pontificio Instituto

individual, at any point in a trial, could demand to be heard by an ecclesiastical tribunal, and that demand must be met.²¹ The basilica then would become not only a seat for the “Emperor of Heaven,” but in fact a judgment hall for earthly concerns before a Christian tribunal.

Constantine would eventually focus the majority of his architectural energy on the construction of churches and basilicas which were connected to the cult of the martyrs (and often served as burial locations for those desirous of ad Sanctos burial). However, the first church structure that Constantine built in Rome was not one that was directed towards the construction of the memory of the martyrs. Rather it focused on the destruction of the memory of an entity that had supported Maxentius against Constantine: the Equestrian guards. To build the Lateran Basilica (started in 313 and probably completed in 320), Constantine razed the barracks of the Equestrian Guard (the *equites singulares*). This was part of the process by which Constantine sought to present himself as the liberator of Rome, and establish his predecessor as a tyrant from whom Rome needed liberation. The Lateran Basilica served as the Cathedral in Rome for more than a

de archeologia Christiana/ Institute of Fine Arts, 1937-1977); Paul Corby Finney, “Early Christian Architecture: The Beginnings (A Review Article),” *HTR* 81:3 (1988): 319–39; J. B. Ward-Perkins “Memoria, Martyrs Tomb and Martyrs Church,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 17 (1966): 20-38. Gregory Armstrong provides a review of the 23 known Constantinian Churches (and several more ambiguous churches) in “Constantine’s Churches,” *Gesta*. 6 (Jan 1967): 1-9. Halgren Kilde observes that Constantine’s churches “were informed by clear social, political and religious agendas. Constantine’s churches were symbols of both religious and imperial power.” Kilde, *Sacred Power Sacred Space: An Introduction to Christian Architecture and Worship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 40.

²¹ The First Sirmundian Constitution (*CS 1*). See also Drake, *Constantine*, 321 ff.

millennium.²² Constantine further sought to destroy the memory of the *equites singulares* thought the destruction of their cemetery with the construction of the basilica on the Via Labricana. This building also appears not to have been associated with any particular martyr shrine, but Krautheimer dates the catacomb (with Christian burials) that it was built upon to the second century.²³ It was here that Constantine's mother was ultimately buried; however Curran argues that due to the military themes used in the mausoleum it may well have been initially intended for Constantine himself.²⁴

The majority of Constantine's Basilicas were constructed near (over) the tombs of the martyrs. One exception to this was the "Church of the Apostles" on the Via Appia, which was the location of a pre-existent cult location dedicated to Peter and Paul. This may well have been the second major structure Constantine constructed in Rome. If this can be dated to the earlier period of Constantine's constructions (perhaps as early as 314) then it is worth noting that Constantine's second basilica also was not centered around the tomb of a martyr, but was located over the catacombs where there was a cult location to Peter and Paul, but with seemingly no evidence for the presence of their remains in the fourth century. It is telling that there was a cult center at this site, even if the remains of Peter and Paul had been removed (if they had even been there in the first place). The

²² For a discussion on the use of this as a destruction of memory see John R. Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital: Rome in the Fourth Century* (New York: Oxford, 2000), 76-96.

²³ *Corpus* Vol. 2, 203

²⁴ Curran, *Pagan City*, 102. Armstrong observes that its dating has been set as early as 312 and as late as 340 (during the reign of Constans) and in the text favors a later date himself. However, perhaps unselfconsciously demonstrating this ambiguity later in the catalogue of the basilicas, he presents it as dating unambiguously from 314-325 "Constantine's Churches," 2 - 4.

eventual focus of Constantine's buildings would be on the remains of the saints, while influential in his later construction does not seem to have been his primary focus early on.

The exact dating of the construction of many of Constantine's church structures is far from clear. Both Krautheimer and Armstrong observe that it was not for roughly a decade after the initiation of the Lateran Basilica that Constantine began the construction of the most elaborate of his martyr basilicas in Rome: that dedicated to Peter. According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, Constantine was not content simply to return to the Christians their seized property.²⁵ He also showered lavish gifts upon the church. Regarding the important locations of the tombs of Peter and Paul, Constantine (at the request of Bishop Sylvester) built a Basilica for Peter. In that structure Constantine laid Peter's coffin which was surrounded by five feet of bronze on all sides, and hung a 150 pound golden cross above the encased coffin.²⁶ It is important to note here that Constantine exhumed Peter's coffin, disturbing the peace of the apostle so as to move it into its new resting place, which violated the Roman prohibition against disturbing the corpse at all. With this reburial, the tomb of Peter became a glorious basilica resplendent with precious metals (quite possibly over 2,000 square feet of bronze) and architecture, the most impressive of his basilicas in Rome. In the middle of this grandeur, Constantine placed his name and

²⁵ The *Liber Pontificalis* is a text that should not be read uncritically, as in many cases it appears to be, if not a work of explicit propaganda from the end of the fifth or beginning of the sixth century, close to it. The dominant theory concerning the authorship of the first section of the book comes from the work of Louis Duchesne who argues that it was written by a single author who relied on the *Catalogus Liberanus* and the *Papal Catalogue*, writing sometime in the late fifth century, see: Louis Duchesne, *Etude Sur le Liber Pontificalis* (Paris: 1887). For our purposes the text of the *Liber Pontificalis* may both tell us about the events of the early fourth century, and shed light on the way that pivotal period in Christian history was (or was desired to be) perceived a century later. In both cases, it cannot be seen to be the final word in historical veracity, as we will see shortly with its discussion of the construction of the basilica built to Paul.

²⁶ *Lib. Pont.* XXXIV.

the name of his mother, ensuring that their memory was forever associated with the construction of the basilica. Despite the fact that this was not his first construction in Rome, it was perhaps his crowning achievement in the Eternal City.

The shrine to Paul, the second martyr upon whom the Roman Church would eventually base its authority, may have been built by Constantine or it may have been a pre-existing shrine. The elaborate Basilica that the author of the *Liber Pontificalis* mistakenly attributes to Constantine was constructed at the end of the fourth century, after the existing structure was destroyed (383/384).²⁷ The larger structure ensured that there was ample room for the number of Pilgrims who would eventually visit the final resting place of the Apostle to the Gentiles. If the initial Pauline shrine was a Constantinian construction, then due to its small size it would have been completed much more quickly than the Petrine Basilica.²⁸ There has not been any significant discussion as to why Constantine would have initiated such a lavish basilica honoring Peter, but simply rushed a significantly smaller shrine honoring Paul. I suggest three possible reasons for this. The first of these is that the cult of Paul on the Ostian Way was a well-established entity by the 320s, and as such Constantine wanted to ensure that it had a functioning building as quickly as possible. The second possibility is that the structure predated Constantine, and there was no reason to add to it, when there were so many other structures to be completed. This second possibility seems unlikely as Constantine felt no qualms when he demolished the structure on the Appian Way (which housed the banquets that Christians held on behalf of Peter and Paul *ad Catacumbas*) to begin the construction of the Church of the Apostles. A third possibility is that this shrine was in

²⁷ For a detailed discussion of this structure see Eastman, *Paul the Martyr*, 72ff.

²⁸ Armstrong, "Constantine's Churches," 3.

fact on private property, as the *Liber Pontificalis* suggests when it recounts that one Lucina reinterred Paul's corpse on her own property after she convinced the Bishop to remove both Peter and Paul from their second burial location *ad Catacumbas*.²⁹ If this shrine was indeed on private land, it may have been that Constantine was hesitant to disrupt a private chapel.

Constantine practically surrounded Rome with his church structures, making their presence obvious to all. Charles Odahl suggests that Constantine chose these peripheral locations so as not to offend the "pagan" sensibilities, which would have been affronted had he built a Christian monument in the center of the city.³⁰ This understanding completely ignores the importance of the specific locations that Constantine did choose, namely those associated with already extant martyr cults. In addition to the ones discussed above, he also built basilicas to Agnes (at the request of his daughter, Constantina), Lawrence, and one basilica commemorating both Peter the Exorcist and Marcellinus. Lawrence's Basilica is especially notable as it included "stairs of ascent and of descent to the body of the holy martyr Lawrence."³¹ Here we have evidence of a clear desire for the body to be accessible for pilgrims to visit. Previously, this must have been a

²⁹*Lib. Pont.* 22. Due to the prevalence of Lucina in martyr narratives, it is nearly impossible to determine if she was an actual person in any of the individual narratives, or perhaps short hand for any number of pious women, or even if she existed at all. On the use of "Lucina" as a generic term for a Christian woman associated with the saints and specifically their remains see Kate Cooper, "The Martyr, the Matrona, and The Bishop: The Matron Lucina and the politics of the martyr cult in fifth and sixth century Rome," *Early Medieval Europe* 8, no. 3 (1999): 297-317; and Nicola Denzey, *The Bone Gathers: The Lost Worlds of Early Christian Women* (Boston: Beacon, 2007), xv.

³⁰ Charles Matson Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire* (London: Routledge, 2004), 147. He also claims that Constantine deliberately did not choose the traditional temple style when erecting Christian buildings as the temples were "polluted with the stains of pagan idolatry," (148).

³¹ *Lib. Pont.* 61.

pilgrimage site, which Constantine wanted to take advantage of (or celebrate), while at the same time ensuring that the pilgrims would still be able to continue the previous practice of visiting the actual tomb of the saint. It is important to observe that Constantine was taking pains to ensure that those who wished to visit the corpse of Lawrence could still do so. The practice of venerating the corpse was not a Constantinian addition to the cult around Lawrence, but rather one that he ensured would be able to continue.

The final basilica that we will discuss is the Basilica Apostolorum which Constantine built for the remains of the Apostles and was also the one that would house his own mausoleum in his new capital: Constantinople. Constantine desired that Constantinople should rival Rome in physical splendor, as well as in Christian sanctity. As recounted decades later by Paulinus of Nola, in *Carmen* 19:³²

When Constantine was founding the city named after himself . . . he should likewise emulate Romulus' city with a further endowment – he would eagerly defend his walls with the bodies of apostles.³³ He then removed Andrew from the Greeks and Timothy from Asia; and so Constantinople now stands with twin towers, vying to match the hegemony of the great Rome.³⁴

³² It is ambiguous if the relics themselves were placed under Constantine himself or his son. Jonathan Bardill places the dates of translation for Andrew and Luke in 336, with Timothy's remains arriving in 356. Bardill, *Constantine, Divine Emperor of the Christian Golden Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2011), 369. For a discussion on the translation of these relics and the dating thereof see: Cyril Mango, "Constantine's Mausoleum and the Translation of Relics," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 83 (1990): 51-62; and David Woods, "The Date of the Translation of the Relics of SS. Luke and Andrew to Constantinople," *Vigiliae Christianae*, 45 (1991): 286-292.

³³ This is decidedly the sort of understanding of martyrs that Augustine distained. They were active only in Heaven and would not perform such mundane acts on earth. See Peter Iver Kaufman, "Augustine, Martyrs and Misery," *Church History* 63, no. 1 (Mar. 1994): 6.

³⁴ Paulinus of Nola, *Carm.* 19.329ff. PL 61.530b-531a:
 "Constantinus proprii cum conderet urbem
 Nominis, et primus Romano in nomine regum
 Christicolam gereret, divinum mente recepit

This translation is echoed by Eusebius in his *Vita Constantini*.³⁵ It was in the Basilica of the Apostles, in Constantinople, that Constantine decreed that he be interred once he died, “thereby ensuring that he would become in fact as well as name *isapostolos*, ‘the equal to the apostles’.”³⁶ Here Constantine clearly erected a monument for himself which promoted, through the use of the remains of what apostles were available to him, the idea that he was at least equal to those sent out by Christ. The memory that he created in those who visited (and eventually those who would come to develop his shrine as a cult center) is that he is with the twelve, at the center of their communion. Constantine was buried in his basilica in 337.³⁷

Consilium, ut quoniam Romanae moenibus urbis
Aemula magnificis strueret tunc moenia coeptis,
His quoque Romuleam sequeretur dotibus urbem,
Ut sua apostolicis muniret moenia laetus
Corporibus: tunc Andream devexit Achivis,
Timotheumque Asia: geminis ita turribus exstat
Constantinopolis magnae caput aemula Romae.”

Trans. Patrick Gerard Walsh, *The Poems of St. Paulinus of Nola* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), 142. Composed January 405.

³⁵ Eusebius, *v.C.* III: XL,VIII. For a detailed analysis of the dating of the translation of the relics of Luke and Andrew to Constantinople see Woods, “The date of the translation of Ss. Luke and Andrew to Constantinople.” Cf. Burgess R. W. “The Passio S. Artemii, Philostorgius, and the dates of the invention and translations of the relics of Sts. Andrew and Luke” *Analecta Bollandiana*, 121 (2003): 5-36 esp. 29. It is also worth noting that Constantine kept his intentions of being interred in this location secret until he neared his death.

³⁶ Drake, *Constantine*, 11.

³⁷ See Mark Johnson, *The Roman Imperial Mausoleum in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 123, on differing theories concerning the dating of the structure and the debate over whether the church stood alone or included a separate mausoleum for the burial of Constantine. Due to the paucity of information (and occasional contradictions in what little exists) there are a variety of theories on this topic. Johnson ultimately argues that the basilica as designed by Constantine was a “building that blurred the distinction between church and a mausoleum.” 128. But that the mausoleum was later separated from the church, which accounts for the discrepancies in the ancient sources. Johnson also dates the translation of Luke and Timothy to June 22, 336. However the debate surrounding the dating of the translation and arrival of these

Constantine's construction of his own shrine is notable. After engaging in the construction of Basilicas for over two decades, Constantine decided to build one in his new city with a dedicated mausoleum for the Apostles, including himself. Not only was he actively controlling the way he would be remembered, through the incorporation of the remains of the Apostles, he ensured that there would be an active cult presence there. He was claiming for himself something as close to divinity as his new religion would allow. Jonathan Bardill may have gone a bit too far when he suggested that Constantine, "did not see himself as an additional apostle but rather as Christ, the figure that the apostles revolved around."³⁸ Or if he did, Constantine's claim might not have been shocking to his audience as it would be today. However, Constantine did claim something shockingly close.

The idea that an Emperor would be considered divine by the time of Constantine was nothing new; indeed by the end of the second century it became almost a formality.³⁹ Divinity was traditionally not something that the emperors claimed for themselves – at least not in Rome, however this varied in the provinces – but rather something that was conferred upon them *after their death*. Consequently any cult site that was constructed to

remains is far from settled. For our purposes it may not matter if the apostles were interred prior to Constantine, as the message that his mausoleum sends would be clear either way. Ultimately the fact that Paulinus and Eusebius present, as fact, that the remains were there prior to Constantine is sufficient to demonstrate the cultural memory of their presence.

³⁸ Bardill, *Constantine Divine Emperor*, 376.

³⁹ See Penelope J. E. Davies, *Death and the Emperor: Roman Funerary Monuments from August to Marcus Aurelius* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 10-11. Simon Price calculates that 36 of the 60 Emperors from Augustus to Constantine received posthumous divinity. Price, "From noble funerals to Divine Cult: the Consecration of Roman Emperors" in *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*, ed. D. Cannadine and S. Price (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1987), 56-105.

honor the newly divine emperor was begun by his heirs.⁴⁰ This *apotheosis* was not something that was customarily claimed by the emperor prior to his demise, although it was tolerated outside of Rome. Constantine ensured his own cult center by permanently linking himself to the cult of the martyrs (which he diligently promoted) and more radically claiming, if not divinity, a privileged place in the presence of God. If one examines the behavior of Christians surrounding the cult of the saints, as well as the behavior of their non-Christian predecessors to various gods, Constantine may well have claimed an equal title to that which other emperors had bestowed upon them post mortem.

We have evidence for the power of the cult that developed around Constantine's mausoleum from Socrates Scholasticus in his *Ecclesiastical History*. Here, Socrates relates what appears to have been the greatest atrocity (amongst many) that Macedonius, the bishop of Constantinople, committed: the movement of the body of Constantine, after an earthquake which damaged the basilica, to another church near the body of the martyr Acacius. There was a strong devotional following of the emperor at his tomb, and following the translation chaos and bloodshed ensued.

The church where the coffin lay that contained the relics of the emperor Constantine threatened to fall . . . Macedonius, therefore, wished to remove the emperor's remains, lest the coffin should be injured by the ruins. The populace getting intelligence of this, endeavored to prevent it, insisting 'that the emperor's bones should not be disturbed . . . and thus two parties were formed on this question . . . Macedonius, in total disregard of these prejudices, caused the emperor's remains to be transported to the church where those of the martyr Acacius lay. Whereupon a vast multitude rushed toward that edifice in two hostile divisions, which attacked one another with great fury, and great loss of life was occasioned, so that the churchyard was covered with gore, and the well also

⁴⁰ For a detailed list of shrines constructed by the heirs of the emperors see Davies, *Death and the Emperor*, 11ff.

which was in it overflowed with blood, which ran into the adjacent portico, and thence even into the very street.⁴¹

Constantius ultimately dismissed Macedonius, not for the other transgressions (many of them bloody) that Socrates relates, but rather for his removal of the body of Constantine, and the disruption of the cult centered on those remains. One also has to wonder what became of the relics of the Apostles which had been translated to the basilica, with whom Constantine had surrounded himself. Sozomen made no reference to their translation, or even concern for their safety. It is entirely possible that the cultic devotion to Constantine, a more recent and immanent hero had completely eclipsed that of the Apostles. If that is the case then even if Constantine only wanted to be the equal to the Apostles, the cult which developed at his tomb made him their superior.

There is one observation of this event that has been overlooked in modern scholarship: in his translation of the apostles, Constantine took what had been a primarily local tradition honoring local martyrs and important dead (in much the same fashion as

⁴¹ Socrates Scholasticus, *HE*. 2.38. PL 69.1008c-1008d: “Domus in qua erat arca Constantini principis corpus habens, ruinam minabatur; ideoque custodes ejus et qui ad orationem intrabant erant positi sub timore. Macedonius ergo cogitavit imperatoris ossa transferre, ne arcam ruinae casus comprimeret. Hoc agnoscentes populi prohibebant, dicentes, non oportere principis ossa migrari, ne quasi exorbiri (id est, e sepulcro effodi) viderentur. Ob quam rem in duas partes populus est divisus: aliis dicentibus nullam esse migrato mortuo laesionem, aliis asserentibus esse nefas, cum quibus etiam erant homousii defensores. Macedonius autem parvipendens verba contradicentium, transtulit corpus imperatoris in ecclesiam ubi corpus jacet martyris Acacii. Quo facto, concursus discordantium populorum ad illam venit ecclesiam, et ad manus usque perventum est; ita ut multi hominum morerentur, et vestibulum ecclesiae ac vicina porticus sanguine compleretur” trans. in *Socrates, Sozemenus: Church History (A Select Library of Nicene & Post-Nicene of the Christian Church, Series 2, Vol. 2)*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (New York: Edermans, 1989). Sozemen, *HE*. 4.21 recounts this event with nearly identical language, he however does not include the grotesque descriptions of Macedonius with which Socrates graces his page.

local family groups would have honored their *own* important dead) and created a trans-local cult of the important dead. The important Christian dead became important for Christianity as a whole and not just for any particular locality. Constantine broke these regional barriers through his radical translation of the remains of the dead, not from the location where they died to the location that they had lived, but from their graves to a new grave which had no association with them during their lifetime. For both Christianity and the Roman world in general, these translations were a fundamental shift in the treatment of the dead, ultimately paving the way for the widespread translations of not only whole corpses, but also the wide dispersal of much small relics later in the century.

Constantine was not the only figure in early fourth-century Rome who sought to use ecclesiastical structures, especially those surrounding the remains of the martyrs, as a means of controlling the cultural memory of the population and establishing his own control after a period of political upheaval. Damasus fought hard to become the bishop of Rome and engaged in an extensive program of inscribing the resting places of the martyrs of Rome, and in doing so established himself, much as Constantine had, as a patron (servant) of the martyrs.

Damasus

“Death is the sanction of everything that the storyteller can tell. He has borrowed his authority from death.”⁴²

“We will experience the present differently in accordance with the different past that we are able to connect to the present.”⁴³

⁴² Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller: Reflections of the Works of Nikolai Leskov,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1968), 94.

According to the first book of the *Collectio Avellana*,⁴⁴ during the reign of Constantius there arose a period of discord concerning who would be the rightful bishop of Rome. Liberius was elected in 352, only to be exiled three years later by Constantius. In his place Felix II was then elected (perhaps unjustly) in 355. The sources differ on the end of Felix. The *Liber Pontificalis* presents him as condemning Constantius and dying a martyr's death at his hands,⁴⁵ while the *Collectio Avellana* presents him as dying peacefully after reigning for eight years. With the death of Felix II, Liberius returned to power and completed his previous position, forgiving those who had turned against him. When he too died:

Then the Priests and deacons Ursinus, Amantius and Lupus, with the holy people, who had been faithful while Liberius was in exile, went to the basilica of Julius and called for Ursinus to take the place of Liberius as their bishop. However the liars gathered [at the church] in Lucinis and demanded Damasus take the place of Felix as their bishop.⁴⁶

From the years 366-384 Damasus ruled as the Bishop of Rome. During this time he was a willing participant in open warfare between differing factions of the Christian community in Rome. He employed violence in order to gain the Episcopal seat. Concerning this conflict the Roman historian Aiminus Marcillianus observed:

⁴³ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 2.

⁴⁴ With some collaboration from the *Lib. Pont.*

⁴⁵ Whereby the much more sympathetic figure of Damasus gathers his bones and buries them appropriately. *Lib. Pont.* XXXVIII.

⁴⁶ *Avel.* 1.5, CSEL 35.1, 2,18-22: "tunc presbyteri et diacones Ursinus Amantius et Lupus cum plebe sancta, quae Liberio fidem seruauerat in exilio constituto, coeperunt in basilica Iuli procedere et sibi Ursinum diaconum pontificem in loco Liberii ordinari deprecant; periuri uero in Licinis Damasum sibi episcopum in loco Felicis expostulant." Trans. mine.

“Damasus got the best of the strife by the strenuous efforts of his partisans.”⁴⁷ Furthermore, he did not shy away from continuing to use aggressive means in order both to retain his position and to squash any and all dissent. He was beset by opposition, from those who would have been loyal to Ursinus⁴⁸ and also from the Luciferians.⁴⁹

One way in which he sought to solidify his power was through an expansive program of inscriptions over the tombs of the martyrs. Through his focus on the martyrs, Damasus sought to do three things. In the first of these he solidified his own power as the sole bishop of Rome, presenting himself as the one who brought the martyrs forward for veneration, and acting as an intercessor with the martyr just as the martyr was an intercessor with God.⁵⁰ Secondly, he sought to connect the Christian present of Rome with the city’s illustrious past.⁵¹ Finally, he wanted to secure his position (and the position of Rome itself) as the center of Western Christendom, due to Rome’s possession of the remains of a host of martyrs, but most especially Peter and Paul.

Prior to Damasus’ beautification of the burial locations of the Christian important dead, Christian epigraphy was not “particularly literate.”⁵² Damasus brought beautifully

⁴⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus, *HR.* XXVII. 3.12

⁴⁸ See: Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital*, 138-42.

⁴⁹ A relatively minor post Nicene splinter group which, following the opinion of Lucifer of Cagliari, rejected the return to the communion of any bishop who had anything to do with (even if they recanted) Arianism. One specific instance of violence occurred between Damasus and a Luciferian Priest *Libellus Precum ad Imperatores* xxii PL: 13, 98.

⁵⁰ See Saghy, “*Scinditur in Partes Populus*,” 273-287.

⁵¹ For a discussion of the Roman-ness of the martyrs as presented on 4th century Gold-glass bases see Lucy Grig, “Portraits, Pontiffs, and the Christianization of Fourth Century Rome,” *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 72 (2004): 203-230.

⁵² Maureen Carroll, *Spirits of the dead: Roman Funerary Commemoration in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford, 2006), 270. Here Carroll is making an observation about the very poor quality of Christian epigraphy. Mark Handley observes that this poor quality could have been the result of a false humility, eschewing ostentation, yet none the less

worked inscriptions into the Catacombs and roads leading to the city.⁵³ Through his presentation of the martyrs, and his control of their history, Damasus sought the aide of these saints to present a unified front against his political opponents. The martyrs, through the inscriptions Damasus provided for them, spoke to the living in a way that solidified Damasus' control of the Eternal City's Christian community. As Damasus could have inscribed the graves of any of the martyrs who achieved the crown in Rome, it must be observed that he chose only those who subscribed to his understanding of Christianity, thus creating a unified body with himself at its head. When he incorporated Hippolytus, the first "anti-pope,"⁵⁴ he was careful to emphasize Hippolytus' return to the unified Church, and establish himself as that Church's rightful heir. His deliberate emphasis on one martyr over another was a way of determining the limits of sacred space, establishing one shrine as important and letting other graves disappear to anonymity. The determination of sacred spaces, according to Jonathan Z. Smith, has always been tied with political power.⁵⁵

Perhaps no other Christian figure from the fourth century borrowed as much of his authority from death than did Damasus. While he was not alone in retelling the tales of the martyrs, his beautification of their shrines set the stage for his successful bid to support his own Episcopate.⁵⁶ He relied heavily on the authority that he gained from the dead. It was not only the Christian dead that Damasus conjured to do his bidding. His

desiring memorialization. Handley, *Death, Society and Culture* (London: British Archaeological Reports, 2003), 33.

⁵³ Saghy, "Pope Damasus and the Martyrs of Rome," 273-287.

⁵⁴ A problematic term not least of all because there was no such thing as a "pope" at the time, let alone how we think of it today.

⁵⁵ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map is not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 104-128.

⁵⁶ E.g. Tertullian, Eusebius, Prudentius, Ambrose, Serverus.

poetry was heavily influenced by both the style and content of Virgil, which he used to tie the history of Rome to the contemporary history of Christianity, as well as to connect the heroes of the age of persecution to his modern era of prosperity.⁵⁷ When Damasus cited, or made reference to the past, he was situating himself alongside his intellectual family, claiming them for himself and by extension rejecting the claims of his rivals. In this regard Damasus was calling his Christian family into communion with their Roman ancestry. The works of Damasus sought to maintain the unity of the Catholic Church (and by a very important extension his own power), and to bridge the boundaries between the Roman and the Christian. These works, then, focused on physical graves of the Christian dead, but drew upon the traditions of Roman inscription and epigraphy.

The style of Damasus' beautification of the graves of the martyrs allowed for his projects to be immediately recognizable within the tradition of Roman memorialization. Not only did he use "Virgilian Prose" but he also conformed to more traditional norms of the types of inscriptions, including the form and lettering.⁵⁸ Damasus brought the reverence and the respect given by Christians to their martyrs and important dead into the light of the roads and thoroughfares leading to Rome, where they would have been accessible to both the Christian faithful and the pagan traveler alike. This also had the effect of quickly broadcasting the message/memory that Damasus sought to project, over

⁵⁷ See Dennis Trout, "Damasus and the invention of early Christian Rome," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33.3 (Fall 2003).

⁵⁸ Dennis Trout, "Damasus and the invention of early Christian Rome." See also Saghy, "Pope Damasus and the Martyrs of Rome."; and Maura K. Lafferty, "Translating Faith from Greek to Latin: *Romanitas* and *Christianitas* in Late Fourth Century Rome and Milan," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11:1 (2003): 48, who observed this hexameter is also known as the *metrumheroicum*.

a significant geographic area and with speed that would have been impossible had he limited his constructions to the building of larger structures.

Nearly all of Damasus' inscriptions would fall into the category of "constative": they purported to tell information from one active authority to a passive recipient. They were clearly set up to perform actions which extended well beyond simple edification. The action performed in this case is the creation of a new understanding of the martyr being commemorated, and more importantly an image of a unified church in Rome with Damasus at its head. Here we see a clear example of how speech acts are never simply constative, they perform something new. These inscriptions performed an action; they create a cultural memory of the saints, a cultural memory that supports the established hierarchy of the Catholic Church. They are not passively recounting the events of the past, but are testaments to active decisions on the part of Damasus.

Saghy and Brown have both attempted to determine the reasons why the cult of the saints in the early years took the form that it did. Saghy observes that the Damasian inscriptions in particular were used not because of some predetermined importance of the graves of the martyrs, but rather due to simple economics:

It is therefore likely that the catacombs became the chosen ground of papal propaganda not only because of the profound spiritual context inherent in martyrdom but also because the erection of marble tombstones was a less expensive enterprise than the construction of churches.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Saghy, "Pope Damasus," 279.

Brown takes a diametrically opposed standpoint about the usage of fiscal resources and the rise of the cult of the saints: “The Cult of the saints was a focus where wealth could be spent without envy and *patrocinium*, exercised without obligation.”⁶⁰

While one should note that these two authors are looking at two distinctly different aspects of the cult of the saints (the former looking specifically at the usage of catacomb inscriptions by Damasus and the latter looking back over the entirety of the cult of the saints), their differences concerning the monetary function in the cult is striking. It is even more striking for Saghy to argue that Damasus was concerned with working on the cheap, considering his episcopal reign began in 366, nearly fifty years after the Edict of Milan, at a time when the Church had significant resources. The *Liber Pontificalis* describes the lavish sums of money that Constantine poured into the construction of basilicas and the estates (and more importantly their revenue) which were given into Episcopal control.⁶¹ The idea that there were somehow insufficient funds to build structures stretches the bounds of credulity. According to the *Liber Pontificalis* there were sufficient funds for Damasus to build at least one basilica, the one which he buried his mother and sister, and was ultimately himself interred.⁶²

I propose a different reason for the implementation of his inscriptions. Damasus was dealing with pressing issues of schismatics within the Roman church, and according to the *Libellus Precum*, was dealing with them harshly.⁶³ He was attempting to stamp out rivals, even bringing them posthumously into the fold of the mother church through the

⁶⁰ Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1982), 41.

⁶¹ *Lib. Pont.*, XXXIV.

⁶² *Ibid.*, XXXIX.

⁶³ *Lib. Pre.* xxii.

usage of martyr shrines. Damasus had the power to place the inscriptions upon the tombs of those whom he deemed to be important; he neither randomly nor universally inscribed the tombs of all of the Christian martyrs in Rome.⁶⁴ As the archon of these Christian archives he had tremendous power over the image that was presented therein. I do not accept that there was a lack of funding to build new church structures; a more plausible theory is that Damasus was trying to conserve time rather than money. He needed a way to establish himself quickly and effectively as the single leader of a unified church, and his inscriptions served this function admirably. He also needed to be seen as the heir of the martyrs, especially as his opponents were being martyred *by his own hands*. His opponents remained a persecuted minority, and he had replaced the Romans as their oppressor.

One significant difference between the construction of funerary inscriptions and the construction of a structure is that the inscriptions could be completed quickly, with almost instantaneous effect. One needed to be neither a Christian nor a pilgrim to see the inscriptions that Damasus had placed upon the tombs of the important dead, as they were part of the monumental parade that lined the roads leading to Rome. Like Ambrose's famous discovery of the remains of long lost saints, Damasus also discovered many "forgotten" martyr tombs. These of course would have allowed him the ability to create from scratch the life and message that he wanted to present on their *memoria*.⁶⁵ The monuments were *memoria* set up to be viewed, to be interacted with, with inscriptions

⁶⁴ Prudentius, *Pe.* 11 discusses the sheer number of Christian martyrs in Rome, and how many of their tombs only contain their name, or simply the number of martyrs buried in that location.

⁶⁵ *Lib. Pont.* XXXIX.

that begged to be read aloud. They allowed the martyrs to be remembered not necessarily as they were, but as Damasus intended them to be.

Through his use of a very specific style and type of inscription, Damasus, also created epitaphs that would have been immediately recognizable even to those who could not actually read the inscriptions for themselves. The literacy rate in Rome never reached more than ten percent; even so those who viewed these inscriptions would have recognized them *as inscriptions*. Due the sheer number of inscriptions Damasus placed around (and under) Rome, and the uniformity he employed in his lettering, even the illiterate viewer would have known both what the inscription was, and more importantly for Damasus' purpose, who had commissioned it.⁶⁶ Additionally, the style of the inscriptions themselves was intended to play a significant role in the way that they were received by whoever viewed them, Christian or not.

The capital script, designed by Furius Dionysius Filocalus, recalls in its proportions the square capitals found on imperial monuments . . . the delicate finials found on heads and feet of the new script, however, mark it as something new and distinctive.⁶⁷

Damasus was visually tying the inscriptions with traditional Roman epitaphs, a radical departure from the “not particularly literate” inscriptions of the previous centuries. This too was a feature that could be appreciated even by those who were unable to actually read what the inscription proclaimed.

⁶⁶ Ihm presents 62 inscriptions as authentic to Damasus, and another 34 as Pseudodamasine. Maximilian Ihm, *Damasi epigrammata; accedunt Pseudodamasiana aliaque ad Damasiana inlvstranda idonea. Recensvit et adnotavit Macimilianvs Ihm* (Lipsiae: B.G. Tevbneri, 1895).

⁶⁷ Lafferty, “Translating Faith from Greek to Latin,” 45. For the name of the carver see Ihm *Epr.* 18.

Damasus was reaching out to all travelers to Rome, literate and illiterate, when he placed an inscription, for instance, on the Tomb of Hippolytus:

Hippolytus, when the commands of the tyrant pressed upon him, is reported to have remained always a presbyter of the Novatian schism; when the sword cut our Mothers vitals (the Church); when he was traveling to the kingdom of God, the people asked him where they might take themselves, he replied that they ought all follow the Catholic faith. Thus having confessed this he earned the right to be our martyr. This tale Damasus tells as he heard it, Christ proves all things.⁶⁸

This inscription is one that had the possibility of being read by all, not just the faithful who approached the Eternal City. Damasus was able to ensure which particular individuals were remembered, as well as the way in which they were remembered. In this case he was able to bring Hippolytus back into the fold of the Catholic Church. Damasus used his position as the writer of these epigrams and constructor of the cultural memory which surrounds them to place the issues that he faced in his current predicament into the “never never time of *cum issua tyranny premerent*.”⁶⁹ The inscription placed over Hippolytus’ tomb was simply a reflection of the current situation that Damasus found

⁶⁸ Damasus, *Ihm Epr.* 37: “Hippolytus fertur,] premerent c[u]m iussa t[yranni,
Presbyter in scism]a semper manisse No[uati;
Tempore quo gladi[us secuit pia uiscera ma]tris,
Deutus Christo peteret cu]m regna pio[rum,
Quaesisset populous ubinam proce]dere [posset,
Catholicam dixisse fidem sequerentur ut omens.
Sic noster meriu tconfessus martyr ut esset.
Haec audita refe]rt Dam[asus, probat Omnia Christus”
Trans. in Saghy, “Damasus and the Martyrs of Rome,” 284.

For an interesting and well-argued discussion of the tensions in the third century church, of which Hippolytus was central, see: Allen Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century: Communities in Tension Before the Emergence of the Monarch-Bishop* (New York: Brill, 1995).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 368. See also Allen Brent “Was Hippolytus a Schismatic?” *Vigiliae Christianae* 49, no. 3 (Aug., 1995): 215-244.

himself in, projected into a fictional past of his own creation, in order to support his own contemporary power, and project that power into the future.

We can see that Damasus is clearly, intentionally, manipulating historical events in order to relate them to his current concern for his position leading a unified Roman congregation. Albert Brent argues that it would have been impossible for Hippolytus to have been part of the Novatian schism (as presented in the Damasian inscription, and later repeated by Prudentius). This conclusion is based on documents that Brent maintains Damasus must have had at his disposal as the Bishop of Rome, which would have guaranteed that had he sought an actual history of Hippolytus, he would have known that Hippolytus' involvement with this particular schism would have been impossible, considering their relative dates.⁷⁰ Brent then concludes that Hippolytus must have been a Bishop based in Rome, of a second – and equal – Christian Community, not the first “Anti-Pope” or an opponent vying for the same seat as Callistus.⁷¹ While this is not an unlikely scenario, I am not entirely convinced by this conclusion, given that there is no direct evidence of a co-Episcopal office in Rome, as in some other cities. Considering the chaos that was caused by the presence of two Roman Bishops prior to Damasus' securing the seat of Peter, I find it unlikely that there would be no historical record of this during the life of Hippolytus, but it is not an impossibility that some in Rome saw Hippolytus as their bishop, and quite probable that they saw him as authoritative in one way or another. Ultimately for the purposes of Damasus' usage of Hippolytus it does not matter if he had been a rival bishop, a schismatic, or simply a peer from another part of the city. It was not Damasus' intention to accurately record history.

⁷⁰ Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church*, 368-9.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 388.

Rather Damasus wanted to unambiguously present Hippolytus as having splintered from the Catholic Church. Damasus then presented Hippolytus as overcoming this schism through his death as a martyr for the universal Church. That is the image that fits into Damasus' narrative, a narrative which then presents the Bishop of Rome as the unifier of differing factions, the one to bring "unity from discord."⁷² This was the cultural memory that Damasus sought to create through his ability to render the lives of the important Christian dead however he chose.

Damasus was seen as an irenic bishop by some contemporaries. The *Codex Theodosianus* 16.1.2 (380ce) decreed, in an attempt to solidify the practices of the Catholic Church, that Damasus as the bishop of Rome and his counterpart from Alexandria were then the standard against which the religion of *everyone in the empire* should be measured.

Even as he supplemented the *memoria* of those buried on the roads leading to Rome, Damasus also injected his image of a unified church deep within the catacombs. Many argue (based on the description by Jerome⁷³) that by this point in time the

⁷² Cynthia White, *The Emergence of Christianity: Classical Traditions in Contemporary Perspective* (Santa Barbara: Fortress, 2010), 63.

⁷³ Jerome, *Ezech.* XII.40, PL 25.0345A-B: "Dum essem Romae puer, et liberalibus studiis erudirer, solebam cum caeteris ejusdem aetatis et propositi, diebus Dominicis sepulcra apostolorum et martyrum circuire; crebroque cryptas ingredi, quae in terrarum profunda defossae, ex utraque parte ingredientium per parietes habent corpora sepulcorum, et ita obscura sunt omnia, ut propemodum illud [Col.0375B] propheticum compleatur: Descendant ad infernum viventes." "While I was a boy at Rome being educated in the liberal arts, on Sundays I used to tour the tombs of the apostles and martyrs with others of the same age and inclination and frequently to enter the crypts, dug deep into the earth, that sheltered – on the walls on either side of us as we entered – the bodies of those buried there. Because everything was so dark, so that the saying of the prophet was almost fulfilled, 'let them descend living to the dead.'" Trans. Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs*, 159.

catacombs were no longer being used and expanded for general burial, but had become centers for pilgrimage. As such Damasus placed his name front and center on the important locations that pilgrims visited. He effectively gave specific locations the Episcopal seal of approval, and reminded the viewers that this seal of approval came from Damasus. Just as he did at the roadside monuments, Damasus made sure to include his name in the majority of the inscriptions that he set up,⁷⁴ and even those that did not include his name utilized the same type of inscriptions, lettering, and verse. As such the Christian visiting the graves of the martyrs would have become familiar with the inscriptions and known (even when not explicitly named) that they were part of Damasus' project. His inscriptions and beautification created a degree of homogeneity among the martyrs' shrines, which would have been visible to both Christians (explicitly within the catacombs) and Non-Christians alike. All of this served to create an impression of uniformity and consistency with *memoria* of the past. Thereby he was able to give himself, as the leader of the Church, the seal of approval of the martyrs themselves.

Perhaps the most famous inscription erected by Damasus was that placed in the "Crypt of the Popes" in the catacomb of Callistus:

Know that here lies united an army of saints, these venerable tombs enclose their bodies, while the Kingdom of Heaven has already welcomed their souls. Here lie the companions of Sixtus who bear the trophies won from the enemy. Here lie the brotherhood of popes who guard the altar of Christ. Here the bishop who lived through a long peace. Here the holy confessors sent to us from Greece. Here young men and children, the elderly and their chaste offspring, who desired to

⁷⁴ In a fashion that was not unlike many of his Roman predecessors who made sure that passersby knew who had erected the monument to the deceased.

conserve their virginity. Here too, I, Damasus confess I would like to be buried were it not for the fear of disturbing the ashes of these holy persons.⁷⁵

This inscription is addressed to passersby, explicitly to the pilgrims who would be looking for “a host of the blessed.” It is precisely because of its location in a crypt which contains the remains of several “Popes” that it has become one of the most famous of his inscriptions. This was a place that Christians came to visit the tombs of significant leaders of the Roman Church. Here the important dead (both martyred and not) became one unified group, and in that homogeneity they became nameless in the inscription. Just as in his other inscriptions, Damasus presented a unified Church for all who would seek out the remains of their sainted “ancestors.” Here that Damasus explained his own absence from the graves. He was not present (to the reader) after his death, and of course could not have been present prior to his death. His explicit reasoning for not desiring to be buried with the Bishops of the past, as well as other saints of Christian history (both famous and unknown), was that he would not want to disturb them, apparently with his less pious remains. Of course, he is there with them for all eternity in his insertion of his text into their final resting place. Damasus acted directly upon the readers, exerting

⁷⁵Damasus, *Ihm Epr.* 12: Hic congesta iacet quaeris si turba piorum,
 corpora sanctorum retinent veneranda sepulcra,
 sublimes animas rapuit sibi regia caeli.
 hic comites Xysti, portant qui ex hoste tropaea;
 hic numerosi procerum, servat qui altaria Chr(ist)i;
 hic positus longa vixit qui in pace sacerdos;
 hic confessores sancti quos Graecia misit;
 hic iuvenes pueriq(ue) sense castique nepotes,
 quis mage virgineum placuit retinere pudorem.
 hic fateor Damasus volui mea condere membra,
 sed cineres timui Sanctos vexare piorum.

Trans. in Antonio Baruffa, *The Catacombs of St. Callixtus: History – Archaeology – Faith* (Vatican City: L.E.V., 1993), 64.

the active role of power, by proclaiming this to be a location of central importance (which they already probably knew – why else would they have been there in the first place?), whereby he sought to create the cultural memory of these important dead. This cultural memory could not have been created unilaterally. It relied on the viewer to make this memory a reality for themselves in their observation of the saints' commemoration. Interestingly, aside from Sixtus, Damasus is the only named individual in the inscription. When pilgrims visited the Crypt of the Popes, they could not help but call Damasus to mind, creating his presence through his proclamation of his own absence.

An unspoken reason that he may have wanted to have been buried elsewhere can be inferred from the fact that he ultimately was buried in a basilica he constructed on the Via Ardeatina. Here he shared space not with the (more) impressive martyrs and Bishops, but with his mother and sister. This would then be a space that more people would visit (due to the more public and accessible nature of the basilica as opposed to the catacomb) and with those increased numbers of visitors he would be the most important of the dead interred therein. His false modesty only survived underground.

Damasus was concerned not only about his own power in Rome, but also with the power of Rome within the rest of the Empire.⁷⁶ One of the most potent claims that he could make was the presence of the remains of Peter and Paul in the city. The control of these remains was tremendously important. For the next two hundred years Rome closely guarded the relics of all of their martyrs, but most especially those of Peter and Paul.

⁷⁶ See Lafferty, "Translating Faith," for a discussion on how Damasus and Ambrose solidified the power of the Western Church through the use of language and relics.

Damasus wanted to make clear the citizenship and possession of these relics when he wrote the inscription placed near the catacombs on the Appian Way:

Here the saints abided previously. You ought to know this, whoever you are, you who seek equally the names of Peter and Paul. The East sent the disciples, which we acknowledge freely. On account of the merit of their blood and having followed Christ through the stars, they have traveled to the bosom of heaven and the kingdom of the righteous. Rome capably deserved to watch over its own citizens. Damasus records these things for your praise, O new stars.⁷⁷

This inscription did not mark the actual grave of either apostle. When this inscription was put in place the cult centers of Peter and Paul were well established by Constantine. However, this location *ad Catacumbas* was possibly the oldest cult center to Peter and Paul in Rome.⁷⁸ This location was most likely known to those outside of Rome, and those coming to the Basilica Apostolorum, which Constantine constructed at this site, would have expected to find relics of Peter and Paul. Daniel Eastman argues that Damasus was not claiming that *hic* in this instance means the specific location of the inscription was important, but rather that *hic* meant Rome itself was the place where the apostles had previously lived.⁷⁹ His argument about the efforts of Damasus to present Rome's possession of the remains as an *evocatio deorum* (specifically as gods of the past

⁷⁷ Damasus, *Ihm*, *Epr.*26: “Hic habitasse prius Sanctos cognoscere debes, Nomina quisque Petri partier Paulique requires. Discipulos griens misit, quod sponte fatemur: Sanguinis ob meritum – Christumque per astra secuti Aetherios petiere sinus regnaque piorum – Roma suos potius meruit defender ciues. Haec Damasus uestras referat noua sidera laudes.” Trans. Eastman, *Paul the Martyr*, 101.

⁷⁸ Which Eusebius *H.e.* 2.25.7, possibly dates to as early as 200.

⁷⁹ Eastman, *Paul the Martyr*, 103-4.

were called out of their previous city and brought to Rome) is convincing.⁸⁰ However, I take issue with his stance that the inscription was placed at this particular location, but really must have meant all of Rome. There was a tradition (fictional or not), strongly attested to both through the archeological evidence of the cultic activity at this location, as well as in the *Liber Pontificalis*,⁸¹ of the remains of the apostles spending time in this location. Consequently it would have made perfect sense for some traveler to come to this location to “seek the names of Peter and Paul” and they should know that those two had “once lived here” *in this particular place*, why else would they have come to *this* location looking for their names in the first place.

Markus Bockmuehl refers to this inscription as “Fruity Hexameter” which presents “a kind of ‘Starbucks’ history – frothy, sweetened and flavored as classical myth.”⁸² While Bockmuehl looks at this as a negative, this effect was exactly what Damasus intended, and considering the popularity of the beverages served at Starbucks, he may well have performed his task admirably. This inscription is decidedly a work of propaganda which sets the church at Rome as the sole possessor of Peter and Paul’s remains and of their authority, which then ensured Rome’s pre-eminence within the Christian community.⁸³

⁸⁰ It should be noted that Peter and Paul were not the only foreign martyrs that Damasus made Roman. He also incorporated Saturinus and Hermes whose inscriptions can be found in Ihm #46 and Feriua #48 respectively.

⁸¹ The *Lib. Pont.* explicitly makes reference only to one inscription out of all of those that Damasus put into place: this one.

⁸² Markus Bockmuehl, “Peter’s Death in Rome? Back to Front and Upside Down,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 60 (2007): 3.

⁸³ For a discussion of the nearly universal acceptance of this claim, see Eastman, *Paul the Martyr*, 101ff.

Letter 19 by Paulinus of Nola (quoted above) discussed how Constantine wished to emulate “Romulus’ city” and that through the introduction of Timothy and Andrew’s remains Constantinople, “now stands with twin towers, vying to match the hegemony of the great Rome.” It is entirely possible that this understanding of the twin towers of Rome (Peter and Paul) was an understanding not necessarily of Constantine, but rather of Paulinus projecting his own understanding of the pre-eminence of Rome through those twin towers, back on to Constantine. As we saw earlier, Constantine desired (and ultimately succeeded) to have more than two apostles in his mausoleum, to outshine Rome’s possession of Peter and Paul. For Paulinus’ early fifth century understanding of the prominence of the relics of Rome, possession of martyr relics was essential if Constantine was going to compete with the “hegemony of great Rome.” If my understanding of Paulinus’ account is correct, this demonstrates how fully he was influenced by the work of Damasus in the construction of the centrality of the cult of Paul and Peter in Rome.

Damasus did not limit the incorporation Peter and Paul into his narrative of the preeminence of Rome to a few simple inscriptions. He commissioned catacomb paintings, and minted small medals for pilgrims to purchase during their time in Rome with the Apostle’s faces on them. Several gold glass bases survive which probably date to his rule, which presented Peter and Paul in communion. One even explicitly included his own image alongside the other two, whereby he was granted apostolic approval through

his presence with theirs. These gold glass bases were ultimately used as decorations within the catacombs, pressed into the enclosures of tombs therein.⁸⁴

By drawing upon the “epigraphic habit” of the Roman world, Damasus explicitly created a Christianity that tied itself to the classical heritage of Rome, and also claimed for itself the future of Rome. The presence and passion of Peter and Paul in Rome allowed Rome to claim them as her own, adding new stars to the heavens that have always looked down on the Eternal City. Who better to present and claim these new stars than Damasus?⁸⁵ It must also be noted that from the biblical account Peter and Paul were not always on the best terms. Consequently once again the image that Damasus presented was one of unity from discord. The apostles were together as one in Rome, as the church which had been divided into two factions was once again one Catholic Church, under the direction of one bishop. On a broader level Rome itself was now synonymous with Christianity; the city which had previously persecuted the Church was now forged anew by Damasus’ pen.

Damasus’ usage of the martyrs was similar to that of Constantine, in that he sought to use their power to solidify his own. However where Constantine constructed elaborate church structures, Damasus turned his attention to the commemoration of the martyrs through his use of inscriptions and epigrams. This technique served him well as it

⁸⁴ See: Lucy Grig, “Portraits, Pontiffs, and the Christianization of Fourth Century Rome” *Papers of the British School at Rome* 72 (2004): 203-230; Nicola Denzey, *The Bone Gathers*, 178-9. Denzey also argues that Damasus emphasized male saints over and above their female counterparts.

⁸⁵ For a detailed discussion of Damasus’ inscriptions see Rebecca Leigh Littlechilds, “The epitaphs of Damasus and the transferable value of persecution for the Christian community at Rome in the fourth-century AD,” MA thesis, University of Victoria, 2009.

allowed him to both act more quickly than he would have been able to had he focused on the construction of churches, as well as cast a much broader net. His inscriptions were found everywhere, from the roads leading into Rome to the depths of the Catacombs.⁸⁶ His audience became the faithful of the church as well as anyone entering into Rome for less ecclesiastical purposes. Damasus successfully placed his mark for everyone to see, a mark that heralded him as the authority on the lives of the martyrs, and the only one who could claim to be their direct descendant. He was able to act as an intercessor with the martyr, as the martyr was believed to have been able to act as an intercessor with heaven.

Conclusion

As we have seen in this chapter two important fourth-century Christian leaders (one emperor and one bishop) sought to consolidate their power through a usage of the bodies of the martyrs. Constantine and Damasus used different means to put the remains of the important Christian dead on display. For Constantine this was through the construction of elaborate monuments to the important dead of Rome, providing previously existing cult centers with new and elaborate structures for the continued worship therein. In these new structures, especially at the most influential sites – the basilicas dedicated to Peter and Paul in Rome, and his own mausoleum in Constantinople – the Christian population could not help but observe who it was who acted as the patron to the saints: Constantine.

⁸⁶ Curran notes that Damasus's inscriptions "help physically unite the sites beyond the walls into an almost unitary Christian hinterland of Rome." Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital*, 146.

Through his enthusiastic construction projects using the rhetoric of burial which traced its roots to pre-Christian Roman practices, Constantine ensured that he would forever be associated with Peter, the Rock of the Church. In no less of an apostolic manner Constantine built towering basilicas upon that rock which combined imperial authority with his new religion. In his own burial Constantine demonstrated that he considered himself to be the patriarch of his new family, surrounding himself with the apostles. Through his usage of the Basilica shrine, he presented the martyrs, the Christian special dead, in a light which echoed the role of imperial power. His solidification of his own power was drawn using decidedly Roman lines. However, these lines were arranged in a specifically new and a specifically Christian design. His own memorial demonstrated his desire to be interred with the remains of the apostles where he identified himself (visually) as the central figure in the emergence of Christianity. He could no longer claim divinity (or expect it to be granted posthumously) due to his Christian faith, but he clearly comes as close to it as possible, creating a cult center at his own mausoleum. One of the major contributions that Constantine initiated in his interaction with the cult of the martyrs was not only his elevation of himself to equality with the Apostles, which is another way for an emperor to gain a cult following after his death once apotheosis was no longer available, but more strikingly what his becoming the equal to the apostles does *for the Apostles*.

Modern scholarship has focused on the claim Constantine made was making for himself in relation with the Apostles. The role of the Apostles for the modern audience has been firmly established near the top of the Christian hierarchy. For Constantine to claim to be the equal to the Apostles means that he was also claiming that the Apostles

were *equal to the emperor*. Constantine's monument established that the Apostles' role in the empire was no less than his own, and the role of his predecessors (who at this time still had an imperial cult). Constantine formulated the graves and shrines to the martyrs and Apostles drawing upon Roman imperial formulas and combining them with the emphasis on the familial nature of honoring the graves of the dead. The martyrs and Apostles were the ancestors with whom Constantine sought to identify himself through burial commemoration. This identification raised the status of those who had been executed by the empire to the level of the ancestors of his imperial dynasty.

Damasus had other matters to attend to, specifically the need to consolidate his own power in a period of significant discord. After struggling to become the Bishop of Rome, Damasus skillfully intertwined two competing narratives at the sites of the martyr's graves. Rather than building many elaborate structures, he chose the more expedient path through the beautification of the widespread and visible memorials to the martyrs of Rome. He wove together Virgilian verse with the Christian cultural memory of suffering and persecution. Through this he created the fabric of late fourth-century Rome as the inheritor of Romulus and Remus as well as Peter and Paul. He did not, however, indiscriminately commemorate every martyr buried in Rome, but rather chose those who best demonstrated the image of the past that most succinctly codified the united Catholic Church of the present. Damasus successfully brought possible schismatics (or more importantly those remembered as such) back into the fold though the intentional misrepresentation of history, as we saw in the case of the Hippolytus inscription. In nearly every case, constantly drawing upon previous Roman practices, Damasus let the reader know who it was that presented the epitaphs for their edification. At the same time

he surrounded himself with the martyrs, soldiers who would defend him against his contemporary rivals.

In much the same way that Constantine sought to claim the Apostles as his personal ancestry through his construction of the Basilica Apostolorum in Constantinople, Damasus sought to solidify the place of Rome within the empire, at a time when its power was waning. Through equation of Peter and Paul to Remus and Romulus, Damasus wove the martyred Apostles into the fabric of the city. By claiming the location of execution and final resting place for Peter and Paul he claimed Peter and Paul for Rome, establishing it as the heir to the rock of the Church.

Both of these men set the stage for the future use of the martyrs and their shrines. We shall see in the next chapters the way in which the martyr shrine continued to be a battleground upon which the Christian powerful sought to craft and present the cultural memory of Christianity, and simultaneously sought to stamp out practices performed at these shrines which may well have undercut their power.

Chapter Three: To Control The Places and Practices Associated With the Remains of the Saints

No sooner is a great man dead than legend is busy with his life.¹

As the fourth century drew to a close Christianity gained a dominance that would have seemed impossible a century before. It was at this point more than at any previous time in its history that Christianity had to struggle to determine its own identity. During the sporadic persecutions of the early fourth century Christians had a common opponent. After the end of the persecutions that opponent was no longer the threat that it had been. There arose a new problem: internal schisms. As Damasus had previously, several bishops from both sides of the Mediterranean sought to use cult of the martyrs as means of solidifying their control, and mitigating the competing claims of their opponents. They also had to confront various unsavory practices that were popular at the graves of the martyrs. Here too the martyrs were invoked so as to bring a new sobriety to the celebration of the important dead.

The building blocks of the fourth-century's usage of burial of the saints as one of the primary means by which the emergent church sought to explicitly create its own identity and communicate that identity to itself was not pulled from thin air. Yet, the structures of memory that were built with these blocks differed depending on the architect. The way that Constantine and Damasus used them was decidedly different from that of Augustine, Ambrose, or Paulinus. However, none of them could have built their

¹ Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, trans. Montgomery, J. R. Coates, Susan Cupitt and John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001 reprint. Orig. 1906), 75.

mnemonic structures as they did without some of the framework that was laid for them by their predecessors, which were themselves built upon general Mediterranean attitudes towards the dead. The major figures discussed in this chapter all approached the usage of the remains of the saints differently. They each sought to support their power through differing approaches to the cult of the saints. As H. A. Drake observed in *Constantine and the Bishops*, at the beginning of the fourth century “it is obvious that there was not just one, monolithic church, but a church that spoke with many voices, through the mouth of bishops who had more than theology to scream about.”² Drake clearly demonstrated that the bishops of the fourth century were struggling to claim their place in the empire. With the advent of the fourth century there were numerous issues with “heresies” and schismatics, which demonstrated that the struggle was not only for doctrinal dominance, but also for political supremacy. While the graves of the important dead were not the primary battle ground for these struggles, in some instances those who emerged victorious were those who successfully forged the cultural memory of their followers at the tombs of the saints.

It is in the second half of the fourth century that we see the development of the cult of the saints reach its zenith. It is also where we began to see some serious discussion about the cult as well as about the problems with it. While this chapter will not discuss the reception of the cult in the non-Christian Gentile world, it will deal with some of the apologetics that Augustine and Jerome felt it necessary to pen against those who objected to the veneration of the saints.

² H. A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2002), 31.

The martyr's remains introduced two types of intention. The first of these was the intention of what was to be done with the remains, the emphasis on how they were buried, where they were buried, and finally, as we saw with Damasus, how that burial was decorated. This last item influenced how visitors to that tomb viewed both the martyr as well as (more subtlety) whoever had the power to present that image of the martyr. The second aspect of intention dealt with that sort of behavior was acceptable at these shrines, and even if the scandalous behavior might invalidate the cult of the saints entirely. Due to the dramatic rise in converts to Christianity in the late fourth century, and their desire to continue practices that they might not have associated with one particular cult or another, the episcopate had to determine how to manage behaviors that either may have subverted their own power (e.g., private devotion to the martyrs, outside the boundaries of episcopal control), but also those behaviors that they considered unbecoming of a Christian congregation.³ Even if the shrine was located centrally and it was presented beautifully, the way in which the martyr cult was received became dependent, almost entirely, upon how those who gathered at the memorial behaved. Bad behavior, drunkenness, fornication, loud music, and possibly even murder, become issues that various bishops felt they needed to address. To be fair, the notion of murder at the shrines was most likely hyperbolic, yet considering the size of the crowds that could amass, it is not inconceivable that accidental death could have occurred during these late night vigils (which almost certainly had the previous irregularities).

³ As we saw in chapter one, the care of the dead did not differ significantly based on one's other interactions with the divine. It was nearly universal throughout the population, much as there is an American way of death. See, Jessica Mitford, *The American Way of Death Revisited* (New York: Vintage, 2000).

The cult of the saints had a strong following throughout the Mediterranean world; however there were regional differences in the way that it was incorporated into the Catholic Church in the fourth century. In Rome it was eagerly embraced by the episcopate as a means of legitimizing its power. In Northern Africa (including Egypt), however, the cult of the saints was quickly embraced by branches of the Christian community that would be deemed “heretical” by the Catholic Church (e.g. Gervais and Donatists). Because of the associations of the cult of the saints with these other Christian groups (which were, at times, being persecuted by the Catholic Church) the Catholic episcopate in Northern Africa were more careful in their approach to the cult of the saints than were their European contemporaries. However that does not mean that the episcopate in North Africa did not use the cult of the dead as a means of establishing its own power and attempting to eliminate the claims of its rivals.

This chapter will examine how several key figures, at the end of the fourth century, sought to use the cult of the saints as it had been initially shaped by Constantine and Damasus, to solidify their own power or the power of the Catholic Church against those that they considered to be heterodox. The usage of the cult of the saints was not uniform, much as the practices that were acceptable at the graveside were not. However, the use of the martyrs’ body was an important (proxy) battleground for several significant debates in which the late fourth-century Christian community found itself engaged in.

The intentional actions of Ambrose, who, through the dissemination of the remains of martyrs that he personally (re)discovered, cleverly spread both the presence of the church of Milan as well as his own influence much further than would have been possible without his use of the cult of the saints. At the same time he was leery of the

popular practices associated with the cult and sought to bring them firmly under episcopal control. His former student, and the recipient of some of those remains, Augustine, held varying views of the cult of the saints over his lifetime ranging from displeasure concerning the drunken crowds at martyr shrines, to defending those same crowds against opponents, to a full embracement of the importance of the martyr's sepulture. While Augustine has been accused of inconsistency in his stance toward the cult, rarely did he resort to seeing the actual remains as a sort of magical talisman. Even when he recounted miracles associated with martyr relics, for him they were a means of instruction, as well as a way of tying his local church, through the intentional promotion of trans-local relics, to the broader Christian community centered in Rome.

Paulinus of Nola's focus on the cult of St. Felix was tremendously influential in the creation of Nola as a site for an annual pilgrimage at Felix's "birthday." Paulinus, also a recipient of Ambrose's generosity, was unambiguously in favor of the cult of the saints. He composed a good deal of poetry for Felix as well as he penned inscriptions that graced the new cult center at Nola and that of his close friend Sulpicius Severus. The latter, a devotee of St. Martin, adds to our discussion through his correspondence with Paulinus as well as through the way that he composes the *Life of Martin*, and the occasional tensions that arise therein. Jerome, who is important in his recounting of going (sneaking?) into the catacombs on Sundays, is also important in his vehement defense of the cult of the martyrs.

Finally, we will turn our attention to Egypt where in the fifth century, Apa Shenoute was leery of the cult of the saints, or at least the way in which it was practiced in Egypt during his (extremely long) lifetime. However, a careful examination of his texts

Since it behooves Christians and Those who Work Evil allows us to observe that he was not against the cult of the saints as a whole but was extremely critical of the logical conclusion of the actions started by Ambrose. He vehemently opposed the “discovery” of saints’ bodies, or the inclusion of bones in a church that might have belonged to someone other than a martyr, or even might not have been human. He also opposed people who spent lavishly on the construction of martyr shrines, while allowing the poor to go hungry. These things Shenoute simply could not abide. In this light he was a proponent of the cult of the saints: but a cult that was not corrupted by empty platitudes and forged relics.

Ambrose of Milan

Whom are we to esteem as the princes of the people but the holy Martyrs? Among whose number Protasius and Gervais long unknown are now enrolled, who have caused the church of Milan, barren of martyrs hitherto, now as the mother of many children, to rejoice in the distinctions and instances of her own suffering.⁴

One of the most important innovations to the cult of the martyrs came from the bold actions of Ambrose. In direct opposition to an imperial decree, early in 386, he began to disperse the saints’ relics that he was in control of, specifically those of Protasius and Gervais. There is no evidence for what would become a common feature of the cult of the martyrs, prior to Ambrose, the division of the bodies which were then sent

⁴ Ambrose, *Ep. 22.7*, PL 16.1021C: “Principes populi quos alios nisi sanctos martyres aestimare debemus, quorum jam in numerum diu ante ignorati Protasius Gervasius que praeferuntur, qui sterilem martyribus Ecclesiam Mediolanensem, jam plurimorum matrem filiorum laetari passionis propriae fecerint et titulis et exemplis?” Trans. Philip Schiff ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Volume X Ambrose: Select Works and Letters* (New York: Cosimo, 2007), 436.

throughout the empire. The only real caveat to this is the treatment of the ashes of the Forty Martyrs. Before we discuss Ambrose's discovery of Protasius and Gervais, and the subsequent treatment thereof, we need to examine how Ambrose himself was the recipient of the tradition of the proto-relic trade. There is some evidence that groups in Egypt were disturbing martyr tombs and placing their bodies on movable stretchers. Furthermore, there was evidence as early as 311 of a dispute concerning a woman who was prone to kissing a bone of a martyr prior to taking the Eucharist. Here however the woman, Lucilla, kept the bone for her own personal usage. "Lucilla . . . was said to kiss the bone of some martyr or other—if, that is, he was a martyr—before the spiritual food and drink, and since she preferred to the saving cup the bone of some dead man, who if he was a martyr had not yet been confirmed as one."⁵ It is notable here that Optatus was not disturbed by the fact that she had in her possession the bone of a martyr, but by the possibility that it might not have been a martyr at all. Even by 367 it seems that there was strong debate about the ability to determine martyr relics from the remains of common people. One also has to observe that, even though Optatus was arguing against the Donatists, his concern here was not the practice associated with the bone, but rather that it was both perceived to take precedence over the Eucharist and that it may not even have been from a martyr.

Typically the first instance of the translation (the movement of a corpse from one location to another) of a martyr is considered to have happened in 351. According to

⁵ Optatus, *Contra Parmenianum Donatistam*, 16, PL 11.916B: "Lucillam . . . quae ante spiritalem cibum et potum, os nescio cuius martyris, si tamen martyris, libare dicebatur: et cum praeponeret calici salutari os nescio cuius hominis mortui, et si martyris." Trans. in Bart D. Ehrman and Andrew S. Jacobs, *Christianity in Late Antiquity – 300-450: A Reader* (New York: Oxford, 2004), 229.

Sozomen's *Church History*, Gallus Caesar (who established Antioch as his residence), was so zealous that he built a temple to the martyr and bishop (of Antioch) Babylas in Daphne (a suburb of the city) in order to purge Daphne of its "pagan superstition and the outrages of profligates."⁶ Gallus then had the tomb of Babylas moved into the temple of Apollo. While Sozomen does not describe where Babylas had previously been interred (presumably in Antioch), the new temple and burial location was apparently close enough to the Oracle at Daphne that it fell silent. This ultimately proved problematic for Julian who, three years later, tried to consult the oracle. At first he was greeted with silence. Julian eventually determined that the problem was the presence of Babylas' remains and demanded that the Christian community remove them. In what could have been a confrontation, the Christians sang songs of praise as they peacefully removed the remains of their martyred bishop.⁷

Other evidence of martyr translation (or at least movement of their bodies) prior to Ambrose, came from Athanasius' Festal letters 41 and 42 for the years 369 and 370 respectively. In these letters Athanasius condemned relic worship, not because there was anything inherently wrong with the honor given to the martyr or saint, but rather because he objected to the treatment of the remains by the Meletians. According to Athanasius they exhumed martyr bodies that they had discovered, and then carried them on stretchers from place to place. This may not have been too far removed from traditional Egyptian practices, which may have included keeping the mummified corpse of the deceased in the

⁶ Sozomen, *HE*. V.19

⁷ *Ibid*.

home. Cicero observed that Egyptians kept their dead in their homes after embalming them.⁸

The translations listed above, however, were not seen as gifts given from one location to another. The trade of the remains of the martyrs has its first clear roots with Basil of Caesarea in 373-4. In a letter without any clear addressee, although it is typically seen as being addressed “to a trainer [of martyrs]” Basil requests that the relics of martyrs be sent to the recipient’s native land.⁹ The verbiage here is interesting, as it begs one to wonder if these martyrs also were originally from Caesarea. If this is the case then the return of the remains would have been much more in accordance with traditional customs (e.g. the bodies of the dead were often returned to their homeland for proper burial – as with the case of Hippolytus’ corpse when it was returned to Rome after he died in exile). However as he expressed in another letter that their hearts were heavy, due to the fact that no more martyrs were being produced.¹⁰ Because of this lack of martyrdom in Caesarea, Basil is exuberant at the physical nature of the struggles of the martyrs beyond the Danube. The martyrs’ struggle against the barbarians was a physical manifestation of the struggle against (non-Christian) opponents, which recalled the glory days of open persecution and martyrdom. He lamented the apathy of his congregation, noting that there was no martyrdom, because those who injure Christians in Caesarea are the Christians themselves. He hoped that with the return of martyrdom God would become reconciled with his congregation and lead them back to a righteous path. It would seem that Basil’s

⁸ Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.45. See Wortley, “The origins of Christian veneration of body-parts,” *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 1 (2006): 19. See also Lucian of Samosata, *On Funerals*, 3.170.

⁹ Basil, *Ep.* 155.

¹⁰ Basil, *Ep.* 164.

request was granted when he wrote in 373 to Ascholius of Thessalonica and observed that Ascholius had honored his homeland by sending it a martyr, quite possibly Sabbas the Goth.¹¹

Basil was not only the recipient of remains. Basil wrote in 370 to a fellow bishop, Arcadius, that he desired to find relics for Arcadius in part so that he could “participate in the saint’s distribution of blessings.”¹² Around 375, at the request of Ambrose, he sent the body of Bishop Dionysius back to Milan where Dionysius had previously been the archbishop prior to his exile to Caesarea at the hands of Constantius. In the letter that accompanied the remains to Milan,¹³ Basil observed two points worthy of note. There was discord amongst Basil’s congregation about the translation of the relics. Secondly, he was quite explicit in his proclamation that these are in fact the real relics of Dionysius, offering as proof the fact that his congregation did not want to give them up, but did so to bring joy to that of Ambrose. It would seem that even by 375 there was the fear (or perceived fear on Basil’s part) that there might be substitution of less holy bones for those of the martyrs.

Basil also apparently gave ashes of the Forty Martyrs to a group of nuns who later gave (some of) them to Gaudentius of Brescia.¹⁴ The presence of the relics of the Forty Martyrs is interesting, as Sozomen wrote about a different discovery of the Relics in 450 (at least 60 years after they had been given to Gaudentius). Sozomen recounted how the relics had been kept by a woman, Eusebia, in her garden outside the walls of

¹¹ Basil, *Ep.* 165.

¹² Basil, *Ep.* 49 quoted in Jill Burnett Comings, *Aspects of the Liturgical Year in Cappadocia (325-430)* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005), 112.

¹³ Basil, *Ep.* 197 See also Comings, *Aspects of the Liturgical Year*, 112.

¹⁴ Gaudentius, *Serm.* 17, PL 20.959ff.

Constantinople, essentially in her private collections. At the time of her death, she had the relics placed near her own tomb, and gave the property to an order of monks. These monks then kept the secret of the martyr's relics (as per her wishes), not even divulging their presence when they sold the property. Eventually, a martyrium was built over the property to a different martyr: Thyrsus. In the fifth century, the Empress Pulcheria received a vision from Thyrsus, commanding her to excavate the long forgotten relics of the Forty Martyrs and re-inter them near his own tomb. The lapse from their primary interment to the vision of Plucheria was no more than the life of one of the monks who, upon questioning, recalled where the location might have been. The excavations were carried out and the relics discovered with the tell-tale sweet odor emanating from the casket where they were discovered beneath the martyrium. Sozomen himself was present at the public festival wherein the relics were placed near those of Thyrsus.¹⁵ I have recounted this narrative here, as it demonstrates that there was a clear division and distribution of the ashes of the Forty martyrs. One of the four ways of legally dealing with a corpse according to Roman law was to burn it, consequently the ashes of the martyrs "could be legitimately kept above ground, visible and accessible."¹⁶

The distribution of the relics may have been a feature of the Eastern Church which seems to have been much looser with the distribution of primary relics than the Western Church. Basil observed that many towns and villages had relics of the Forty Martyrs, by the 370's.¹⁷ We also see a bit later that John Chrysostom, in a sermon late in the fourth century or early in the fifth, discussed how the Egyptians had many martyrs and freely

¹⁵ Sozomen, *He.* IX.2.

¹⁶ John Wortley, "The origins of Christian Veneration of body-parts," 5-23.

¹⁷ Basil, *Mart.* PG 31.521

sent them throughout the country.¹⁸ Gaudentius was also notable in that he may well have returned from his pilgrimage to Jerusalem (ca. 387) with relics of John the Baptist, although these too he does not elaborate concerning what sort of relics these were.¹⁹

Ambrose was the recipient of other martyr relics than those sent by Basil. According to *The Martyrologium Hieronymianum* he received the remains of the apostles John, Andrew and Thomas.²⁰ This would mean that Andrew's relics had been moved from Constantinople to Milan in 386. These then were the relics that he probably incorporated into his "Roman" Basilica.²¹ It is odd that he does not mention these very prestigious names when he recounts the consecration of the basilica in a letter to his sister²². The absence of any other reference to their presence in his works casts some degree of doubt upon whose relics he incorporated into that structure. However there is little doubt that he received some relics and placed them into the basilica; he laments that there were no local martyrs for veneration in Milan.

Finally Neil McLynn presents us with one final point of note on the relic trade or martyr translation.²³ He boldly asserts that Felix and Nabor were themselves brought to

¹⁸ John Chrysostom, *pan. Aeg.* PG 50.693. Both John and Basil are discussed in Gillian Clark, "Translating relics: Victricius of Rouen and fourth-century debate," *Early Medieval Europe* 10.2 (2001): 167.

¹⁹ Gaudentius, *Serm.* 17, PL 20.259ff.

²⁰ Delehaye, Hippolyte. *Martyrologium Hieronymianum Cambrense*. Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1913. See Allan Doig, *Liturgy and Architecture from the Early Church to the Middle Ages* (Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2008), 58. One is skeptical of placing too much historical veracity on this. However, it is important to note that several other bishops who were known to have received relics from Ambrose also had those of Andrew in their collections (e.g. Paulinus, Gaudentius, and Victricius).

²¹ Richard Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals: Topography and Politics* (University of California Press, 1987), 80 n. 23.

²² Ambrose, *Ep.* 22.

²³ Neil Brendan McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (University of California Press, 1994), 216. See also Gillian Mackie, *Early Christian*

Milan, from Lodi, by the previous bishop, some 60 years earlier (which would put the translation around the surprisingly early date of 326). McLynn appears decidedly apologetic, when he suggests that Felix and Nabor were interred themselves *ad Sanctos* near a previously established local cultic location. It was this knowledge of their translation that led Ambrose to be confident that there would be other martyrs buried near their new tombs. If there had been a previously established cult site at this location then one has to wonder why it was necessary to bring their bodies to Milan. Or if their acquisition was, as McLynn claims, “precisely in order to supply Milan’s deficiency of sanctified remains,”²⁴ then it seems highly unlikely that 60 years prior to Ambrose no one remembered the graves of these illustrious martyrs. However, if these remains were actually translated in the 320’s from Lodi after having been buried there since the death of the martyrs in 303, that would be an extraordinarily early date for such an endeavor. Despite these possible antecedents for Ambrose’s own translation of martyr remains, his action was unprecedented in that he moved them into a basilica, and then dispersed pieces of them throughout the empire.

By 386 Ambrose had been embroiled in a protracted conflict with both the Emperor Valentinian II and the Empress Justina in Milan over the usage of church structures in Milan. They had introduced an Arian Bishop into Milan and decreed that Ambrose should hand over a church structure for use by the Arians. He and his congregation barricaded themselves in the structure and Valentinian ultimately relented.²⁵

Chapels in the West: Decoration, Function and Patronage (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 126 n. 59 which makes passing reference of this tradition.

²⁴ McLynn, *Ambrose*, 216.

²⁵ For an overview of the Arian crisis in Milan during this period see: D. H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts* (Oxford Early Christian

Soon thereafter, Ambrose recounted in a letter to his sister, a sermon that he gave upon the discovery of the bodies of the previously unknown martyrs Protasius and Gervais. Their discovery filled the void left by the absence of local martyrs, a void that apparently was felt not only by Ambrose but, at least according to Ambrose himself, weighed heavily on the souls of his congregation. “For after I had dedicated the basilica, many, as it were, with one mouth began to address me, and said: Consecrate this as you did the Roman basilica. And I answered: 'Certainly I will if I find any relics of martyrs.' And at once a kind of prophetic ardor seemed to enter my heart.”²⁶ According to McLynn this popular call for martyr relics may have been an inconvenience for Ambrose. He had already prepared his basilica with the novel addition of his own final resting place reserved under the altar. To build a basilica with an aim towards ensuring one’s own memory was not new (e.g. Damasus’ in Rome) yet the notion of pre-ordaining the burial location of prominence within that structure was revolutionary.²⁷ Consequently the call for relics as he had used them, in the consecration of the Roman Basilica, was problematic Ambrose. It was more politically expedient for Ambrose to have had his own martyrrium ready and waiting should he meet with a violent demise – which was always a possibility when you tangled with an emperor.

Studies) (New York: Oxford, 1995), esp. Ch. 7, and Richard Krautheimer, *Three Christian capitals: topography and politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

²⁶ Ambrose, *Ep. 22.1*, PL 16.1019B: “Quia nihil sanctitatem tuam soleo eorum praeterire, quae hic te geruntur absente; scias etiam sanctos martyres a nobis repertos. Nam cum ego basilicam dedicassem, multi tamquam uno ore interpellare coeperunt dicentes: Sicut Romanam basilicam dedices. Respondi: Faciam, si martyrum reliquias invenero. Statimque subiit veluti cujusdam ardor praesagii.” Trans. H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 10*. Ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1896).

²⁷ McLynn, *Ambrose*, 209.

While the presence of his pre-constructed martyrium may have been a deterrent to his own possible martyrdom (lest a more unruly popular uprising develop around that shrine), Ambrose's discovery of the martyrs (at the request of his congregation) would ultimately provide Ambrose with the ability to reunify his own church in Milan, as well as to spread his influence throughout Europe and into North Africa. While Damasus was content to let pilgrims make their way to Rome and revel in the grandeur of the martyr shrines there, Ambrose could not count on such masses. However through his dispersal of the remains, and not simply secondary (or contact) relics, Ambrose was able to spread his influence nearly as far as Damasus had spread his own reputation. Ambrose was also explicitly drawing upon Constantine's precedent through the usage of the basilica as the chosen architectural structure for Milan.

Ambrose (or as he claimed: his congregation) felt that the lack of local martyrs was some sort of deficiency (keeping up with the Romans has always been hard). Once the Martyrs had been discovered (bloody, large skeletons both of them) they were translated to the new basilica and laid to rest in the location that Ambrose had set up for his own body, under the altar. During the translation there was a miraculous healing of a blind man, which was momentous enough for Augustine (who was in attendance) to recount at least three times himself.²⁸

Augustine was not the only one to recount the exhumation of these remains; Paulinus in his *Life of Ambrose* also relates a similar scene concerning the unearthing of these relics, long ago forgotten to have been martyrs at all. They had been buried, according to both Paulinus and Ambrose, anonymously yet *ad Sanctos* near the

²⁸ Augustine, *Conf.* IX. 7; *Civ.* XXII. 8, 2; and *Sermo de Diversis*, CCLXXVI. 5 See also Paulinus of Milan, *Vit. Ambr.* 5, PL 14.27A ff.

sepulchers of the martyrs Felix and Nabor. When these remains were unearthed, miracles and exorcisms abounded. The miracles also served to bolster Ambrose against his Arian opponents. Paulinus described that: “but by these good works of the martyrs the faith of the Catholic Church grew, at the same time the treachery of the Arians diminished.”²⁹ As we shall see in the next chapter, the Arians (despite the conflation that Athanasius proclaims, namely that they were of one mind with the Meletians) were critical of the emerging martyr cult, especially as it was being used by Ambrose.³⁰

If the gathering of remains and early veneration thereof was as important as the *Martyrdom of Ignatius* suggests, then how could the graves Protasius and Gervais have gone without a cultic following, or at least without someone in the community remembering their location from the time of their death until the time of Ambrose's revelation concerning their location? If we do not grant that Ambrose actually found the intact bodies, dripping with blood and sweet smelling, but simply dug up two unmarked graves and created the wide ranging and important cult of Protasius and Gervais essentially out of whole cloth, how then was this tolerated by his congregation? The answer lies somewhere between these two scenarios. Ambrose was drawing upon the tradition of the cult of the martyrs as described in Ignatius, one that had a long history within Christian circles, yet also one that had evolved during the fourth century thanks

²⁹ Paulinus of Milan, *Vita. Ambr.* 5.14, PL 14.0032A: “Sed iis beneficiis martyrum in quantum crescebat fides Ecclesiae catholicae, in tantum Arianorum perfidia minuebatur.” Trans. mine.

³⁰ It is entirely possible that their criticism of the martyr cult's usage by Ambrose was almost exactly the same, for the same reasons even, as Augustine's criticism of the Donatists' usage of the cult surrounding local martyrs, or even Athanasius' almost complete rejection of the Martyr cult. The ability to set the boundaries of who was a martyr, and what could be done at their shrine/grave, and where that shrine/grave could be located, were all means of delineating distinctions between groups when they are not necessarily apparent.

primarily to the activities of Damasus and Constantine. The presence of local martyrs had become important, and hence the local congregation wanted their own locations of sanctity, their own martyrs. Ambrose drew upon that desire, that rhetoric, to create his own arguments. Ultimately it is unimportant for the current endeavor if the remains were actually those of Protasius and Gervais or even if Ambrose himself believed that they were. The importance of this action is the effect that it had upon his followers (who clearly *did* believe that the remains were authentic), and the direction that Ambrose went with these remains, which would become precedent for several hundred years of Christian development.

The bodies of Protasius and Gervais were not the only martyr relics that Ambrose miraculously discovered. Paulinus also discusses Ambrose building a church for the recently discovered Vitalis and Agricola, whose bodies had apparently been buried “amongst the Jews.”³¹ The body of Nazarius, who had been buried in a garden “outside the city,” was translated to the Basilica of the Apostles, at the Roman gate at the city of Aquileia. Here too the blood of the martyr was still wet, and Paulinus observes that “then we were filled with a fragrance that outshone the sweetness of all of the spices.”³²

Ambrose is perhaps *the* central figure in the development of the distribution of relics which would eventually become common with the cult of the saints. It was under his episcopal oversight that the cult of the saints grew into what it would become in the

³¹ Ibid., 8. This of course is further evidence for the idea discussed in chapter one about the intermingling of graves. Or even the notion that at the time of their death, there was not a strong distinction between Jews and Christians in Milan. See Boyarin, *Dying for God*, on the possibility of a false dichotomy surrounding these terms in the first two centuries.

³² Ibid., 8.32, PL 14.0038C: “Etiam odore tanto repleti sumus, ut omnium aromatum vinceret suavitatem.” Trans. mine.

following centuries. His approach to the remains of the saints was significantly different than that of Damasus. Damasus saw the burial locations and inscriptions of the important dead as a perfect way in which to recreate an idealized, unified, past leading up to an idealized unified present with him at the head of this unified church. The remains were dynamic in their meaning but static in their locations. Ambrose of Milan was not to be thwarted by the fact that the important dead had been buried in one particular location, a location that (sadly) was not directly under the altar of his basilica. In prior church building endeavors, done in relation to graves of saints or other important dead the church structure was molded around the saint's tomb.³³ However in 386, after his congregation expressed their desire for relics of saints as other churches had, Ambrose received a vision in a dream, which told him of the exact location of the burial of saints Gervais and Protasius.

Ambrose draws some of his authority (especially that which revolved around the martyr cult) from the desire of his congregation for local martyrs to venerate. He is then able to draw upon his authority in this regard in order to influence his congregation. His usage of power is not unidirectional, nor is power necessarily ever unidirectional. Power is always active and incorporates multiple forces. Power, or perhaps more precisely the

³³ Prudentius, *Pe.* XI. 171ff describes this practice regarding the tomb of Hippolytus: “talibus Hippolyti corpus mandatur opertis propter ube adposita est ara dicta Deo. Illa sacramenti donatrix mensa eademque custos fida sui martyris adposita servat ad aeterni spem vindicis ossa sepulcro. Pascit item sanctis Tibricolas dapibus. Mira loci pietas et prompta precantibus ara specs hominum placida prosperitate iuvat.”; “Such is the place of concealment to which the body of Hippolytus was committed, and by it has been set an altar dedicated to God. That table both gives the sacrament and is set there as faithful guardian of its martyr; it keeps his bones in the tomb for the hope of their everlasting deliverer and feeds the dwellers on Tiber's banks with the holy food. Wonderful is the grace that attaches to the spot and the altar, ever ready to receive its suppliants fosters the hopes of men with kindly favor.” Prudentius, “Peristephanon” in *Prudentius vol. II.* 1953, trans. H. J. Thomson, LCL. (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press) 317.

ability to act upon others through the construction of truth and reality, those attempting to act upon others must be granted that ability to some extent. Those influencing others must use tools that work effectively upon those that they wish to influence. This understanding of power is clearly evident in Ambrose's usage of the remains of the saints, as a means of solidifying his power both within Milan, but also through his projection of his own (and with his also Milan's) influence which he spread throughout Europe as he spread the relics from Milan.³⁴

It is important to note here that, at least according to Ambrose, the impetus for this discovery was not *his* desire for saints' remains within his church, but rather the popular demands of his congregation. He had already consecrated the Basilica Apostolorum (what he refers to in Letter 22 as the "Roman Basilica") with the relics of martyrs.³⁵ Afterward he observed the power that the presence of these foreign martyrs had on his congregation. Those in power were using the cult of the saints as a tool for the establishment of social control, but one must also be careful to note that this was a tool that they were given by the larger Christian population. While it is possible that Ambrose's use of the remains of the saints was a complete Ambrosian creation (and I am not unsympathetic to this stance), it is also important to note that his novel uses of the martyr's relics would not have been tolerated, or embraced, if there was not some desire for this sort of

³⁴ My understanding of power in this case stems from my understanding of Foucault's usage of power, see his afterword in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); as well as the interviews he gave in Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980). For an overview of Foucault and power see Isaak Dore "Foucault on Power" *UMKC Law Review* no. 78 (2009-2010), 737ff.

³⁵ The *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* describes those remains as that of the Apostles John, Andrew and Thomas. This would mean that Andrew had been moved from Constantinople to Milan in 386. See Doig, *Liturgy and Architecture*, 58.

commemoration amongst his congregation. Without a receptive audience, one which was willing to accept the novel language of relic dissemination, Ambrose's speech act would not have been effective. McLynn is surprisingly uncritical of Ambrose's intentions with regard to this essentially unprecedented discovery and translation. He asserts that: "The fourth-century cult of the martyrs was not a pantomime staged for the vulgar but a channeling of powerful energies too intractable for the bishop to have controlled at will, and too pervasive for him to have thought to try."³⁶ This argument places far too much credence upon the random tidal forces that propelled the cult of the martyrs, pulling Ambrose from the safe shores of his (deliberate, calculated) plan of enshrining himself in his basilica, out to the unsteady seas of the cult of the martyrs. Indeed it is precisely due to the "pervasive" and "powerful energies" of the cult of the martyrs that made it the perfect tool for Ambrose to have use to satisfy his congregation, unify the church in Milan, counter his Arian opponents (who derided the cult of the martyrs) and re-establish his own power..

Paulinus criticizes the Arians for not admitting properly the miraculous nature of the relics discovered by Ambrose:

[A] great number of Arians who sided with Justina ridiculed such grace of God as the Lord Jesus denied to confer upon His Catholic Church by the merits of the martyrs. And they claimed that the venerable man Ambrose had by means of money prepared men to state falsely that they were troubled by unclean spirits and to say that they were tortured by him just as by the martyrs.³⁷

³⁶ McLynn, *Ambrose*, 215.

³⁷ Paulinus of Milan, *Vit. Ambr.* 5.15 PL 14.32b: "Tamen intra palatium multitudo Arianorum cum Justina constituta deridebat tantam Dei gratiam, quam Ecclesiae catholicae Dominus Jesus meritis martyrum suorum conferre dignatus est: venerabilem que virum Ambrosium narrabat pecunia comparasse homines, qui se vexari ab immundis spiritibus mentirentur; atque ita ab illo, sicut et a martyribus se torqueri dicerent." Trans. in *Early Christian Biographies*, ed. Roy J. Deferrari (New York: Catholic University of America Press, 1952), 42.

Here Paulinus may have been recounting actual events wherein a group of those loyal to Arius and his theology mocked the miracles that Ambrose claimed took place, accusing him of bribing men to claim that they were healed. It may also have been polemical on the part of Paulinus, as another way to demonize his opponents. The important thing here was that Paulinus saw the acceptance, as miraculous, of the events that took place around the remains of the martyrs as a sign of one's faith. Failure to accept these events as miraculous meant that one would be labeled as "other." The other in this case was "Arian." In the text he also essentially accused the Arian's of being like the "Jews," that is to say, not sufficiently Christian. Here we have a litmus test for Paulinus, if you are truly Christian; you will properly revere the relics of the saints, as presented to you by their mediator: the bishop of Milan.

If Ambrose had been content to discover, exhume, and rebury the remains of the martyrs, his importance to the creation of a universal Christian cultural memory would not have been nearly as tremendous as it was. Ambrose was, however, central in the development of the cult of the saints (perhaps more so than Damasus and Constantine) because he extended the power of the saints that he discovered, and consequently his own power, through the distribution of their remains. No one prior to Ambrose distributed the pieces of these remains (or primary relics: the bits and pieces of the actual body) as he did. Ambrose is known to have sent relic fragments to Paulinus, Severus, Gaudentius, Augustine, and Victricius of Rouen. This spreading of the bloody seed of Christian memory throughout the empire was, according to Paulinus of Nola, inspired by Christ:

Since the faith had initially not been spread through the whole world alike, many areas of the earth were without martyrs. This I think is why Christ has both inspired princes (in the first place when Constantine was Caesar) and acquainted His servants with His most generous decision to summon martyrs from their earlier homes and translate them to fresh lodgings on earth.³⁸

Victricius of Rouen in a sermon to commemorate the arrival of relics from Ambrose sometime after 395 also discusses the nature of the whole of the martyr as present in each tiny fragment. “Before our eyes are blood and clay,”³⁹ he states, however, “we demonstrate that the whole can be in the part. So we can no longer complain of smallness: for when we said that, as in the genus, nothing of sacred bodies perishes, we certainly reckoned that what is divine cannot be diminished, because it is wholly present in the whole. And wherever it is anything, it is whole.”⁴⁰ He concludes that: “Moreover the healing power is no less in the parts than in the entirety.”⁴¹

³⁸ *Carmen* 19.317ff. PL 61.0530B: “Nam quia non totum pariter diffusa per orbem
Prima fides ierat, multis regionibus orbis
Martyres abfuerant, et ob hoc, puto, munere magno
Id placitum Christo nunc inspirante potentes,
Ut Constantino primum sub Caesare factum est,
Nunc famulis retegente suis, ut sede priori
Martyras accitos transferrent in nova terrae.”
Trans. Patrick Gerald Walsh, *The Poems of St. Paulinus of Nola (Ancient Christian Writers v. 40)* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), 142.

³⁹ Victricius of Rouen, *De Laude Sanctorum*, 10.2 PL 20.0452B “subjicitur oculis cruor et limus.” Trans in Gillian Clark “Victricius of Rouen: Praising the Saints,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7.3 (1999): 356-399, 390-392. All translations are taken from Clark. The original title of this work is unknown. This title was given by Clark, based in part on the one provided in CCL 64:53-93.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.15 PL 20.0452C: “Ostendimus itaque in parte totum esse posse. Unde queri jam de exiguitate non possumus; nam cum dixerimus ad instar generis, nihil sacrosanctis perire corporibus, certe illud assignavimus, non posse minui, quod divinum est, quia totum in toto est.”

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 11.1, PL 20.0453A: “Huc accedit quod non minus in partibus, quam in soliditate curatio est.”

With Ambrose there was a development of the idea that it is possible to consecrate a basilica without the remains of saints (indeed Ambrose did that with his own), though it was preferable to have martyr remains for said consecration. Severus writes to Paulinus some years later to ask if Paulinus might have some relics that he can spare for the consecration of Severus' newly constructed basilica. Paulinus replies that he does not, but isn't concerned as he has heard that there might be others forthcoming, from none other than Ambrose.

Through his control over the early trade in relics, Ambrose situated himself to become a sort of power broker in the late fourth-century church. His actions appeared to be in flagrant disregard of an edict proclaimed by Maximus, Valentinian and Theodosius delivered at Constantinople in February of 386, which declared that it was illegal to translate a body already buried, or to dismember it for distribution or sale.⁴² There was a desire for martyrs' relics, and the church in Rome – home to the highest density of those relics – jealously guarded them (which served its own interests as a means of not diluting the importance of the Eternal City, even as the capitol of the west had been moved to Milan, and Constantinople had replaced Rome as the capitol of the Empire). By proclaiming that he had found these relics, and then generously sharing them with his fellow clergy, Ambrose cemented his personal role in the newly expanding sacred geography of Europe, as well as the prominence of Milan. He was the one to whom bishops turned when they needed to share in the sanctity (or political effectiveness) of the

⁴² See Clark, "Translating Relics," 169. Could the Emperors have been concerned with the distribution of the sacred, and the consequential loss of prestige for Constantinople? This is also an odd time to have issued such a decree considering the possibility that Ambrose had received relics from Luke and Andrew from Constantinople at almost exactly the same time as this decree was issued.

martyrs. Even if a city had martyr tombs (as in Hippo or Nola), the reception of relics from Ambrose may have become something akin to a status symbol, an official spiritual connection to the larger church. The reception of relics was a means of creating a degree of sacred homogeneity, which would have been an effective way for less powerful or charismatic bishops to ward off rival claims of power, or subvert local cults.

Paulinus of Nola inscribed his gratitude to Ambrose into the altar at his basilica at Fundi:

Under the lighted altar, a royal slab of purple marble covers the bones of holy men. Here God's grace sets before you the power of the apostles by the great pledges contained in this meager dust. Here lies father Andrew, the gloriously famed Luke, and Nazarius, a martyr glorious for the blood he shed; here are Protasius and his peer Gervais whom God made known after long ages to His servant Ambrose. One simple casket embraces here his holy band and in its tiny bosom embraces names so great.⁴³

Here Paulinus not only discussed whose relics were within the altar, but also where they came from. Here we can see how Ambrose, through his distribution of Protasius and Gervais ensured his own stamp upon the ecclesiastical infrastructure. Ambrose was explicitly named in Paulinus' inscription, ensuring his own fame and prestige, but also solidifying the importance of Milan. In essence Ambrose was engaging in advertising, in building the “brand” of Milan, as the home of Protasius and Gervais, though his

⁴³ 32.18, PL 61.0339a-b: “Ecce sub accensis altaribus ossa piorum
 Regia purpureo marmore crusta tegit.
 Hic et apostolicas praesentat gratia vires
 Magis in parvo pulvere pignoribus.
 Hic pater Andreas, et magno nomine Lucas,
 Martyr et illustris sanguine Nazarius;
 Quosque suo Deus Ambrosio post longa revelat
 Secula; Protasium cum pare Gervasio.
 Hic simul una pium complectitur arcula coetum:
 Et capit exiguo nomina tanta sinu.” Trans. Walsh, *Letters*, 151.

distribution of their relics. If people were constantly made aware of these two previously unknown martyrs, they might have been inclined to make pilgrimages to Milan (instead of, or at least in addition to, Rome) which would have solidified the status of Milan as a (if not “the”) focal city. Even if the altar was not physically aimed at Milan, in a very real sense it was pointed directly there.

Peter Brown suggests that the willingness of the late fourth-century episcopate to participate in the cult of the saints through the construction of these elaborate basilicas in their honor, had much to do with the growing wealth of the church, and a need to spend that wealth in a seemly fashion.⁴⁴ I cannot argue against the acquisition of wealth, and its effect on the magnitude of Christian construction endeavors. I do not, however, feel that this accounts for the entirety of the excitement and eagerness of the bishops. As I note above, Paulinus replied to his dear friend Serverus that he could not give him any relics for the consecration of his Basilica. The basilica was nearly complete (if not consecrated), which means that it was being built with or without the relics. Those relics were desirable but not necessary for Christian construction. The desirability of the relics had to have been influenced by Constantine’s building endeavors, which focused (especially in regard to basilica construction) on the remains of the saints. Ambrose himself mirrors that association with both the dedication of the “Roman” basilica as well as with the translation of the remains to the “Ambrosian.” I submit that the Constantinian basilicas were especially effective due in large part to the incorporation of the remains of the saints, and it was this effectiveness that was the impetus for imitation.

⁴⁴ Brown, *Cult*, 39 ff. To be fair to Brown, this was not the only reason he proposes that the episcopate embraced the Cult of the Saints.

The Roman church had no interest in diluting its power. Paulinus, Prudentius, Damasus, and even Constantine (through the translations of important relics to Constantinople so that it would rival Rome) saw the spiritual power and consequential importance of Rome as stemming from its possession of a tremendous number of relics, most importantly those of Peter and Paul. At a time when Rome (and Milan for that matter) was working to create a western Christianity with Latin as its primary language,⁴⁵ the Roman saints were important to Rome, precisely because they were *in* Rome. In the shadow of this spiritual powerhouse, Milan could not claim any sort of primacy. While the “notorious invention of Sts. Gervais and Protasius by Ambrose in 386”⁴⁶ appeased Ambrose's own population in Milan, their fame would not spread much past the walls of the city without help.

Ambrose saw to it that the relics did not remain within Milan, tucked safely away under the altar in the resting spot that he had intended for himself. He did not jealously guard the power of his relics, as did the Roman church, but rather through his generous distribution of those relics saw to the growth of both the fame of the local saints as well as his own influence. He guaranteed a place for both himself and his city in the heart of Nola, Brescia, Hippo, Roan, and Aquitaine. It is possible that Ambrose needed to exert his influence, to proclaim Milan as the new Rome, due to the new status that Milan had as a new capitol city. We know from the writings of Augustine, Paulinus, and Victricius that these relics were not seen as abominations, but rather were welcomed and even

⁴⁵ See Lafferty, “Translating Faith.”

⁴⁶ C. Mango, “Constantine’s Mausoleum and the Translation of Relics,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 83 (1990): 53.

sought out for the consecration of Basilicas. Paulinus and Victricius both wrote that this was God's plan so as to spread the seed of Christianity as far and wide as possible. One has to wonder if it would have been possible for anyone other than Ambrose to have accomplished this paradigm shift in the approach to the translation of relics. He was the mentor to Augustine one of the most dominant figures within Western Christianity at the time. He also commanded the respect of Paulinus of Nola, a fierce enthusiast for the Cult of Felix in Nola. Would anyone else have been able to have sent out bits of martyrs' bodies and had the recipients see it as an act of generosity rather than a rather disturbing package to have received?

Despite the warm reception with which these relics met, it is interesting that this practice of distribution was not widely employed. Ambrose was unique in his generation in his eagerness to spread his influence in what Peter Brown refers to as a Christian innovation on the idea of patronage.⁴⁷ It is interesting that while it appears to have been a very successful way of spreading the power and influence of Ambrose, it was not replicated elsewhere with the remains of the saints. While Paulinus sent a sliver of the True Cross to Severus, he did not divide Felix or send on other relics at his friend's request. Mango may have overstated the case about the revulsion that would have met the dismemberment of corpses in the Roman psyche. It was, however, not something that other bishops (e.g. Paulinus, Damasus) were eager to replicate, either because of squeamishness or the desire to keep the cult center under their own control.

While Ambrose's model may not have become the standard form of treatment of relics until the following centuries, his method did have something in common with those

⁴⁷ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 41ff.

who wished to keep the bodies of the martyrs whole. Both groups sought to keep the remains of the saints under Episcopal control. Through the incorporation of the remains of Protasius and Gervais into the Basilica in Milan, and through the construction of other official church structures over the remains of the important dead, the episcopate nearly universally sought to bring the corpses of the important dead, and more importantly the cultic activity that surrounded those corpses, under the control of the official church structure. Ambrose's innovative dispersal of relics was possibly unique to him, yet he was not distributing them to the powerful wealthy widows, or other *individuals*. Ambrose was sending his relics to fellow bishops. These bishops would then have been able to control the use of the relics, and any cultic activity that surrounded them; they would not have become private talismans, but would have remained available to the whole of the Christian community for use in an approved of manner.⁴⁸ There would have been less and less private devotion (as well as feasting and drinking) at the smaller memorials and more communal veneration of the saints within the church structures where the practices, and more importantly the message could be tightly controlled. This aided the creation of cultural memory, precisely because it ensured that memory was available to the entire community and allowed that memory to be more consistent. The fact that the episcopate retained control of these remains (and their cult) tells us who controlled the *form* that cultural memory took, but the cultural memory only *exists at all* precisely because the episcopate sought to ensure the communal nature of the martyrs' remains. For collective

⁴⁸ See also Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les origines du culte des martyrs* (Brussels, 1933), 65-66; Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*; and Michael Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs: The Liber Peristphanon of Prudentius* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 15-17.

memory to exist it must be a: “collective notion (not an individual belief) about the way things were in the past.”⁴⁹

Augustine of Hippo

But then the only reason why the name memorials or monuments is given to those sepulchers of the dead which become specially distinguished, is that they recall to memory, and by putting in mind cause us to think of, them who by death are withdrawn from the eyes of the living, that they may not by forgetfulness be also withdrawn from men's hearts.⁵⁰

Augustine's treatment of the martyr cult is one that is filled with ambiguity, but no real contradiction. There seems to be a progression in his thought over the latter half of the fourth century into the early fifth.⁵¹ While at no point does he actually contradict his previous statements concerning the role of the martyr grave, or *ad Sanctos* burial, he does seem to be ill at ease at times with some of the practices surrounding the cult of the saints. Augustine's development of his understanding of the efficacy of the role of the tombs of the martyrs may well have coincided with his own understanding of the efficacy of the cult as a means of inspiring his congregation.

⁴⁹ Ruth M. Van Dyke and Susan Alcock eds., *Archaeologies of Memory* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003), 2.

⁵⁰ Augustine, *Cur.* 6, PL 40.596: “Sed non ob aliud vel Memoriae vel Monumenta dicuntur ea quae insignita fiunt sepulcra mortuorum, nisi quia eos qui viventium oculis morte subtracti sunt, ne oblivione etiam cordibus subtrahantur, in memoriam revocant, et admonendo faciunt cogitari.” Trans. H. Browne, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 3*. Edited by Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887.)

⁵¹ See Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (University of California Press, 2000), 419; Peter Brown, “Enjoying the Saints in Late Antiquity,” *Early Medieval Europe* 9.1 (2000):1-24; and Serge Lancel, *Saint Augustine* (London: SCM Press, 2010), 320, for a discussion of Augustine becoming more receptive, and eventually enthusiastically repeating miracle stories associated with the martyr's relics.

Augustine also used his sermons to counteract the influence of the Donatist “heresy” which had both a strong presence in Hippo and had eagerly embraced the cult of the martyrs.⁵² Augustine used the cult of the martyrs not as a means of discussing the joys of the crown of martyrdom as many had before, but rather as a foil by which he could direct his congregation’s attention towards matters of piety which he considered more important. It was also through his ultimate control of some of the relics of Stephen that he sought to counter the activities of more popular (and unruly) commemorations of local saints, which may have been embraced by his opponents as well. As in Rome under Damasus, Augustine used his power to name authentic martyrs and their relics as a means of solidifying his control in Hippo, and to present the image of the Church as one that was unified, universal, and Catholic. This image was in contradistinction with that of his opponents, which was local, without connection to the rest of Christianity (especially that associated with Rome and imperial powers), and Donatist.

Augustine exerted his authority to proclaim who could be considered a martyr, and more importantly who could not. He proclaimed that it was impossible for the “heretics” (Donatists) to be martyrs, and explicitly says the Circumcellions were not.⁵³ In a letter arguing how the Catholics had been wronged by the Donatists, Augustine complained about the treatment that the Catholics received at the hands of the Circumcellions. He then complained that once they had died, their thuggery had earned

⁵² The most influential work on the Donatist church remains W. H. C. Frend, *The Donatist Church: a Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952). For a general overview of Augustine’s interaction with the Donatists see, Edward L. Smither. “Persuasion or Coercion: Augustine on the State’s Role in Dealing with Other Religions and Heresies,” *Liberty University*, 2006. http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=lts_fac_pub

⁵³ Augustine, *Serm.* 313E.7

them the honor of martyrs: “What they do to us they do not blame on themselves; what they do to themselves, they blame on us. They live as brigands, they die as Circumcellions, they are honored as martyrs”⁵⁴ This was echoed in a sermon in which he criticized both those who (he claimed) threw themselves off of cliffs in their desire to become a martyr, and even worse (in Augustine’s eyes) those who collected the blood of those jumpers, who honored their tombs, and got drunk during their vigils.⁵⁵

It was not only the drinking and self-martyrdom that Augustine railed against, he claimed that the Circumcellions also trafficked in “martyr” relics. In the early years of the fifth century, Augustine protested that the Donatists were selling relics, if they were even those of martyrs.⁵⁶ Consequently this protest would have been prior to the arrival of the relics of Stephen in Hippo. Ultimately, Augustine was more concerned about the sale of the objects and their dubious authenticity than he was the transferal of relics from one place to another. He was also probably annoyed that this was an aspect of his rivals, and should consequently be criticized.

Augustine was aware of the popular devotion to martyrs (including those martyrs of his opponents), and rather than subvert it, was trying to control who can be seen as having gained the crown of martyrdom. He was, unambiguously, establishing his own power to name, to determine who should be the proper recipient of the respect given to martyrs, rather than to circumvent the process as a whole.

⁵⁴ Augustine, *Ep.* 88.8, PL 33.0307: “Quod nobis faciunt, sibi non imputant; et quod sibi faciunt, nobis imputant. Vivunt ut latrones, moriuntur ut circumcelliones, honorantur ut martyres.” Trans. Sister Wilfrid Parsons, *St. Augustine, Letters Volume II (83-130)* (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1953), 30.

⁵⁵ Augustine, *Serm.* 313E.5, on self-inflicted martyrdom see Augustine, *Ep.* 185.3.12.

⁵⁶ Augustine, *Mon.* 28, PL 40.556: “Alii membra martyrum, si tamen martyrum, venditant.”

In the last half of the fourth century, Paulinus of Nola, a strong proponent of the miraculous nature of the remains of Martyrs, wrote to Augustine to ask his perspective on the efficacy of *ad Sanctos* burials, prompting Augustine's cautionary response.⁵⁷ One must not think that the physical location in and of itself of burial near a saint can have any direct effect on the deceased, Augustine cautioned his friend, but that it is “more comfort for the living than help for the dead.”⁵⁸ However, Augustine then softens his criticism of *ad Sanctos* burial, noting that it may be advantageous to the dead:

I do not see what helps the dead . . . save in this way: that recollection of the location in which they deposited the bodies of those who they love; they should commend them by prayer to those same saints, who have like patrons taken them into their charge to aid them before the Lord.⁵⁹

For Augustine, the remains of the saints themselves would not aid those buried near to them. It was more the simple fact that if you are buried in a place that people frequent, you are more apt to be remembered than if you were buried in a desolate field. This desire to be buried in a prominent place was reminiscent of the previous Roman desire to be buried along the important roads leading to Rome. It was not because the road itself contained any special power, but rather that it was there that they had the best chance of being remembered, and therefore of gaining immortality.

⁵⁷ Augustine, *Cur.* PL 40.0591.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.4, PL 40.0594: “. . . magis sunt vivorum solatia, quam subsidia mortuorum.” Trans. H. Browne, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 3*. Edited by Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.6, PL 40.0596: “. . . non video quae sunt adjumenta mortuorum, nisi ad hoc ut dum recolunt ubi sint posita eorum quos diligunt corpora, eisdem sanctis illos tanquam patronis susceptos apud Dominum adjuvandos orando commendent.” Trans. H. Browne, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 3*. Edited by Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887).

Augustine is not saying that memory alone is the benefit of *ad Sanctos* burial. Rather, it is being remembered by the faithful, and then the subsequent prayers given to the martyr may influence the martyr so as to intercede on behalf of the departed who then act like patrons for the deceased, in front of God.⁶⁰ As there is merit in burying the dead, and as such there has to be merit in caring about the location of that burial, but that merit benefits only the living, it will have no effect on the departed.⁶¹ Without the prayers and their subsequent intercession on behalf of the departed, there would be no advantageous effects for burial near the saints. Here Augustine's understanding of the importance of the placement on the memory of the departed was decidedly in keeping with previous (and continued) Roman practice. The care of the dead in the non-Christian Gentile population was twofold, first it was designed to keep the departed *manes* complacent, and secondly (and frequently more importantly) it ensured the memory of the deceased would live on in their descendants.

In addition to the popular, yet for Augustine theologically vacuous, notion that *ad Sanctos* burial helped those interred near the martyr's tomb, Augustine had to confront the issue of people offering sacrifices *to* the martyr. In Book X of *The City of God*, Augustine indicates that it might be acceptable to worship, revere, or even address in prayer entities who are not God. Nonetheless, it is never acceptable to offer sacrifices to them:

There are indeed many kinds of worship that have been appropriated from the service of God to be conferred upon men for their honor, an abuse that may come either from carrying humility too far or from the pestilential practice of flattery. Yet those who received such tribute were still considered only men. They are spoken of as men worthy of worship, or of reverence, or even, if we choose to

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 4.6, and then repeated in 5.7.

bestow still more honor, men worthy of being addressed in prayer, But who ever thought it right to offer sacrifice except to one who he knew or considered or pretended was God?⁶²

He takes up this theme regarding the cult of the saints when he argues against Faustus the Manichean who criticized the Christian practices associated with the relics (according to Augustine) essentially saying that they were different in name only from previous non-Christian traditions: “the sacrifices you change into love feasts, the idols into Martyrs to who you prey as they to do their idols. You appease the shades of the departed with wine and food.”⁶³ Augustine responds that Christians do not sacrifice to Martyrs, but only honor them:

Both to excite us and to intimate and to obtain a share in their merits, and the assistance of their prayers. But we build altars not to the martyrs, but to the God of the martyrs, although it is in the memory of the martyrs. . . The offering is made to God, who gave the crown of Martyrdom, while it is memory of those thus crowned. The emotion is increased by the association of the place.⁶⁴

Augustine was concerned with commemorating the memory of the martyrs, and that it was through the proximity with the remains that the living could feel a stronger tie with

⁶² Augustine, *Civ.* X.iv,: “Multa denique de cultu divino usurpata sunt quae honoribus deferrentur humanis, sive humilitate nimia sive adulatione pestifera; ita tamen ut, quibus ea deferrentur, homines haberentur, qui dicuntur colendi et venerandi, si autem multum eis additur, et adorandi. Quis vero sacrificandum censuit nisi eique deum aut scivit aut putavit aut finxit?” Augustine, *City of God vol. 3 (Books VIII—XI)*, 1988. LCL. trans. David Wiesen (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press), 265-7.

⁶³ Augustine, *Faust.* 20.4, PL 42.370: “...sacrificia vero eorum vertistis in agapes, idola in martyres, quos votis similibus colitis: defunctorum umbras vino placatis et dapibus...”

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.21, PL 42.385: “Populus autem christianus memorias martyrum religiosa solemnitate concelebrat, et ad excitandam imitationem, et ut meritis eorum consocietur, atque orationibus adjuvetur: ita tamen ut nulli martyrum, sed ipsi Deo martyrum, quamvis in memoriis martyrum, constituamus altaria. . .sed quod offertur, offertur Deo qui martyres coronavit, apud memorias eorum quos coronavit; ut ex ipsorum locorum admonitione major affectus exurgat.” Trans. Richard Stothert. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, Vol. 4. Edited by Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887).

the divine. Furthermore this strong emotion was a psychological consequence within the living, not an effect of the spiritual powers of the deceased.

Faustus also condemned Christians not only for worshiping the martyrs and offering sacrifices to them, but also for getting drunk at the tombs of those martyrs. Faustus could not see any significant difference between the actions of the Christians and those of their non-Christian Gentile neighbors. In response to this Augustine had to effectively draw a boundary around the actions of Christians, distinguishing them from those of their neighbors. To do this he pushed for the importance of intentionality. Augustine does not argue that there might be some drunkenness at the tombs, but that even if that is the case, it is better than sacrificing *to* the martyrs:

As for those who drink to excess at the feasts of the martyrs, we of course condemn their conduct; for to do so even in their own houses would be contrary to sound doctrine. But we must try to amend what is bad as well as prescribe what is good, and must of necessity bear for a time with some things that are not according to our teaching. The rules of Christian conduct are not to be taken from the indulgences of the intemperate or the infirmities of the weak. Still, even in this, the guilt of intemperance is much less than that of impiety⁶⁵

In this passage Augustine acknowledged that drunkenness, at the memorial meals for the dead, was a practice that Christians would have to “bear for a time” and that it must be grudgingly accepted due to the greater good. Indeed Augustine speaks from experience as he confesses in *Sermon 395B.5* (“On Obedience”): “When I went to vigils as a student in

⁶⁵ Ibid., PL 42.388: “Qui autem se in memoriis martyrum inebriant, quomodo a nobis approbari possunt, cum eos, etiam si in domibus suis id faciant, sana doctrina condemnet? Sed aliud est quod docemus, aliud quod sustinemus, aliud quod praecipere jubemur, aliud quod emendare praecipimur, et donec emendemus, tolerare compellimur. Alia est disciplina Christianorum, alia luxuria vinolentorum, vel error infirmorum. Verumtamen et in hoc ipso distant plurimum culpae vinolentorum et sacrilegorum.” Trans. Richard Stothert, from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, Vol. 4. Ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887).

this city I spent the night rubbing up beside women, along with other boys anxious to make an impression on the girls, and where, who knows, the opportunity might present itself to have a love-affair with them.”⁶⁶ It was not only the opponents to the cult of the martyrs who observed the nefarious acts that were committed at the martyr festivals. Here Augustine, himself a participant and defender of the martyr vigils, is frank in admitting that while he was in his early twenties, he would frequent these festivals where he would mingle (and rub against) women with lascivious intentions. It is important to note that at this point in the 370’s Augustine had not yet converted to Christianity, but made a regular habit of attending these festivals: they were open to all, those who were baptized, those within the community who were not yet baptized, and those outside the community altogether. This demonstrated a blurring of the distinctions between social groups which would have been more strictly enforced elsewhere.

After Augustine’s conversion and subsequent rise in the episcopal ranks he attempted to limit the actions that could be performed at the martyr shrines. However as we see in *Letter 29.9* he placed the blame for bad behavior on those who had previously been pagan (although here he does not admit that he, himself, had been one of those trouble makers in his youth).⁶⁷ Elsewhere he criticizes those who have converted to Christianity in name only, but still carry on at the festivals as if they were still pagan.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ “Ego puer vigilans cum studerem in hac civitate sic vigilavi feminis permixtis improbitatibus masculorum, ubi forte et castitatem temptabat occasion” Trans. Peter Brown, *Augustine*, 456-457. Brown also notes that a Syrian holy man was reputed to have kept his virginity “even though he frequently went to feasts of the martyrs.” (457). The presence of this laudatory behavior at the feasts of the martyrs, bespeaks of a general understanding (warranted or not) of the accessibility to sexual acts at these drunken festivals.

⁶⁷ He also blames “the Heretics” for bad behavior in *Ep. 29.11*.

⁶⁸ *Mor. Eccl.* 34.

Augustine eventually wrote to Bishop Aurelius of Carthage for help to ease what he clearly saw as a problem of the Church in Northern Africa as a whole. The problem was principally that: “drinking and partying are considered to be acceptable, that even on the most blessed days honoring the martyrs,” this behavior was tolerated.⁶⁹ Augustine’s main concern was not necessarily the practices associated with the memorials of the saints, but also with drunkenness in general. But how, he wonders, can one prohibit an activity in the homes of men that is allowed in honor of the martyrs? Augustine cautions, however, that there might be other ways of dealing with these practices than through strict denunciation, he favored teaching proper behavior rather than forbidding that which was improper.⁷⁰ One of the concerns that Augustine presents here is that there was inconsistency within the African church concerning these practices. He wants Aurelius to issue clear advice surrounding these practices.

Eating and drinking at the tombs of the saints was not only the purview of those with a desire for riotous partying on their minds. Augustine’s own mother was once denounced for bringing wine and food with her when she visited the martyrs’ shrines.

When as my mother therefore had one time brought unto the oratories erected in memory of the, as she was wont to do in Africa, certain cheesecakes, and bread and wine; and had been forbidden to do it by the sexton: so soon as ever she knew that the bishop had forbidden this, she did so piously and obediently embrace the motion, that I myself wondered at it, that she would so easily be brought rather to blame her own country-custom, than to call the present countermand in question.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Augustine, *Ep.* 22.1.3, PL 33.0091: “Comessiones enim et ebrietates ita concessae et licitae putantur, ut in honorem etiam beatissimorum martyrium.” Trans. mine.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.5. One has to wonder if he was responding to Ambrose’s prohibitions in Milan here.

⁷¹ Augustine, *Conf.* 6.2, LCL. 268-269: “Itaque cum ad memorias sanctorum, sicut in Africa solebat, pultes et pane et merum adtulisset, atque ab ostiario prohiberetur: ubi hoc episcopum vetuisse cognovit, tam pie atque obedienter amplexa est, ut ipse mirarer, quam

Augustine quickly notes that his mother was no drunkard, but that she brought her pot of wine which was lukewarm and mixed with water. It was none other than Ambrose who prohibited the consumption of wine at the martyr shrines, not for those such as Augustine's mother – of course – but to ensure that the anniversaries of the martyrdom, amongst the more unscrupulous, might not become hotbeds of debauchery, such as those to which the non-Christian Gentiles had been accustomed.

From this passage we see that the practice of bringing wine and foods to the tombs of the martyrs was an African custom, with which his mother was familiar. Drinking at the graveside was something that was becoming enough of a problem that Ambrose at this point sought to curtail it in Milan. Augustine discusses this event not so much to tell the reader about the events surrounding the shrines of the martyrs, which were quite possibly so well-known at the time of his writing that it would not have occurred to him that it might need discussion. Rather he wished to contrast his pious and obedient mother with the other groups of less pious or less obedient Christians who were not so willing to give up their customs. Augustine does not discuss how long this custom had been practiced in Africa, but the assumption is that it was not something new either Augustine or to his mother at the time of his tenure in Milan (ca. 384). This is not necessarily surprising, as these practices were a carryover from non-Christian Gentile memorial meals for the dead on the anniversary of the death of the individual. It may

facil accusat ix potius consuetudinis suae quam disceptatrix illius prohibitonis effecta sit.” Augustine, *Confessions, vol. I (Books I-VIII)*. 1999. Trans. William Watts. LCL. (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press).

have also been that by this point in the century it was an established ritual within exclusively Christian circles.

For Augustine, the cult of the saints was something, at least early in his career, that was to be tolerated, but also something that needed to be held in check. The beliefs of those who held it dear, were to some extent quaint, drawing upon ethnic customs (as in the case of his own mother), but often for Augustine theologically questionable. However towards the end of his life (explicitly in *City of God*) he was more open and willing to include the martyr cult into his own spiritual life and ultimately into his own church. Book 22 of *The City of God* recounts many miraculous occurrences, most of which were related to the martyr relics in one way or another. Here Augustine recounts, with some degree of pride, the miraculous occurrences associated with Stephen in Hippo. The relics came to Hippo under Augustine's oversight, who asked people to share publically the miracles associated with these relics.⁷² Here we see Augustine interested in the ability of the community to have access to the martyrs' remains (under his control, of course). He also wanted everyone to know about the efficacy of these relics to cure ailments, and for this memory to be effective in bringing people to God it had to be collective among the Christian community.

Iver Kaufman argues that for Augustine, his "*City* certainly supposes that Christians will search in time rather than in particular places, in history rather than

⁷² Gillian Clark traces Stephen's circuitous route to Augustine. Clark, "Victricius of Rouen," 168. Despite John of Jerusalem taking them to Jerusalem, Lucian kept some bones and dust and then gave them to Avitus of Braga (on pilgrimage to holy land as well as to debate Pelagianism). Avitus then gave some to Orosius (from Spain) who then gave some to Evodius of Uzalis, who then gave some to Augustine. See also Scott Bradbury, *Severus of Minorca* (New York: Oxford, 1996), 16-24.

exclusively at gravesites and shrines.”⁷³ While this may be true, it is also equally true that even though the shrines of the saints presented some problems in terms of the practices associated with them, they were also instrumental in the creation of the cultural memory of the Christian community in Hippo. Augustine was attempting to craft a memory that would survive attacks on it from multiple fronts: from those who also claimed to be Christians, but whose orthodoxy Augustine disputed, as well as from those who migrated south after the disastrous events of 410 and who had not embraced Christianity. This memory was one that was informed by the misery of this earthly life.⁷⁴

The miracles of the saints were important to more than those healed by them, primarily because they drew the attention of the believer (and non-believer alike) to the God of the martyrs. When Augustine discussed, in a sermon, the discovery of the relics of Stephen, and finally the construction of the shrine for Stephen in Augustine’s basilica in Hippo, he was quite explicit that the altar was not built to Stephen, but rather to God: “We have not erected an altar to Stephen, but with the relics of Stephen we have erected an altar to God.”⁷⁵

Augustine preached about the martyrs primarily on their feast days. However, almost every time he did preach about them he then used the martyrs as a means of instructing his congregation about how to live a more perfect Christian life. In *Sermon*

⁷³ Kaufman, “Augustine, Martyrs and Misery,” 8.

⁷⁴ Augustine, *Civ.* 22.9, PL 41.771: “Cui, nisi huic fidei attestantur ista miracula, in qua praedicatur Christus resurrexisse in carne, et in coelum ascendisse cum carne? Quia et ipsi martyres hujus fidei martyres, id est, hujus fidei testes fuerunt, huic fidei testimonium perhibentes mundum inimicissimum et crudelissimum pertulerunt; eumque, non repugnando, sed moriendo vicerunt. Pro ista fide mortui sunt, qui haec a Domino impetrare possunt, propter cujus nomen occisi sunt. Pro hac fide praecessit eorum mira patientia, ut in his miraculis tanta ista potentia sequeretur.”

⁷⁵ Augustine, *Serm.* 318.1, PL 38.1438: “Nos enim in isto loco non aram fecimus Stephano, sed de reliquiis Stephani aram Deo.” Trans. mine.

318 where he was discussing the discovery of Stephen's relic he turns the sermon not to the miraculous nature of that discovery but rather discussed how the life was fraught with temptation. The martyrs were the primary example of how one should deal with that temptation.⁷⁶ Even if there was no threat of martyrdom for the residents of Hippo near the end of the fourth century, they were likely of a mind to listen to an "occult tempter" who urged the sick person to wear a charm so that they might live. Augustine argued that this was tantamount to the offer of the emperor who would also grant life to those who offered sacrifice. Be steadfast in your faith, he instructed his congregation, just as the martyrs had been in theirs.

Sermon 323 was to be delivered after the reading of a leaflet recounting how a young man had been healed from his tremors at the shrine of Stephen in Hippo.⁷⁷ Augustine took the opportunity not to preach so much on Stephen, but rather on the need for children to honor their parents. The young man was stricken with this curse after his mother had been beaten by his older brother. She then went to the baptistery and called upon God to curse that child. Sadly her curse was so effective that all of her children were afflicted which ultimately led to her suicide.⁷⁸ To children he cautioned that they should honor their parents, and he urged parents to remember their role as parents. Finally there was a cautionary note that "you must learn only to make requests to God

⁷⁶ Augustine, *Serm.* 318, is also interesting as it also implies that some of the remains of Gervais and Protasius made their way to Hippo. This seems to be the only reference to the presence of these two saints in Hippo.

⁷⁷ We will deal with another aspect of this narrative in chapter five.

⁷⁸ See also Augustine, *Serm.* 322.

which you are not afraid of being granted.” In all of this Stephen was secondary at best. The relics were simply the particular medium that God chose.⁷⁹

Augustine’s life and preaching exemplifies some of the debates surrounding the cult of the saints at their graves which persisted through the end of the fourth century and into the fifth. In his youth he participated in the festive atmosphere that surrounded the late night vigils and co-mingling of the sexes at the graves of the martyrs. Later he tolerated the idea that there was some benefit to the practice of *ad Sanctos* burial, but it was only through the prayers of the living whose memory was jogged by the presence of the grave, and not through physical proximity (absent the intercessory living agent to pray to the martyr on behalf of the deceased) to the grave. He also strongly defended the intercessory role of the martyr, who would mediate between the living God, while bemoaning the popular practices (especially of drinking) that took place at the tombs. Finally he warmly embraced the relics of Stephen into Hippo, and became a strong supporter of that cult and of its miraculous aspects.

If we look at the development of Augustine’s thought, it may appear to be inconsistent and perhaps irreconcilable. However for Augustine, as with many other bishops near the end of the fourth century, the cult of the saints was the site on which the battle for the cultural memory and self-definition of Christianity was waged. I submit that when Augustine embraced the cult of Stephen, he was not so much embracing the cult of the saints, but was rather looking to use the previous North African practices associated with the cult of the saints (including those of the Donatists) as a means of moving away

⁷⁹ This was the point that Augustine was trying to get across to his congregation. However it would also appear that the mother sought out Stephen’s relics because she believed that they were the effective agent.

from local divisions within Christianity. It was not unique to North Africans to focus on the cult of the *local* saint, but it was a practice that Augustine sought to counter in his own community. The local saints' cults had pre-existing and troublesome practices associated with it; the local saint maintained the boundaries of one Christian group against another (most explicitly the notion that there were Donatist martyrs and Catholic martyrs). Augustine saw the cult of Stephen as a means of breaking down these local boundaries and sought to use instead their predispositions towards the cult of the saints in order to focus his countrymen's energies on a saint that embraced a catholic, or universal, Christianity.

Augustine demonstrated a preference for universal (or trans-local) saints over and against the ones found locally, even when there were no relics of that saint within his city. He was not always successful in turning his congregation's attention towards martyrs who had no physical relics in the city, no matter how significant they were. The local saints, and those whose relics were in Hippo, were the most important for his congregation. In *Sermon 298*, on the feast day of Peter and Paul, Augustine lamented the small turn out of the faithful, contrasting it to the much larger crowds at the festivals of local saints. These local saints he calls "lambs" as opposed to the festival of the "rams," who should be much more honored.⁸⁰ Augustine sought to entice and seduce his congregation through a medium that they traditionally embraced, and focus their energy soberly towards the church of the empire away from the church of the particular locality.

⁸⁰ Augustine, *Serm.* 289.1.1, PL 38.1365: "Petri et Pauli natalitia frequentia majore celebranda. Debuimus quidem tantorum martyrum diem, hoc est, sanctorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli majore frequentia celebrare. Si enim celebramus frequentissime natalitia agnorum, quanto magis debemus arietum?"

Paulinus of Nola

His correspondence with Augustine around the efficiency of *ad Sanctos* burial prompted Augustine's response, *On the Care of the Dead (Curro pro Mortuis)*. Unlike Augustine's ambivalence regarding the place of the martyr in Christian practice (as we note above) Paulinus was decidedly unambiguous and consistent in his promotion of the cult of the saints. Prior to his arrival at Nola⁸¹ and his tenure as the bishop thereof, Paulinus had a fondness for a third-century saint, Felix of Nola. Once Paulinus rose to the episcopate, he became the central force for the revival of the cult of the Felix. The reach of Paulinus spread far beyond the confines of his relatively small urban center.

When one takes into account the direction that the popular practice of the Church headed in the centuries following his episcopate, one could argue that Paulinus of Nola was one of the most influential bishops of the fourth century regarding the cult of the Saints, and the creation of a Christian cultural memory which surrounds the graves of the martyrs, second only to his esteemed friend, Ambrose. He may well rival Ambrose through his nearly complete reinvention of the Cult of Felix in Nola.⁸² It is for this reason that his whole-hearted promotion of the cult of the saints, especially the cult of Felix in Nola, but also his aid to other Italian Bishops in the construction of saints' shrines, foreshadowed the subsequent trajectory of the church as a whole.

Paulinus had a reputation for eloquence with poetry, specifically the poems that he composed annually for the “birthday” of Felix as well as for the inscriptions over the

⁸¹ A city some 224 kilometers south east of Rome.

⁸² See Catherine Conybeare, *Paulinus Noster: Self and Symbols in the Letters of Paulinus of Nola* (New York: Oxford, 2000), 3ff.

remains of the saints in Nola. Paulinus' longtime friend Severus contacted Paulinus asking him for help in writing inscriptions for his own church. The letter that Paulinus penned in response to this request demonstrated how two bishops who were continuing the tradition of Damasus and were clearly were interested in establishing text in stone over the remains of martyrs. It also demonstrates the importance of the cult of Felix to Paulinus, and the congregation at Nola.

There are two important letters from Paulinus to Severus, which help us understand the importance of relics in both of their churches. *Letter 31*, dated to 403 CE, was written in response to Severus' request for "some blessed object from the sacred relics of the saints, which to adorn your family church in a manner worth of your faith and service."⁸³ Paulinus expresses his regret that he cannot fulfill the request from his close friend, but is relieved that there is a possibility of a relic from Silvia "who had promised him some of the relics of many Eastern Martyrs." Paulinus, as he had no relics, or ashes, to share was able to spare a tiny fragment of the True Cross, which he believed would also enhance Severus' collection of relics and aid in the consecration of the basilica.⁸⁴

The second of the letters relevant to this discussion is *Letter 32* in which Paulinus presented the verses that Severus had asked him to write to commemorate the saint's relics that were going to be found in Severus' new basilica, which would be in close

⁸³Paulinus of Nola, *Ep. 31.1*, PL 61.0325B: "Frater Victor inter alias operum tuorum et votorum narrationes retulit nobis desiderare te ad basilicam quam modo apud Primuliacum (V. not. 137) nostram majorem priore condideris, de sacris sanctorum reliquiis benedictionem, qua adornetur domestica tua ecclesia, ut fide et gratia tua dignum est." Trans P.G. Walsh in *Letters of St. Paulinus of Nola vol. II* (New York; Newman Press, 1967), 125.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

imitation of Paulinus' own church structure. The inscriptions that Paulinus suggests in *Letter 32* differ significantly from those that Damasus established in Rome: there is no discourse on the unity of the church, indicating that it was not a concern for either Paulinus or Severus. This demonstrated a different reason for the incorporation for these inscriptions. Where Damasus had to secure his own position and authority through the usage of inscriptions over the relics of the martyrs, Paulinus did not feel that this was necessary. He did not offer potential inscriptions to his friend which would promote Severus either. While some of the inscriptions that Paulinus offers to Severus include a brief mention that Severus built the structure, the inscriptions over the relics do not exhibit the self-referential nature that we saw with the Damasine inscriptions.

One exception to this tendency to avoid explicit references to himself or Severus was a poem written as a prayer to Clarus (who was interred beneath an altar) rather than as an expository text discussing his life, Paulinus offered a prayer to Clarus seeking protection for himself and Severus.

In your kindness receive these prayers of sinners who ask you to be mindful of Paulinus and Therasia. Love these persons entrusted to you by the mediation of Severus, though when you were here in the flesh you were unaware of their merits. . . So embrace Severus and Paulinus together as brothers indivisible. Love us and join with us in this union. God summoned us together, Martin loved us together. So, Clarus, you must likewise protect us together.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Paulinus of Nola, *Ep. 32*, PL 61.333d-334a, “Haec peccatorum bonus accipe vota rogantum, Ut sis Paulini Therasiae que memor. Dilige mandatos interveniente Severo, Quos ignorasti corpore sic meritis. Unanimi communis amor sit fomes utrisque Perpetui summo foederis in Domino. Non potes implicitos divellere; si trahis unum Unus adhaerentem, quo rapitur, rapiet. Ergo individuos pariter complectere fratres. Utque sumus, sic nos dilige participans, Sic Deus accivit, sic nos Martinus amavit; Sic et tu pariter Clare tuere pares.” Trans. Walsh, *Letters*, 141.

It is unknown which poem Severus chose from those provided by Paulinus, if any, but simply the fact that Paulinus would have seen this as an appropriate inscription to have been placed near the altar indicates that at least *Paulinus* would have approved of it. It also demonstrates the influential role that Paulinus himself had, in the eyes of a contemporary (and close friend), in fostering “appropriate” memorials at the graves of the saints. Paulinus was explicitly calling upon Clarus to care for his soul, to remember him, much as Damasus was calling upon the reader of his inscriptions (although more often implicitly) to remember him as they were remembering the martyr. The important difference here was that Paulinus was demonstrating the desire for a saint to remember him (explicitly) which would have (as per Damasus, implicitly) been enacted by the reader of the text.

Once Paulinus has finished offering these verses to Severus he recounts the poems that he has placed in the Basilica in Nola, as well as another basilica he had constructed in Fundi, an important town for Paulinus as he once held property there, and visited frequently. In this section of the letter he is not offering what might be inscribed upon the walls of a building, but rather goes into some detail about the words being used to create the cultural memory in churches under his own control. It is not only the words that are inscribed on the tombs of the martyrs, but the structures themselves which break with tradition and are focused on what Paulinus considers to be the most important cultic feature, the tomb of St. Felix: “The outlook of the basilica is not, after the usual fashion, towards the east, but faces the basilica of blessed Lord Felix, looking out upon his

tomb.”⁸⁶ Felix has taken the place of Jerusalem as the primary point of orientation of this basilica, announcing to any and all who observe the outlook of the building that Felix is the point around which their shared culture is focused, and (perhaps) where previously the church structure looked to Jerusalem for salvation from the returning Jesus, it now looked to Felix. He is even given, by Paulinus, the honorific “lord” which is commonly (even in this same letter) reserved for Jesus.⁸⁷ The altar contains the sliver of the True Cross, presumably the one that he splintered further to send a piece of it to Severus with *Letter 31*. The inscription before this altar repeats the refrain that “the whole power of the cross lies in this small segment.”⁸⁸ Here, as he had suggested that Severus do, the cross is buried in the altar with the ashes of martyrs.

As he further describes the basilica he notes that the twin colonnades contain four chapels each for private meditation, and for the funeral monuments of the clergy “and their friends, so that they may rest in eternal peace.” One has to wonder if this letter was written in regard to the letter that Paulinus received from Augustine *One the Care of the Dead*. Note that Paulinus does not observe that these essentially *ad Sanctos* burial locations would aid in the salvation of the priests and their friends, but rather that burial near the saint would ensure their peace. There is no discussion at all of how burial *ad Sanctos* might relate to their salvation, which would suggest that this may well have been written after his correspondence with Augustine, as prior to that discourse, Paulinus

⁸⁶ Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 32.13, PL 61.337A: “Prospectus vero basilicae non, ut usitatio mos est, orientem spectat, sed ad domini mei beati Felicis basilicam pertinet memoriam (id est tumulum) ejus aspiciens.” Trans. Walsh, *Letters*, 147.

⁸⁷ For a discussion of the church structures in Nola see: R. C. Goldschmidt, *Paulinus' Churches at Nola* (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitg. Maatschappij, 1940).

⁸⁸ Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 32.11, PL 61.0336B: “Totaque in exiguo segmine vis crucis est.” Trans. Walsh, *Letters*, 146.

appears to have been uncertain about the efficacy of *ad Sanctos* burial – otherwise he would not have written to Augustine for a second opinion on the matter.

Inscriptions that reference Paul as the bishop of Nola who constructed both the new and old churches imply that Paulinus had little to do with the churches construction and possibly only had his own inscriptions added subsequently (he does claim them as his own earlier in the text).⁸⁹ However, the basilica at Fundi seems to have been entirely his own creation. It was the basilica that he had long desired to build, as he was fond of Fundi due to his previous possession of an estate there.⁹⁰ The basilica was not quite consecrated when he wrote this letter. But would eventually “be consecrated by sacred ashes from the blessed remains of apostles and martyrs.”⁹¹

Through the poetry of Paulinus we can glimpse the cult of Felix. Paulinus recounted how the day that they celebrated as his birthday itself was so sacred, that demons were cast out, even those who may have previously been too powerful for exorcism.⁹² Paulinus recounted how huge crowds would throng to the tomb: “from the mouth of the Porta Capena she [Rome] pour[ed] fourth thousands, dispatching them in a thick swarm over the hundred and twenty miles to the walls of friendly Nola. The Appian way [was] invisible for long distances through the thick-massed crowds.”⁹³

⁸⁹ Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 32.15.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.17.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, PL 61.0338C: “Verum hanc quoque basiliculam, de benedictis apostolorum et martyrum reliquiis sacri cineres, in nomine Christi sanctorum Sancti, et martyrum Martyris, et dominorum Domini, consecrabunt.” Trans. Walsh, *Letters*, 150.

⁹² Paulinus of Nola, *Carm.* 14 ca. 397.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 14.65-70, PL 61.0466B: “Hujus honore diei, portaeque ex ore Capenae Millia profundens ad amicae moenia Nolae, Dimittit duodena decem per millia denso Agmine: confertis longe latet Appia turbis.” Trans. Patrick Walsh, *The Poems of St. Paulinus of Nola* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), 79.

Under his tutelage the cult of Felix broadened its appeal from that of a local saint to one which drew pilgrims from all over. Rome itself, home to uncounted martyrs and their shrines, disgorged massive crowds to make the not insignificant trip to Nola for the celebration of the “birthday” of its patron saint. The memory of Felix had a sort of gravitational pull that extended beyond the surrounding countryside, allowing Paulinus, through his promotion of the cult of Felix, to craft the cultural memory not only of his local congregation but also to influence that of Rome. The pilgrims would have taken their experience in Nola back to Rome with them, where it would (of necessity) have influenced their experiences with the martyr’s shrines at home.

Paulinus’ annual poems celebrating the “birthday” of Felix, demonstrated an author who fully embraced the cult of the saints, as it has developed under his sponsorship. These poems were love letters to Felix, which emphasized the primacy of the corpse of the martyr as *the* central way that a city would gain sanctity. Rome, for Paulinus, was first in sanctity and power *only* because of the presence of the relics of Peter and Paul. Rome itself had no privileged place in his mind outside of the presence of its relics. Nola too, as exemplified by the crowds which could not be contained by the basilica on Felix’s feast day, claimed importance through the presence of Felix.⁹⁴

By the time that this poem was written (January 403) Paulinus’ church was undergoing renovations enhancing it with various types of embellishment. One of the innovations was lodgings, the uppermost of which “look from their windows above on the inviolate altars, beneath which the saints have their recessed abodes. For the ashes even of apostles have been set beneath that table of heaven, and consecrated amongst

⁹⁴ Paulinus of Nola, *Carm.* 27.

other holy offerings they emit a fragrance pleasing to Christ from their living dust.”⁹⁵ The list of those interred in the altars is most impressive. Indeed, the list includes the apostles Andrew, John the Baptist, Thomas, and Luke. These are joined by the martyrs: Agricola, Vitalis, Proculus, Euphemia, and Nazarius, many of whom had been sent by Ambrose. This was an important observation by Paulinus as it signaled the impressive collection that Paulinus had amassed for the city of Nola. Of course it was still the presence of the entire corpse of Felix and not the bits and pieces of these other illustrious figures in Christian history that brought the crowds to Nola for Felix’s festival.

In *Poem 27.542* he recounts:

“Now the greater number among the crowds here are country folk not without belief but unskilled in reading. For years they have been used to following profane cults in which their god was their belly, and at last they have turned as converts to Christ out of admiration for the undisputed achievements of the saints performed in Christ’s name. Notice in what numbers they assemble from all the country districts, and how they roam around, their unsophisticated minds beguiled in devotion . . . See how they in great numbers keep vigil and prolong their joy throughout the night, dispelling sleep with joy and darkness with torchlight. I only wish they would channel this joy in sober prayer, and introduce their wine cups within the holy thresholds. . . I none the less believe that such merriment arising from modest feasting is pardonable because their minds beguiled by such guilt are uninitiated . . . and their sins arise from devotion, for they wrongly believe that saints are delighted to have their tombs doused with reeking wine.”⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Ibid., 27.396-405, PL 61.0675A-B: “Sed rursum redeamus in atria: conspice rursum
Impositas longis duplicato tegmine cellas
Porticibus, metanda bonis habitacula digne,
Quos huc ad sancti justum Felicis honorem
Duxerit orandi studium, non cura bibendi.
Nam quasi contignata sacris coenacula tectis,
Spectant de superis altaria tota fenestris,
Sub quibus intus habent sanctorum corpora sedem.
Namque et apostolici cineres sub coelite mensa
Depositum, placitum Christo spirantis odorem
Pulveris inter sancta sacri libamina reddunt.” Trans. Walsh, *Poems*, 288.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 27.547-567, PL 61.0660C-0661A: “Rusticitas non cassa fide, neque docta
legendi,
Haec adsueta diu sacris servire profanis,

Rather than simply bemoan this practice, or ban wine and punish the offender, Paulinus sought to educate and distract the crowds with paintings and inscriptions within the church so that they will be awed by the church structure, and the example of Felix. This will lead them to drink less and forget the desire for too much wine. So they spend their time admiring the building and which means that not much time would remain for indulging in food and drink.⁹⁷

This indulgence, or active encouragement, of previously non-Christian gentile practices surrounding cult centers is not unique to the consumption of wine. Paulinus appears to have been alone amongst his peers with the leniency he gave the consumption of wine at the birthday celebration of Felix. Paulinus alone was comfortable with the consumption of wine during the “modest feasting” as it allows him to educate their rustic minds. In *Carmen* 20 he incorporates images of animal sacrifice, and clearly describes the ritualistic slaughter of two pigs and a cow (of which two had been offered

Ventre Deo, tandem convertitur advena Christo.
 Dum sanctorum opera in Christo miratur aperta.
 Cernite quam multi coeant ex omnibus agris,
 Quamque pie rudibus decepti mentibus errent.
 Longinquas liquere domus, sprevere pruinas
 Non gelidi fervente fide; et nunc ecce frequentes
 Per totam et vigiles extendunt gaudia noctem:
 Laetitia somnos, tenebras funalibus arcent.
 Verum utinam sanis agerent haec gaudia votis,
 Nec sua liminibus miscerent pocula sanctis.
 Quamlibet haec jejuna cohors potiore resultet
 Obsequio, castis sanctos quoque vocibus hymnos
 Personat, et Domino cantatam sobria laudem
 Immolat. Ignoscenda tamen puto talia parvis
 Gaudia quae ducunt epulis, quia mentibus error
 Irrepat rudibus; nec tantae conscia culpae
 Simplicitas pietate cadit, male credula sanctos
 Perfusus halante mero gaudere sepulcris.” Trans. Walsh, *Poems*, 290.
⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.570ff.

to Felix at their birth). These animals are then cooked and distributed to the poor who had gathered at the shrine to Felix for his annual feast.⁹⁸ It was this willing, perhaps eager, incorporation of aspects of the cultic activities of his Nolan neighbors that made the Cult of St. Felix so tremendously popular. This is something that Paulinus seemed to be quite aware of, and perhaps as a result defends himself against detractors in the opening verses of *Carmen* 20.5:

Good masters often minister dutifully to their dear charges. They protect subordinate slaves with fatherly love, and show kindness by nurturing with closer care those who with the eyes of love they see are less resourceful or deficient in strength. . . This is my allotted situation under Felix's patronage.⁹⁹

Superficially this passage discusses how Paulinus has been helpful to those who wish to offer their vows to Felix, not through his own property. However, it also defends his willingness to allow practices at the tomb of Felix that had been harshly criticized elsewhere. While Augustine describes his mother's practices as a local phenomenon, they clearly were not. Augustine's mother would have felt right at home at the tomb of Felix, watered down lukewarm wine and all – even away from her own countrymen.

Paulinus' willingness to indulge practices that others had openly criticized allowed him to welcome huge crowds into the Church. These were decisions that Paulinus could not have taken lightly, as they went against the desires of other, extremely

⁹⁸ See Dennis Trout, "Christianizing the Nolan Countryside: Animal Sacrifice at the Tomb of St. Felix," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 281-298.

⁹⁹ Paulinus of Nola, *Carm.* 20.5-10, PL 61.0551.A: "Affectu rimante vident. Et si quis eorum,

Moris ut humani sollemnis postulat usus,

Votum aliquod celebrare velit, neque possit egenis

Id patrare opibus, studio curatur herili

Servus inops, cui dives opum, queis pauper egebat,

Contulerit dominus cumulandae impendia mensae.

Haec mihi conditio est data sub Felice patron." Trans. Walsh, *Poems*, 157.

influential, bishops. Perhaps he did not have to worry about the impression that his countrymen would be considered backwards – as did Augustine – due to the proximity of Nola to Rome. He also may not have needed to concern himself as much as did the episcopate in Rome about maintaining practical purity. In any event, Paulinus' allowances permitted the cult of Felix to grow, and his own authority did not suffer because of this. However, unlike Damasus, Ambrose, or Athanasius, the evidence does not support the idea that Paulinus was acting out of a desire for personal influence and prestige. Unlike these other bishops, Paulinus was not engaged in any particular struggle within the congregation of Nola, he did not have to use the cult of the martyrs as a means of expressing his ability to influence an audience that may have been directly opposed to him. Instead he was able to work with traditions which were not threatening to him, and through that he leveraged the cult of Felix to impressive popularity.

Sulpicius Severus

What little is known about Sulpicius Severus comes primarily from his correspondence with Paulinus. However, we do know that he was of noble heritage, with access to a good education, and ultimately gave all of that up after his wife died at a young age. While it is true that he did not embrace the cult of the martyrs with quite the enthusiasm that we have seen with previous figures in this chapter, he was interested in its development in his congregation, despite the ambivalence that his predecessor (Martin) had toward the cult. We see from his correspondence with Paulinus, that Sulpicius incorporated relics into his basilica, and wanted to honor them with verse as

had Paulinus. He is another example of the way in which the presence of relics was gaining prevalence, prevalence in the exact way that was intended by Ambrose.

However we also see some caution regarding the popular cult of the saints. In his *Life of Martin* we encounter, perhaps for the first time in the west, some evidence of a push back against an over exuberance of the (vernacular) cult of the saints. Martin demonstrates an attempt to see that the cult of the martyrs is not completely out of episcopal control. In *The Life of Martin*, Severus describes how Martin is concerned regarding an altar over the remains of an unknown martyr. Martin attempted to verify any popular practices associated with the veneration of martyrs. After careful investigation he prayed over the sepulture asking God for guidance as to the character of the individual honored as a martyr.

Next turning to the left-hand side, he sees standing very near a shade of a mean and cruel appearance. Martin commands him to tell his name and character. Upon this, he declares his name, and confesses his guilt. He says that he had been a robber, and that he was beheaded on account of his crimes; that he had been honored simply by an error of the multitude . . . Then Martin made known what he had seen, and ordered the altar which had been there to be removed, and thus he delivered the people from the error of that superstition.¹⁰⁰

Here we see Martin, through his prayers, enacting a sort of necromancy, whereby he was able to conjure the spirit of the robber who was buried within the sepulture. This

¹⁰⁰ Sulpicius Severus, *Mart.* 11, PL 20.0166d-0167A: “Tum conversus ad laevam vidit prope assistere umbram sordidam, trucem. Imperat, nomen meritumque ut loqueretur. Nomen edicit, de crimine confitetur: latronem se fuisse, ob scelera percussus, vulgi errore celebratum; sibi nihil cum martyribus esse commune, cum illos gloria, se poena retineret. Mirum in modum vocem loquentis qui aderant audiebant, personam tamen non videbant. Tum Martinus quid vidisset exposuit, jussitque ex eo loco altare, quod ibi fuerat, submoveri: atque ita populum superstitionis illius absolvit errore.” Trans. Alexander Roberts, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, Vol. 11. ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894.). This chapter is the only time that Severus explicitly mentions martyrs in this work.

confirmed Martin's suspicion that the altar was not properly placed by a martyr's tomb, but only through the "false opinion of humans." Previously Martin had been pleased that there was some religious veneration taking place, and so stayed away until such a time as he could verify whose sepulture was being honored as that of a martyr. Severus does not tell us what the impetus was for his decision to go and see this shrine for himself. One could well imagine that the religious veneration that was taking place there had ceased to be of the sort that he found proper, or that it was moving in a direction that Martin could no longer control. Through the summoning of a spirit that no one else could see, he effectively nullified a cult center that was out of his control.

Apa Shenoute

Apa Shenoute (d.465), like many Christian leaders in North Africa and his European counterparts, had an ambivalent relationship with the uses of the remains of the martyrs. His was primarily concerned with what was, and what was not appropriate to do at the tombs of the deceased. He faced similar riotous problems with the anniversaries of the martyrs' death. Shenoute lists the shameful practices that he had seen at the shrine of the saints, painting a vivid picture of the goings on at the shrines:

But to sing, to eat, to drink, to laugh and especially to fornicate and to kill people because of drunkenness and debauchery and fighting in total ignorance is lawless [lacuna] some within are singing Psalms, reading and performing the sacrament, while others outside have made the sound of the horns and flutes fill the whole place with anger against those who do these things. . .¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Shenoute, "Those Who Work Evil," in E. Amélineau, *Œuvres de Schenoudi. Texte copte et traduction française. Par E. Amélineau. [With facsimiles.] Copt. & Fr.* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1907), 199-200.

Shenoute penned two distinct texts that deal with the use of martyr bodies and the practices associated with their memorials. *Since it Behooves Christians* and *Those who Work Evil*¹⁰² In *Those Who Work Evil* he was not concerned with how one achieved martyrdom, but rather what one does with the graves of the martyrs, and how those graves were discovered. David Frankfurter discusses the text in a number of different circumstances, he consistently presents Shenoute as an ardent opponent of the martyr cult, which is not completely supported by the material.¹⁰³ The main point that Frankfurter takes away from *Those Who Work Evil* is the complaints that Shenoute levels against the relic cult, especially that the introduction of bones into a church is completely unacceptable. In “Beyond Magic and Superstition” he quotes from the latter part of the text:

Those who adore [martyrs] in some shrine built in their name worship demons, not God. Those who trust that healings come to them, or goods, in a place they built over some skeletons without knowing whose they are, are no different from those who worshiped the calves that Jeroboam set up in Samaria . . .

Who among those who fear God will not say “Woe to those who say ‘I saw a light in the shrine that they built over some bones of a skeleton in the church, and I was eased of my illness after I slept there.’”¹⁰⁴

What is worse is that those who introduce bones into a church “do not understand what is proper to do in a church.”¹⁰⁵ In another work Frankfurter discusses the idea of spirit

¹⁰² Found in E. Amélineau, *Œuvres de Schenoudi. Texte copte et traduction française. Par E. Amélineau. [With facsimiles.] Copt. & Fr.* (Paris : E. Leroux, 1907), 1:197-211.

¹⁰³ David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: assimilation and resistance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 193; “Beyond Magic and Superstition,” in *Late Ancient Christianity, vol. 2, A People’s History of Christianity*, ed. Virginia Burrus (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 257; *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt*, illustrated edition (Brill Academic Publishers, 1998).

¹⁰⁴ Frankfurter, “Beyond Magic and Superstition,” 263. Trans. Frankfurter.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

possession and necromancy at the tombs of the saints, again taken from *Those Who Work Evil*.¹⁰⁶

While there was clearly a strong distrust of the cult of the saints in Shenoute corpus, especially *Those Who Work Evil*, yet to characterize it as solely a diatribe against the martyr cult is a misrepresentation of the text. To read Frankfurter's interpretation of the text would lead one to believe that Shenoute is critical of all of those who worshiped at the shrines of the martyrs, and everyone there looked to them for necromantic inspiration, which is not the case at all. Shenoute's ambiguity is not that of Augustine. The ambiguity that we see in *Those Who Work Evil* focuses much more on the practices associated with the relic cult as well as the "discovery" of the relics. What we see in Frankfurter's interpretation is an unambiguous criticism of the relic cult in Egypt, which does not appear to have been what Shenoute was saying.

Ultimately Shenoute was attempting to control the practices at the shrines, to limit what could be performed there, in much the same way that we saw Augustine and Ambrose. The shrine was good when it is used "properly" but it is not always used this way. The tension continued well into the fifth century between those who wanted to continue the festive atmosphere which surrounded the martyr's vigils, and those who condemned these endeavors. In *Since it Behooves Christians* Shenoute asks his audience: "But if what is bitter beyond all bitterness is mixed with what is sweet, will you drink it,

¹⁰⁶ David Frankfurter, "Where the Spirits Dwell: Possession, Christianization, and Saints' Shrines in Late Antiquity," *Harvard Theological Review* 103, no. 1 (2010): 27-46.

oh man?”¹⁰⁷ This begins a discourse on the activities that he sees as polluting the shrines of the saints. He does not dismiss the shrines out of hand, but rather is critical of the bitterness that is mixed with the sweetness of the true meaning of the shrine. He continues: “To go to the places of the martyrs to pray, to read, to sing Psalms, to purify yourself, to bring the offering in the fear of Christ is good; it is the pattern of the Church; it is the cannon of God’s house.”¹⁰⁸ It is good to go to the tombs of the Martyrs, and there is no problem with treating them in roughly the same fashion that you would a church, even going so far as to “bring the offering.”

Of course the problems that both Augustine and Jerome were forced to defend against, namely behavior unsuited to these sacred locations, was a problem for Shenoute in Egypt as well. However, Shenoute does not seem to be defending the martyr cult against those who would be rid of the whole project, or who ridicule (as did Julian) Christianity because of it, but rather he is saying that it is a good thing, but one needs to be reserved and careful in one’s behavior, which is entirely consistent with his approach to life in general (physical as well as spiritual – if they can be divided for him).¹⁰⁹

One can clearly see how Shenoute envisioned proper behavior within the shrines: the pious taking the Eucharist over the tomb of the martyr, dedicating their attention to God. Their peaceful reverence was then disturbed by the drunken ignorant crowds outside. These crowds came to the shrine to drink and commemorate the deceased through a festival complete with horns and flutes. Most likely as with the events that

¹⁰⁷ Amélineau, *Œuvres de Shenoudi*, 199.1, translation from the Coptic generously provided by David Brakke (unpublished, 2012).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Caroline T. Schroeder, *Monastic Bodies: Discipline and Salvation in Shenoute of Atripe*, Illustrated edition (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

Augustine described earlier, the social boundaries were dissolved, men and women were mingling and secreting off into the night. Shenoute may well have been dabbling in hyperbole when he described killing as a common part of the vigil, however it is not completely outside the realm of possibility that fights might not have emerged from the intoxicated crowds, possibly engaging in gambling over horse races, “you have made them [the burial locations] places for competition among your animals,”¹¹⁰ which could have led to death.

Shenoute’s anger is primarily directed at the priests who allow such things to happen at the tombs of the martyrs, reminding them that the “place of the martyr is the house of Christ,” and then quoting Jesus, “My house shall be called the house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.”¹¹¹ It is hard to reconcile Frankfurter’s image of Shenoute being an ardent opponent to the cult of the martyrs, with the one who here compares the tomb of the martyr to the “house of Christ” and the temple in Jerusalem. Even later (in *Those Who Work Evil*) when he accuses those who bring bones into a church of not knowing what is proper to do in a church, he is *not* saying that no bones are proper for a church, but rather bones of unknown origin, are not proper for a church. The bones of martyrs, are (according to the passage above) the house of Christ, by their very nature as martyr relics. What is important then, it to treat the tombs of the martyrs like a church, and not a market place (or even worse than a market place): “The things that are

¹¹⁰ Amélineau, *Œuvres de Shenoudi*, 201.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 200, Shenoute quoted Jesus’ cleansing of the temple here (Mt: 21.13, Mk: 11.17, Lk: 19.46).

not done in the market places to those who sell their wares have been done to those who sell their things in the places of the martyrs.”¹¹²

Later in *Since it Behooves Christians* he had the martyrs speak for themselves, if they were alive to see the practices of those who were defiling their tombs. The tombs were places that purify the individual, but too often according to Shenoute they were soiled by the activities of those who frequented them. While the accusations of murder were provocative, Shenoute's primary complaint centered on the occasions for fornication. He singled out those who protested that they have never been married, and could not, have been committing adultery. He went on at length about their finding dark corners for their dark deeds.¹¹³ Martyr shrines were places where both men and women could go, and mingle in a way that was improper elsewhere, and as a result apparently darkened corners were found for other reasons than prayer. While these practices, along with the sacrificing of goats and other animals clearly offend Shenoute; the refrain that Shenoute comes back to again and again in *Since it Behooves* is that these behaviors offended the martyr, who had the power to intercede on behalf of humanity with God. The logical conclusion is that if this offended the martyrs, the behaviors should not be done, and could even have acquired the enmity of the martyr and the martyr's God.¹¹⁴ Theologically this understanding of the intercessory role of the martyr is one that is completely in accordance with Shenoute's European counterparts.

Shenoute's ire was not aimed at those who are feasting at martyr's tomb, but rather those who claimed to have visions of the martyrs proclaiming that they were buried

¹¹² Ibid., 201.

¹¹³ Ibid., 203-204.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 205-206.

in one particular location, and that they should be exhumed and placed in a church.¹¹⁵ Shenoute was taking aim not only at his fellow Egyptians but also, possibly, Ambrose who famously engaged in exactly this sort of behavior. Shenoute even claimed that this behavior only served human ambition and pride, the desire to possess the bones of martyrs within one's church. This ambition, Shenoute proclaimed, would be our death.¹¹⁶

Shenoute had three problems with those who are claiming to have had a vision of the saint telling them where their remains are buried. The first of these, as noted above, was that there was no way to tell whose bones one was digging up. This even included the possibility of claiming that the bones of a dog were those of a saint. With the scandalous possibility of building a church around those venerable canine remains.¹¹⁷ We saw the same from the wishes of the venerable brothers themselves who made it clear that they did not wish to have their bones venerated.¹¹⁸ If it was their wish that no one know of their burial locations, who are you, Shenoute wondered, to deny them their wishes to remain anonymous in death. Despite Frankfurter's quotation claiming that those who put bones in churches did not know what is proper to do in a church, Shenoute was not as clear in his prohibition of relics in churches. He was against putting the bones of common Christians, or worse – dog or non-Christian – into the Church, but he was quick to use the disclaimer that no one knows *whose* bones people claim to have found. To that end he makes no mention of the tell-tale signs that Ambrose, Paulinus, Augustine

¹¹⁵ Shenoute, *Those Who Work Evil*, Ibid., 212-213.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 213.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 208.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 213. In one clear example of a record of the desire of a holy man not to have his bones venerated came from Athanasius's *Life of Anthony* where Anthony expressed the desire to be buried in secret so that his body would not be exhumed and carried around on a stretcher, as he claimed was the practice of the Egyptians.

etc. make use of to determine if remains are indeed those of a saints: perfect preservation, sweet smelling remains, and liquid blood, were all demonstrative of the saints who had gained dominance over purification itself.¹¹⁹

Shenoute had the healthy skepticism of one who did not believe everything that he heard. However, from the preceding, pages it was not clear that he would have been completely against the remains of one who was clearly and indisputably known to have been a martyr being present in the church, again he even called the martyrs' tombs "houses of Christ" where the Eucharist could be performed piously. He pointed out that nearly all of the activities that could take place in the church building could take place at the tombs of the martyrs. Shenoute observed that he admired and praised a priest in areas to the south that when men came to him claiming to have found the remains of a martyr, the priest replied that either they were incorrect about whose remains they had found, or that they thought the priest would allow the remains of a common man into his church.¹²⁰ Note that it was not that he would not allow them to bring bones into the church, but that it was only problematic if they were those of a "common man." This leaves open the possibility that if the remains were something other than "un homme simple," they might have had a place in the church.

The final concern that Shenoute had with the reverence paid to bone fragments of unknown origins, was that they were being lit by candles, and riches were being heaped upon them in the attempt to honor a martyr who may not have desired such honors. This

¹¹⁹ See also Carolyn Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity 200-1336* (New York: Columbia, 1994), for a discussion on the fear of purification in the emergent church, and its subsequent influence on the development of Christian theology.

¹²⁰ Shenoute, *Evil*, in Amélineau, *Œuvres de Schenoudi*, 218-9.

was money wasted when it could have gone to widows and orphans.¹²¹ It was not necessarily that there was anything wrong with lighting lamps or using oil, it was just that the money would have been better spent taking care of the poor (which was one of the practices that Shenoute was best known for).

While Shenoute has been cited as an example of an opponent of the martyr cult, he was decidedly different from the opponents that Augustine and Jerome find themselves defending the martyr cult against, in that he was in favor of reverence being paid to the saints, even at the martyr's tomb. Yet he saw clearly – and condemned – the abuses of the sites themselves. He was also concerned that there was considerable potential for the fabrication of martyr relics. One item that he did not address is the power of the bones themselves. As we have seen Augustine, Ambrose, and Paulinus etc., all argued that there were miracles associated with the remains of the martyrs. This was one subject on which Shenoute was remarkably silent. However Armand Veilleux reminds us in his preface to a modern reprint of Besa's *Life of Shenoute*, that Shenoute's spirituality lacks any mystical dimension, and has even been described as “Christ-less.”¹²² This then may have been an aspect of spirituality that was beyond the interest that Shenoute paid to anything, not just to the reputed power of the relics.

Shenoute seemed to be attempting to perform an action that was quite different from his European counterparts. He was not using the relics of the saints as a means of solidifying his control in the face of opponents, he was not attempting to negate the

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Armand Veilleux, “Shenoute or the Pitfalls of Monasticism” preface to *The Life of Shenoute by Besa*, Trans. David N. Bell (Kalamazoo MI: Cistercian, 1983), v.

claims of his rivals. Nor was he creating new martyr shrines or incorporating newly found martyrs within church structures. Ambrose's discovery of relics, and those who claimed to have done likewise in Egypt, were running the risk of polluting churches with the incorporation of relics that were not verifiable, which for Shenoute was unacceptable. However he was attempting to control the actions of his countrymen at the shrines of the saints, and lambasting those priests who (like Paulinus in Nola) were tolerant of debauchery at the martyrs' tombs. Like many of the western bishops he was struggling to enforce his image of appropriate behavior in the face of other Christians who did not always agree with what should be done at these shrines. The specific locations of the martyrs' tombs required a sobriety and decorum, they should not be treated like market places that set them apart from the rest of the world in much the same way that a church did. As we have seen with his European counterparts (especially Augustine and Ambrose) Shenoute's discourse did not attempt to keep people from worshiping at martyr shrines; he just wanted them to worship at the shrines appropriately. He was also calling upon the memory of the suffering of the martyr as a tool to get the rowdiness of the martyr shrines brought under control. The shrines were the concrete representations of the memory of the martyr and as such Shenoute deftly reminds his audience of the martyr's sufferings to beat back their base behavior.

Conclusion

The innovations made by Constantine and Damasus were meaningful only because they drew upon pre-Christian practices associated with the care of the dead combined with the importance of the figure of the martyr within Christianity.

Consequently the power struggles associated with the martyr cult were far from fully ironed out when subsequent Christian leaders sought to impose their own image of the Church upon their congregations. Once again the martyr cult became a tool that they used as they sought to control the Christian message and the practices of their congregations.

Ambrose was not the first to translate the corpses of martyrs into Church structures separate from their initial burial locations, yet he was instrumental in the establishment of relic distribution as a recognized Christian practice. Through his generous contributions of relics he controlled in Milan, Ambrose ensured that his own reputation and that of Milan extended far beyond the borders of his city. In doing so he also continued the process of transforming the local martyr into a trans-local, universal, figure. Through his distribution of local martyrs (most famously Protasius and Gervais) Ambrose transformed what had been previously unknown local saints into important figures known throughout the empire. He contested the importance of Rome, which closely guarded its important saints, with his own munificence which may have had more importance, ultimately, in the development of the unifying of Christendom through the universal martyr cult.

Whereas Ambrose sought to spread the saints from Milan to willing recipients, Augustine was initially dubious about the importance or even the efficacy of the martyr cult. Primarily due to the importance of the martyr cult with his Donatist neighbors, Augustine initially downplayed its importance. However, it appears that once he was in possession of Stephen's relics his attitude towards the martyr cult shifted considerably. Augustine saw Stephen as a biblical martyr with universal appeal, one that united the Church as a whole, rather than dividing it based on local practices. Consequently he

could accept the practices associated with Stephen's cult in a way that he rejected those of local martyrs, especially those honored by the Donatists.

Both Augustine and Ambrose (among others) confronted the pre-Christian practices associated with the care of the dead, principally feasting at the graves of the departed, especially of the important dead. To this end they sought to curb the enthusiasm of their congregations urging temperance during the all night vigils where men and women comingled suggestively. These calls for abstinence were not necessarily observed immediately; indeed the number of times that they were repeated indicated that they frequently fell on deaf ears. Yet this was an important aspect of their attempts at controlling the martyr cult. If one could not control the activities which surrounded the cult, it was especially difficult to control the message that the cult transmitted.

Paulinus of Nola differed from his contemporaries in several significant ways, with regard to his approach to the martyr cult. In Nola there was no significant struggle for power. Neither the Arians (who scoffed at the martyr cult in Milan) nor the Donatists (who warmly embraced it in Northern Africa) were vying for the hearts and minds of the population of Nola. As a result, Paulinus was able to let his own enthusiasm for the cult of Felix shine unconcealed, without political interference. Unlike Ambrose and Augustine, he did not disallow drinking at the martyrs' festivals, arguing that it was better to encourage the veneration of the saint, and once that was accomplished the congregation's love of God would naturally encourage temperance. Perhaps this more lenient atmosphere in Nola led to the feast associated with Felix gaining tremendous popularity. Paulinus reported that legions of the faithful from Rome annually made the pilgrimage to Nola, so as to honor Felix's birthday.

At the end of the century or early in the next, Shenoute presented a hesitancy towards the unbridled martyr cult that has led some commentators to claim that he opposed it altogether. Shenoute was not opposed to the martyr cult, or even the introduction of relics into church structures. What he did oppose, however, was the rampant, unchecked, spread of the martyr cult which could lead only to people digging up random corpses and presenting them as martyr relics. It was acceptable to incorporate the bones of saints into a church, those were the only ones he would condone. Shenoute also objected to the carnival atmosphere which he claimed was common at the martyr festivals. From his description, which may have been embellished for rhetorical effect, one can see that the promotion of the martyr cult by Ambrose and others had been quite successful, even if their calls for pious behavior had not. It should be noted that the form of enthusiastic piety that was found in the popular martyr cult was one that did not fit well with Shenoute's own extreme abstemiousness. Consequently the fact that he did not prohibit the veneration of the saints, or even attempt to limit it (other than calling for a less riotous observance, and greater care over whose relics were venerated), confirmed how important the cult of the saints had become by the early fifth century.

All of the men discussed in this chapter sought to control the martyr cult in one way or another, to greater and lesser degrees of efficacy. With the possible exception of Shenoute, their usage of the martyr cult served to project their image of Christianity, as well as their own personal place within the church.

Chapter Four: To Reject Not Everyone Loves a Corpse

Late in the fourth century (381) the Christian Emperors Gratian, Valentinian, and Theodosius issued an edict banning the introduction of new bodies of apostles and martyrs from Rome. They also subjected anyone dislocating the bodies in a tomb to previously existing Roman law which had been aimed only at those who disturbed (through destruction or re-use) the tomb structure itself. These emperors were not only concerned with the introduction of human remains into the city of Rome, they were also concerned with the sale and/or movement of relics from one place to another.¹ Even with the concentrated efforts of Christian (and imperial) leaders to create a cultural memory situated squarely on the shoulders of the tombs of the important dead, the presence of these laws denotes a continued suspicion of the breakdown of the boundaries which separated the living and the dead within the walls of the Roman city. It was also not a forgone conclusion that the intentional direction that those leaders desired was received in a uniform manner.

Cyril Mango uses these laws to demonstrate that the translation of relics was repugnant to the Roman population and that it was shocking how quickly the practice

¹ *TC.* 240.9.17.6 and 240.9.17.7. See Gillian Mackie, *Early Christian Chapels in the West: Decoration, Function, Patronage* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 264 n. 1 and 2. See also C. Mango, "Constantine's Mausoleum and the Translation of Relics," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 83 (1990): 51. For previous legislation: *TC.* 240.9.17.1-4 (Constantius II proclaimed in Milan in the year 351); Julian first seems concerned about the dead in 363 with *TC.* 240.9.17.5 yet here it is about the insult that would be dealt to the dead if their tomb was disturbed, and not the movement of the tomb.

developed in the latter half of the century. While I cannot but agree that the spread of the practice is noteworthy, I also think that Mango has overstated the case for this aversion. It would appear that Mango lets his distaste for the practice (which is clear from the first sentence of the article²) get in the way of accurately understanding the motivations of Constantianus II. He was concerned enough about the tombs of the dead to add the aspect regarding the disturbing of remains of the dead (to a legal understanding regarding the destruction of the *tomb structure*) precisely because people *were* removing the bodies, although by this point (386) the disturbance and dismemberment of the remains of the important dead was only in its infancy. Contrary to the point that Mango attempted to make one can observe that the practice of corpse exhumation and distribution was *not* repugnant to the entire population. The practice of disinterment and possibly the circulation of relics was practiced widely enough that it was necessary to legislate against it.

Christianity in the fourth century underwent seismic shifts in its understanding of the relationship between the living and the remains of the martyrs. The previously universally established practices concerning the familial care of the dead, broadened into the church taking over the role of burying both the Christian indigent, as well as concern for the burial of, and care for, the important dead: martyrs and church leaders. In this care there existed tensions between those who wanted to continue their normative behaviors associated with the commemoration of the departed (feasting, drinking, etc.) and those

² “Among the practices of the Early Church that inspire in us feelings of embarrassment, not to say revulsion, is that of the translations of the saints’ relics.” C. Mango, “Constantine’s Mausoleum and the Translation of Relics,” 51.

who desired to have more somber and subdued celebrations of the death of the martyrs. Both of the groups (boisterous and restrained) accepted the martyr cult as an important part of what it meant to be a Christian. They disagreed over the form that it should take but not over its centrality to Christian identity and cultural memory. Bishops like Augustine, Ambrose, Paulinus, Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, sought to use the popularity of the martyr cult as a way of directing the lives of their congregations, while at the same time defending their own authority against the claims of their rivals. Despite the fact that their preferences would ultimately become normative by the fifth and sixth century, their desires were not universally accepted. The aim of this chapter is to examine the way in which the martyr cult was rejected in the fourth century, related to the practices of associating with martyr graves. We will not deal explicitly with those who heard Augustine's cry for sobriety, or Shenoute's demand to no longer introduce the remains of unknown individuals into the church, and simply dismissed those desires. Those rejections will have to stand acknowledged by the fact that these appeals for the desired decorum had to be made over and over again. Here we will survey the rejection of both Christians and non-Christians to the cult of the martyr as a whole; a rejection of both ends of the spectrum of behavior that was associated with the care of the martyr's remains.

Julian "The Apostate"

In the middle of the fourth century, the most notable opponent of the cult of the saints was the Emperor Julian, often referred to as "the Apostate."³ Despite his Christian

³ Julian reigned as Emperor from 361-363, after having first been Caesar of the west starting in 355.

heritage, Julian desired to reverse the Christianization of the empire as initiated by Constantine. In 362-363 he undertook several measures that appear to have been aimed at hindering the practices associated with the martyr cult. Of course, this is relatively early in the century considering the translations of Ambrose were still 25 years off.

For Julian the cult of the dead was a stylistic tool that he used in order to bolster his argument to return Rome to its religiously Hellenistic roots. Juana Torres observes: “Julian attacked the veneration of relics in his works not so much as a personal obsession, as it might appear, but because it was a characteristic trait of Christians in his time. His ultimate goal was to discredit everything connected with their cults in favor of the ideals of Hellenism.”⁴ The association between Christians and the graves of the important dead had become, especially by the 360’s, one of the most distinguishable aspects of Christian worship, as opposed to their non-Christian neighbors. The association of Christians with the graves of their important dead made this criticism so useful for Julian’s attack on the Christian.

In the *Misopogon* Julian expressed his disgust for the Christian practice of praying at tombs, where he observed that this practice was something that he had been forced to “put up with.”⁵ Julian was drawing upon the image that Christians had presented of themselves, both to themselves and the non-Christian world that they associated with tombs (especially as a place of prayer). However, for Julian this was not something to be celebrated, but rather a means of denigration for the practices of the Christian community. It is worth observing at this point that Julian explicitly describes women (“old crones”) as the ones that were tied closely with the martyr cult. His usage of

⁴ Juana Torres, “Emperor Julian and the Veneration of Relics,” *AnTard* 17 (2009): 210.

⁵ *Misopogon* 344A.

gendered language in this case may have been an additional means of demeaning his Christian opponents. Conversely, there may well have been an understanding that those most interested in the care of the martyrs were, in fact, women. In the narratives concerning the martyr's remains, women played a disproportionately prominent role.⁶

Furthermore, in his diatribe *Against the Christians* he argues (correctly) that the reverence paid at the graves of the saints was not something that can be traced back to Jesus. He also criticized Christians for their failure to observe that graves were unclean (citing Jesus) and consequently one could not invoke God at them. Ultimately he noted that within ancient Judaism sleeping in tombs for the sake of visions or dreams was a form of witchcraft.⁷ Julian was raised a Christian, and at least according to one biographer, had a significant mastery of their texts and used that knowledge to argue against the veneration of the saints at their tombs from within the Christian tradition.⁸ His criticism was not only aimed at his contemporary Christians, he also leveled accusations against the Apostles for performing this same sort of divination only after Jesus had died. Julian accused Christians here not necessarily of divination (he himself was wont to visit the Delphi to consult the oracle) but rather of hypocrisy by not following the teachings of Jesus.

One item of note regarding the conflict between Julian and Christians is, of course, that the Romans themselves had a long history of elaborate burials, which were

⁶ For a discussion of the presentation of women in the literature surrounding the martyr cult see Nicola Denzey, *The Bone Gatherers: The Lost Worlds of Early Christian Women* (Beacon: 2007), and Kate Cooper, "The Martyr, the Matrona and the Bishop: the Matron Lucina and the Politics of the Martyr Cult in Fifth and Sixth-Century Rome" *Early Medieval Europe* 8 no.3 (1999): 297-317. Neither work addresses Julian's criticism directly.

⁷ Julian, *Gal.* 335C.

⁸ Eunapius, *VS.* 473-4.

visited with a certain degree of frequency. Often these tombs contained physical structures for eating and drinking, where the living would interact with the shades of the dead. However there remained for the most part a distinction between the “religious” practices associated with the official cult, and the practices of individuals and families for their dead. Juana Torres observed: “I am referring to the pagans' belief about the dead as polluting presences in the carrying out of civil life and, above all, in religious rites.”⁹ Here he seemed to be speaking about a very specific usage (perhaps uncritically so) of the term “religious.” Both Julian and Torres were referring specifically to the civic religious life, not the “religious life” that the Christians, nor indeed as most modern readers, might have thought of as religious life.¹⁰ It was also clear that burial practices and commemoration would be part of what many modern readers would consider to have been part of the religious life. Graves in the context of Julian’s priests were not part of civic religious life, but rather part of the familial expressions of grief and remembrance, all of which had nothing to do with the gods, but clearly had what we consider to be a religious context: rituals designed to appease the spirits of the dead.

This division could be seen as projection of modern distinctions upon the ancient world, distinctions that they would not have understood. However, it is also useful to draw boundaries between the familial responsibilities and the civic responsibilities to the “religious” life of the empire. In general the care of the dead was (with the exception of Christians) seen as a function of the family. Indeed when the dead were improperly cared for, chaos and destruction could ensue, but it was *not* the responsibility of the official

⁹ Torres, “Julian,” 211.

¹⁰ Roman Priests were forbidden from seeing a corpse during any official celebration. See Torres, “Julian,” 206.

priests to care for the dead. Julian himself provides evidence for this discrepancy between practices in his letter to Arsacius where he laments that the charitable actions of the Christians has advanced their cause.¹¹ Of these actions Julian explicitly mentions the care for the graves of the dead (which we also saw in chapter one was considered a great act of piety), as well as their sobriety and care of strangers. The remainder of the letter goes on to describe the reforms within the civic priesthood that Julian sought to make, primarily based on the model of charity that he observed within the Christian community. The one obvious absence from this, however, is that at no point does he dictate that the priests should have anything to do with the burial of the dead. This remained a private function of the family. Not only was the care of the dead to remain an activity of the family, Julian later decreed that funerals should be carried out only at night.¹² As part of his justification for this decree, dated to 363, he explained later in a letter that, he observed that there are no good omens on days with funerals.¹³

Julian was also annoyed with the presence of martyr graves near his own religious sites. Rufinus of Aquileia wrote that Julian had the body of the martyr Babylas moved as its presence made the oracle in Daphne mute to his questions.

Then he ordered the Galileans, for thus he called our people, to come and remove the martyr's tomb. The whole church therefore came together, mothers and husbands, virgins and youths, and with immense rejoicing pulled along the martyr's coffin in a long processions singing psalms with loud cries and exultation.¹⁴

¹¹*The Works of the Emperor Julian* vol.3, 1923, Trans. W.C. Wright, LCL. (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press), 67-71.

¹² *CT* 9.17.5.1 See also Torres "Julian."

¹³ Julian, *Ep.* 136.

¹⁴ Rufinus of Aquileia, *Hist.* 35, PL 21.503B: "Tum ille, venire Galilaeos (hoc enim nomine nostros appellare solitus erat) et auferre sepulcrum martyris jubet. Igitur Ecclesia universa conveniens, 261 matres et viri, [Al. additur et] virgines, juvenesque immensa exultatione succincti, trahebant longo agmine arcam Martyris, psallentes summis

It is unclear if the refusal of the Oracle was because it was displeased by the presence of the Babylas' grave, or if there was some inherent power in the martyr's tomb that dominated the Oracle's ability to perform effectively. Clearly for Julian it was the pollution of the corpse, and for the Christians, including Gallus it was the power of the martyr's remains. After the remains were removed in 362, the temple was destroyed by fire, which according to Sozomen was an act of God demonstrating his displeasure at the removal of Babylas.¹⁵ Julian asserted that the displeasure and fire came from a much more earthly source, the Christians.¹⁶ According to Sozomen, after (in response to?) the fire, Julian ordered the governor of Caria to destroy all of the martyr shrines complete with an altar and a roof, which were close to the temple of Apollo Didymus in Miletus.¹⁷

Babylas' tomb was not the only shrine that suffered under the reign of Julian. Rufinus recounts the events that lead to the destruction of the tomb of John the Baptist: “[T]hey frenziedly attacked the tomb of John the Baptist with murderous hands and set about scattering the bones, gathering them again, burning them, mixing the holy ashes with dust, and scattering them throughout the fields and countryside.”¹⁸ The ashes were collected by a group of monks from the monastery of Philip, who had made a pilgrimage to the tomb of John to pray. After mixing with the crowd they managed to collect all of

clamoribus, et cum exultation.” Trans. Philip R. Amidon. *The Church History of Rufinus of Aquileia Books 10 and 11* (New York: Oxford 1997). 40. G. Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 364, 387-8 dates this occurrence to 351-4 under Caesar Gallus.

¹⁵ Sozomen, *HE* 5.20.

¹⁶ Julian, *Mis.* 361.

¹⁷ Sozomen, *HE* 5.20.

¹⁸ Rufinus, *Hist.* 28, PL 21.00536A-B: “Ex quo accidit, apud Sebasten Palaestinae urbem sepulchrum Joannis Baptistae mente rabida et funestis manibus invaderent, ossa dispergerent, atque ea rursum collecta, igni cremarent, et sanctos cineres pulveri immixtos, per agros et rura dispergerent.” Trans. Amidon, *Church History*, 85.

the ashes “as far as they could in the circumstances.” Once the ashes were in hand these clandestine monks made their escape, and took the relics to Philip who believed it was beyond his ability to care for the relics, sent them off to Athanasius. Despite, as we will see below, Athanasius’ own antipathy towards relic veneration as it was used by his opponents, he received these and hid them within a hole in the wall of the sacristy. Athanasius hid them, perhaps, to keep them from falling into the hands of his opponents.¹⁹

In this instance, it was not a decree from Julian that caused the desecration of the tomb, which was still against Roman law to disturb, but rather the fervor of the general population. Despite Julian’s apparent disgust with the veneration paid at the tombs of the martyrs, it is noteworthy that he did not make it an imperial agenda to confiscate or desecrate these graves or shrines. He even observed that a group of people in Emesa (near Antioch) had exceeded his wishes with the cleansing of the holy places, when they overturned Christian tombs, and attacked those who were praying there.²⁰ Julian clearly expresses that he was not interested in violence against the Christians, but sometimes people get caught up in the moment, and he could not be blamed for their bad behavior could he? The fact that these events, only one of which was explicitly ordered by Julian, were the only ones that both he and his opponents recounted, denotes that they were the exception rather than the rule under his reign. Gregory of Nyssa even complained that

¹⁹ Ibid., 11.28, It is also a possibility that Rufinus has them deposited in Alexandria to bolster a later claim by the Alexandrian church to those same relics.

²⁰ Julian, *Misop.* 361 The violence that was perpetrated in this instance of the destruction of tombs was more than simply the destruction of the structures (which was under Roman law illegal) but it was the destruction of memory.

Julian was careful not to grant the Christian community martyrs.²¹

The only marginal exception to this lack of new martyrs under Julian was a tradition which is briefly discussed by Sozomen, where a statue of Jesus was removed by Julian and dragged around the city and destroyed by Julian's supporters. After the destruction of the statue the Christians recovered the bits and pieces, which was nearly indistinguishable to the recovering of the ashes or pieces of martyrs after execution. The remains of the statue were then placed in a church and from those remains a previously unknown plant grew, which could miraculously cure any disorder.²² Here we have a tale that is nearly identical to martyr narratives, from the mutilation of the body, to the gathering of the remains and internment in a church, followed by miraculous healing for the faithful. Even if Julian was not content to allow Christians to become martyrs, the Christians themselves created something nearly identical.

We also have evidence for intra-Christian hostilities from Julian who accuses Christians of slaughtering, each other for not worshiping in the same fashion.²³ In this passage, Julian is criticizing Christians for killing each other over differences of style of worship, at least some of which took place over the corpses of the important dead. One need only look to the persecution of Donatists in North Africa.²⁴ This included the controversy over Lucilla's kissing the bone of a martyr in 311 which during the pivotal period for the schism between the Meletians and the Catholics.²⁵ One could also see the

²¹ *Or. Catech.* IV.58.

²² Sozomen, *HE* 5.21.

²³ Julian, *Ad. Gal.* 206A.

²⁴ Maureen Tilley, *Donatist martyr stories: The Church in conflict in Roman North Africa* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999).

²⁵ See W.H.C. Frend, *The Donatist Church: a movement of protest in Roman North Africa* (Gloucestershire: Clarendon Press, 1971), 18.

conflict between Athanasius and his accusations of the “Egyptians” putting martyrs on stretchers and carrying them from place to place.

Julian was critical not only of Christianity as a whole, but Christianity as it was being practiced, which he believed was not in accordance with the gospels. In his attempt to re-establish previous Roman religious practices, he used the martyr cult against his Christian opponents. Not only did he relocate the tomb of Babylas, but he also sought a sympathetic audience for his professed disgust at the practices of Christians associating at the graves of the martyrs. From the fact that he signaled out two Christian activities to suppress (teaching and the martyr cult) we can see that for Julian in the middle of the fourth century, the practices performed at the graves of the martyrs was one of the most important signifiers of Christianity.

Other Non-Christian Opponents

Julian was far from the only non-Christian Gentile who was disturbed by the practices associated with the martyr cult. Some of these concerns came from the perception that Christians (correctly or not) were violating the taboo surrounding the incorporation of corpses within the city limits. Others dismissed the crowds at the martyr’s shrines as those of the simple and unwashed masses. Finally other distrusted the appearance of clandestine meetings, perhaps even some underground in the catacombs.

An interesting account concerning a non-Christian uprising concerning their fear of the presence of a corpse within the city walls comes from Marcus Diaconus in his

biographical account of the *Life of Porphyry of Gaza*.²⁶ In this case there was no corpse pollution, however the non-Christian gentile's believed (and were very quick to do so) that Christians would be bringing a corpse of a martyr into the city. Their actions demonstrated a general knowledge, and opposition to the Christian associations between the living and the dead, as well as a deep-seated fear of the degradation between the long established boundaries between the living and the dead. Here, despite the shocking conclusion of the perceived corpse rising up and beating with a piece of wood those who complained about the presence of that 'corpse' within the city we can appreciate just how anxious the non-Christian population was over the perceived violation of this taboo.

Not every instance of conflict with regard to the Christian relationship with the remains of their dead needed to be settled with blows. Maximus of Madaura wrote a letter to Augustine²⁷ where he was dismissively critical of the honor paid to the martyrs at their graves:

The tombs of these men (it is a folly almost beneath our notice) are visited by crowds of simpletons, who forsake our temples and despise the memory of their ancestors, so that the prediction of the indignant bard is notably fulfilled: *Rome shall, in the temples of the gods, swear by the shades of men.*²⁸

Here Maximus appears to be looking to Augustine for a sympathetic audience when he criticizes the "folly" of those "simpletons" who revere and worship at the tombs of the martyrs. Maximus is also critical of the Christians for meeting as he says in "secret

²⁶ Marcus Diaconus, v. *Porph.* 23.

²⁷ Written in 390.

²⁸ Included as Letter 16 in Augustine's corpus. Maximus to Augustine, *Ep.* 16, PL 33.0082: "Horum busta, si memoratu dignum est, relictis templis, neglectis majorum suorum manibus, stulti frequentant, ita ut praesagium vatis illius indigne ferentis emineat: Inque Deum templis juravit Roma per umbras." Trans. J.G. Cunningham, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, Vol. 1. Ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co.,1887).

places.” One is not exactly sure what he means by this other than perhaps in the darkened crypts of the shrines of the saints, such as the one described by Prudentius which surrounded the tomb of Hippolytus. Augustine, in his reply to Maximus does not take up this particular argument about the “folly” of the martyr cult, but is scathing of Maximus nonetheless. One wonders, had Augustine replied to this letter twenty-five years later, if he would have passed by the opportunity to extol the virtues of the martyr cult more fully.

The fourth-century Greek historian and Sophist, Eunapius of Sardis likewise was disgusted with the practice of integrating the remains of martyrs into temples in Egypt:

For they collected the bones and skulls of criminals who had been put to death for numerous crimes . . . made them out to be gods, haunted their sepulchers, and thought that they became better by defiling themselves at their graves. ‘Martyrs’ the dead were called, and ‘ministers of a sort, and ‘ambassadors’ with the gods to carry men’s prayers.²⁹

As with the remarks by Maximus, Eunapius here seems to be both shocked and incredulous that these events were actually transpiring. The practice of collecting the bones of those executed for criminal activity was so absurd to these late antique non-Christians that it defied credulity more than elicited feelings of offense.

Christian Opposition to the Martyr Cult

We have discussed opposition from Christians who were critical of the martyr cult primarily based on the actions of those who went to the festivals for less than pious purposes in the preceding chapters. These criticisms were aimed more at the fact that dark

²⁹ Eunapius of Sardis, *Lives of the Sophists*, 1961, ed. and trans. W. C. Wright, LCL. (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press), 425. See Peter Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 7; and *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity*, 177; also Julian, *Misopogon* 344A.

deeds were carried out in dimly lit corners of the shrine where women and men mingled during all night vigils. Their criticisms were based less on a particular problem with the role of the important dead, or out of revulsion based on the integration of the remains of the dead into religious piety. Concern over debauchery, however, was not the only way in which Christians rejected the role of the martyrs' remains.

Athanasius of Alexandria

“Wandering errant bodies, could only lead to wandering errant minds.”³⁰

In the early years of the fourth century a group that would eventually become considered to have been a schismatic group, referred to themselves as the “Church of the Martyrs.” Does this then refer to the idea that they focused their worship around the shrines and tombs of the saints, or were they simply claiming to be the direct descendants of the heroic martyrs of the recent past? There can be little doubt that the latter is true, but it is uncertain at best as to their relationship with corpses and graves, at least during the lifetime of Mellitus.³¹

We know little of their practices, although from Epiphanius it would seem that the “Church of the Martyrs” was theologically nearly indistinct from their “Catholic” adversaries. After this initial appropriation of the martyrs (at least in name, and most

³⁰ David Brakke, “‘Outside the Places, Within the Truth’ Athanasius of Alexandria and the Localization of the Holy,” in *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt*, ed. David Frankfurter (Boston: Brill, 1998), 466.

³¹ Epiphanius, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis: Books II and III (Sects 47-80, De fide)*, Book 2, 1994, trans. Frank Williams (Leiden: Brill), 318.

likely in practice), we learn little of their relationship with the martyr cult as it was around the tombs and shrines of those who had died as witnesses for Jesus, until their opponent Athanasius of Alexandria discusses one of their practices that he considered to have been abhorrent. According to Athanasius, who discusses this in his *Festal Letter 41* of 369 and then injects this same revulsion into the mouth of Anthony (who desires to be buried in secret rather than suffer this fate), the Meletians were (at least according to Athanasius) exhuming the remains of martyrs and placing them on portable stretchers. Once they were on these mobile devices and no longer trapped in their sepulchers, the Meletians were able to take them anywhere they wanted, thereby creating mobile locations of sanctity. According to David Brakke, this was because they no longer controlled the church structures and consequently no longer had access to the remains of the saints, in structures that were constructed surrounding their graves. This may well be the case, and I will discuss this thesis below when I examine Athanasius' response to them. For the Meletians it may have been the only way that they could have participated in an aspect of their religious practice once they no longer controlled the church structures.

John Wortley rightly questions how fully we could trust Athanasius in his commentary concerning the Meletians, as he was obviously opposed to them and desired to show them in the least favorable light possible, and of course these accusations of placing martyrs on stretchers is attested nowhere else.³² Yet Wortley argues that from previous Roman commentary on the practices of Egyptians concerning placing mummified remains of the important dead within private homes, it would have made

³² John Wortley, "The origins of Christian veneration of body-parts," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 1 (2006): 24.

perfect sense that some of the important dead within Christianity would also have had this same treatment. Additionally I am not (in this case) interested in veracity of actual practices, but rather in the fact that the practices (real or imaginary) were used as examples of what “proper” behavior was to the bishops who were arguing against them. One would not use an example of the horrid behavior of others if no-one cared about the implied behavior (e.g. Athanasius does not discuss the eating habits of the Arians). This usage of the treatment of the remains of the martyr was a trope by which to argue against one’s adversary, and consequently allowed the speaker to persuade or influence (to exert the power to create) the cultural memory of that community.

It may well have been the case that this idea of unearthing the remains of the important dead was something that may have been considered so repugnant to the Egyptian Christian population, that this could have been a straw man created by Athanasius. This practice is unattested to elsewhere. It may have served Athanasius’ purpose to have Anthony express his desire to be buried in secret, as a reaction to this practice. This would have been true especially if Athanasius was unable to claim the remains of such an esteemed figure of the Egyptian church, if there had been a call by members of his community to visit Anthony’s tomb.

Athanasius of Alexandria (296-373) was a dominant force in Alexandria for much of the fourth century, and was on again off again the bishop of the great Egyptian city from 328 until his death in 373. However his episcopate was not without significant controversy as he was nearly constantly caught in disagreement, political wrangling with the “Arians,” and struggling for control of the city with the Meletians, a “heretical” group who joined forces with the Arians, precisely because they both opposed Athanasius. As

we will see below in the *Festal Letters* of 369 and 370, Athanasius was extremely critical of what he claimed to be Meletians practices surrounding the bodies of the martyrs. However considering the exceptionally long duration in which he was embroiled in conflict with the Meletians, it is notable that he only deals with the issues of burial and Martyr remains in three texts.³³

In some ways his tactics were similar to those of Damasus in Rome, such as his use of thugs to intimidate his opponents, and mobs of controlled violence, in others he was exactly the opposite: he was critical of the use of martyr bodies, as the locus of the sacred within the community.³⁴ This may well have been because he was not in control of those bodies in the way that Damasus was, but rather was fighting against those who did claim to have control of martyr remains. As such he was unable to harness the remains of the saints, and their locations of sanctity, (if he had wanted to) as had Damasus, and had to in effect undermine the arguments that were serving his western brethren so well in their own efforts to construct of the cultural memory of the emergent church. In both cases the episcopate sought to influence their flock against their opponents through the use of the remains of the martyrs, either through embracing them – as did Damasus et al. – or through denying the cult of the martyrs as we shall see in Athanasius. However, it would seem in his *Life of Anthony* that he was not unsympathetic to the visceral appeal of the cult of the Saints, as he called the Sheepskin that he had been given by Anthony one of his favorite possessions.

³³ Athanasius, *v. Anton*, *Festal letters* 41 and 42.

³⁴ For a discussion Athanasius' employment of violence and disruption of civic proceedings as a means of solidifying his power see: Richard E. Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God: The struggle to define Christianity during the last days of Rome* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1999), 107.

Athanasius recorded the *Life of Anthony* at the request of “foreign monks” sometime in 356 and 357, and in doing so recorded the first biographical account of someone who did not suffer Martyrdom as a means of achieving sainthood. Anthony was an ascetic monk who served to some extent as the exemplar of Egyptian Monasticism in the fourth century. A prominent theme in the biography is the demonic temptations of Anthony. From Athanasius' account we learn that it was not uncommon for ascetics to pray in tombs (of martyrs or otherwise), which indeed are one of the places that Anthony prays and is confronted by Satan.

Towards the end of his account of Anthony's life, Athanasius notes that despite the desire of the faithful to have Anthony with them during his last delays, Anthony did not grant their wish. This was due to the practice of “the Egyptians” who would wrap the bodies of martyrs in linen and believed that they honored their departed by keeping the dead in their homes. Anthony did not want to receive this treatment.³⁵ One should observe here that Athanasius described a Christian practice surrounding the remains of Christian martyrs. However he clearly distanced himself and his community (the “Orthodox” community), by placing these practices, which Anthony so adamantly avoids, in the hands of “the Egyptians.” This echoes the New Testament when it used the generic term for those who opposed the early Jesus movement as “The Jews.” Boundaries were drawn between those inside the community, who buried the dead, and those outside who did not. Those others are the ones who do this, or oppose that, clearly not our co-religionists. Markus observes in *The End of Ancient Christianity*, that the monastic ideal during periods of peace, was replacing the role of the martyr in Christian thought. As

³⁵ Athanasius, *vit. Anth.* 90.

such Athanasius used someone of equal stature to the martyrs to disabuse his followers of the martyr cult.³⁶

Ultimately Anthony was buried in a secret location. However those who buried him were given a sheepskin that had been worn by Anthony. Athanasius describes those contact relics in terms that were not unlike those used by Paulinus concerning primary relics of the martyrs. Athanasius observed that looking upon the sheepskins was the same as looking upon Anthony.

This sets the stage for the first of the two *Festal* letters that will be examined here, namely *Letter 41*, which was written for Easter in 369. After criticizing the Meletians and the Arians in general, Athanasius gets very specific about particular transgressions. In order to lay claim to the traditions of the Martyrs, the Meletians unearthed the bodies of the martyrs so that they could be viewed. He then gets caught up in the moment and wanders away from his original reason for criticism of this practice (i.e. Bodies should be buried under ground), and accuses his opponents of not actually even having the bodies of martyrs.³⁷

Athanasius then goes on to provide a series of scriptural examples that speaks of Patriarchs being buried in tombs. He then asks the Meletians from whence they received the idea that it was good to exhume the bodies of the martyrs.³⁸ Here Athanasius appears to be very upset (or at least is for the sake of his rhetoric) about the practices of the Meletians regarding the remains of the saints, not necessarily because of the reverence that is being paid to the saints, but rather because of the form that reverence is taking,

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Brakke, "Outside the Places," 477.

³⁸ Ibid.

including the possibility that they are selling the relics.³⁹ He is not arguing that there is no worth in paying homage to the martyrs, that – at least from this letter – he has no problem with. But here Athanasius is critical of the transportation of the corpse of the martyr around on a stretcher or piece of wood.

His ire was so great that he doesn't even try to make a completely watertight case, as at first he claims that these bodies are not even the bodies of martyrs, exerting his authority to name and to proclaim who is and who is not a martyr. From his council that the Meletians do not have the remains of *any* martyrs in their city, Athanasius does tacitly admit that there is importance in the possession of these remains; but, these remains *must* remain buried. They cannot be movable, for the threat of movement means that the sanctity that they hold would no longer be in the possession of the episcopate.⁴⁰

The Meletians were not, as Athanasius proclaimed in this Festal letter, the inheritors of Arianism, but rather those who initially caused a disturbance because they were more strict regarding the readmission of the *lapsi* or those who had become apostates during the Decian persecutions in the beginning of the fourth century.⁴¹ Despite this ambiguity concerning their theology, the Meletians were clearly focused on the relics of the martyrs to such an extent that they may have exhumed their corpses and focused their worship around these relics. Ample evidence suggests that the behavior Athanasius

³⁹ Ibid., 477-478.

⁴⁰ For a discussion about Athanasius' sometime over reliance upon rhetoric and the way that can get in the way of even his theology see G. Christopher Stead, "Rhetorical Method in Athanasius," *Vigiliae Christianae* 30 (1976):121-37.

⁴¹ See R. Williams, "Arius and the Meletian Schism" *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, 37.1 (April 1987): 35-52, for a detailed discussion on the sources for this understanding. Williams seems to be alone in his dismissal of Epiphanius' account that the schism was based on the issue of the *lapsi*. He chooses Sozomen's rendition of the events, which quite possibly has the schism take place prior to the persecution.

desired was not the normative behavior of the majority of Egyptian Christians during his lifetime (or even after, as we have seen with Shenoute).⁴² Athanasius did present us with evidence where either there are the practices in Egypt that he lamented (or something very close)⁴³ or that he saw this particular line of argumentation as an effective means of establishing his power by painting his opponents in a negative light. Either way the treatment of the dead was important to his congregation and demonstrated Athanasius's belief in its effectiveness in the creation of the cultural memory of what it meant to be a Christian in Alexandria.

The Meletians would ultimately claim for themselves that they were the true descendants of the church which had suffered the persecutions, and had stayed true to the doctrines. They were separate from the others who wanted to let those who had abandoned their faith during the Diocletian persecutions back into the church universal. It was not until sometime later that they began to be associated with the Arian Controversy, quite possibly when they embraced Arianism not because of the theology, but because of a shared hatred of Athanasius. However even from an early period they closely associated

⁴² For a discussion on how he most likely misrepresented Anthony in his *Vita* by presenting him as much more subservient to the bishop and scripture than the image that Anthony's letters present to readers (which are more in line with the Nag Hammadi Codex I) see Lance Jenott and Elaine Pagels, "Anthony's Letters and the Nag Hammadi Codex I: Sources of Religious Conflict in Fourth-Century Egypt," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 18, n. 4 (Winter 2010): 557-589.

⁴³ Supporting material for Athanasius' claim that Anthony did not want his burial location to be public because of fear of exhumation and translation comes from Jerome who wrote ca. 390 that Hilarion likewise wanted to be buried quickly before anyone could venerate his remains. His wishes were carried out, however, his good friend Hesychius could not bear this. Hesychius convinced the locals who were guarding the grave in a garden (perhaps they wanted the local holy man to remain a local holy man, desiring the honor of his grave) and pretended he wanted to live in the garden. Over the next 10 months "at great peril to his life" he personally exhumed the corpse and stole it away to Majuma, where it was interred in a monastery. Jerome, *Vit. Hil.* 100.44-46, PL 23.

themselves with the suffering and persecution that took place during the Decian persecutions. Epiphanius reports that they called themselves the “Church of the Martyrs.”⁴⁴ From this letter, one can clearly see how they might claim such a title, if they were traveling from location to location with the portable sanctity of the remains of the saints.

In his *Festal letter 42*, from 370, Athanasius once again turns his attention to those who would inappropriately use the memories of the Martyrs, and their shrines. In this instance the problem is not that the remains are being carried around, but rather they are being used for the exorcism of demons, and some sort of divination (bordering upon necromancy). Athanasius is quick to remind them that they were not healed by the martyr, but rather by Jesus – the Savior.⁴⁵ The misconception (as it was deemed by the episcopate) that it was the martyr her/himself who was responsible for the chasing out of demons would continue to plague the cult of the saints. Here Athanasius reminds the reader that the martyr shrine has no power without the savior for whom the martyr died.

It would not be quite so bad if these ignorant fools were just going to the shrines to exorcise demons, and they simply misunderstood whence the power to exorcise came. But they were also going to ask the demons, once they have been cast out, about the future: “these people give glory to them [Demons] and ask them about what will happen.”⁴⁶ And that they bring condemnation “upon themselves by thinking that the demons are the prophets of the martyrs.”⁴⁷ This use of the martyr’s shrine is “not a

⁴⁴ Athanasius, *Adv. Haer.* 68.3.

⁴⁵ Brakke, “Outside the Places,” 479.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Christian act.”⁴⁸ Those who practice this necromantic divination, according to Athanasius, should be shunned.

Finally, Athanasius was confronted with a decidedly different set of circumstances than his European contemporaries. He was never fully in control of the geographic space of the church in Alexandria. He was also beset by an opponent who had previously (and perhaps more justly) laid claim to being the true descendants of the martyrs: the Meletians. He also had to deal with a practice which involved movable shrines, which limited his ability to control the development of both the martyr cult as well as the access to Christian sacred space. To this end he argued against the cult of the martyrs, most effectively by putting a local hero, Anthony, on literary display. While so on display Anthony speaks for Athanasius against the practice of moving corpses, and pleads for an anonymous burial. Despite his best efforts, his usage of the literary remains of the dead did little to diminish the importance of the martyr cult in Egypt, saw with Shenoute in the previous section.

Jerome

Augustine was not alone in being forced to answer the accusations of debauchery at the graves of the saints. While Augustine was answering a Meletian opponent, others had to confront Christians who denied that the cult of the saints was an appropriate form of worship for Christians. Early in the fifth century Jerome was exceedingly aggravated by the claims made by Vigilantius regarding the activities surrounding the martyr cult. Vigilantius, a presbyter, was no outsider to those who favored the cult of the martyrs. He

⁴⁸ Ibid.

was known to Severus, Paulinus, and Jerome; having acted as a messenger for the three.⁴⁹ However, as we can tell from Jerome's response to a text that is no longer extant, Vigilantius was adamantly opposed to the practices surrounding the cult of the saints. Vigilantius condemned the vigils and reverence paid to Martyrs at their tombs. Consequently, Jerome could not "turn a deaf ear to the wrongs inflicted on the apostles and martyrs."⁵⁰ Vigilantius derided the practice of contact relics:

What need is there for you not only to pay such honor, not to say adoration, to the thing, whatever it may be, which you carry about in a little vessel and worship? . . . why do you kiss and adore a bit of powder wrapped up in cloth . . . Under the cloak of religion we see what is all but a heathen ceremony introduced into the churches . . .⁵¹

To this Jerome responded that Vigilantius was a "madman," observing, as did Augustine, that there was no adoration paid to the martyrs, but rather to God through the martyrs. He was likewise disgusted that Vigilantius would refer to the relics of the Martyrs, and contact relics, as "bits of powder wrapped in cloth." Jerome then goes on to ask rhetorically if a long list of emperors and bishops had been sacrilegious when they translated relics.

⁴⁹ Jerome *Ep.* 58.11. Also Paulinus of Nola *Ep.*5. Dennis Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 220 n.132, cites relevant modern scholarship.

⁵⁰ Jerome, *Vigil.* 1, PL 23.0339: "...me cohibere non possum, et injuriam apostolorum ac martyrum surda nequeo aure transire." Trans. W.H. Fremantle, G. Lewis and W.G. Martley. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 6*. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1893).

⁵¹ Jerome, *Vigil.* 4, PL 23.0342: "Quid necesse est, te tanto honore, non solum honorare; sed etiam adorare illud nescio quid, quod in modico vasculo transferendo colis?... Quid pulverem linteamine circumdatum, adorando oscularis? Et in consequentibus: Prope ritum gentilium videmus sub praetextu religionis introductum in Ecclesiis." Trans. Fremantle.

Jerome's rebuttal of Vigilantius, while clearly written with a good deal of rage, lays out a clear understanding of the theological reasons behind the belief in the efficacy of the Martyrs. Based on Mt. 22:33 he notes that “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob: he is not the God of the dead, but of the living. If then they are alive, they are not, to use your expression, kept in honorable confinement.”⁵² And that they follow the lamb, and as such “if the lamb is present everywhere, the same must be believed respecting those who are with the Lamb.”⁵³

Jerome does acknowledge that there is a striking similarity between the practices of pagan idol worship and that which is done out of respect for the martyrs: “And because we formerly worshiped idols, does it follow that we ought not now to worship God lest we seem to pay like honor to Him and to idols? In one case respect was paid to idols, and therefore the ceremony is to be abhorred; in the other the martyrs are venerated, and the same ceremony is therefore to be allowed.” Like other pagan festivals Vigilantius accused the vigils held in the honor of the martyrs to have been hot beds of sin. This is a claim that Jerome doesn't exactly deny:

We must not, however, impute to pious men the faults and errors of youths and worthless women such as are often detected at night. It is true that, even at the Easter vigils, something of the kind usually comes to light . . . and so should we not watch at Easter-tide for fear that adulterers may satisfy their long pent-up desires, or that the wife may find an opportunity for sinning without having the

⁵² Jerome, *Vigil.* 5, PL 23.343-344: “Deus Abraham, Deus Isaac, Deus Jacob: non est Deus mortuorum, sed vivorum Si ergo vivunt, honesto juxta te carcere non clauduntur.” Trans. Fremantle.

⁵³ Jerome, *Vigil.* 6, PL 23.344: “Si Agnus ubique, ergo et hi qui cum Agno sunt, ubique esse credendi sunt.” Trans. Fremantle. This is an interesting argument, as it would seem to counter the point that he is trying to make. If the Martyrs were everywhere present with Jesus, then there would be no need for relics or contact relics.

key turned against her by her husband. The occasions which seldom recur are those which are most eagerly longed for.⁵⁴

Clearly the vigils practiced in honor of the martyrs, were occasions that were not always used for what Jerome would consider pious purposes. Yet these things also happened at Easter, and it would be absurd in Jerome's eyes to forgo celebrating Easter simply because of the actions of a few bad eggs. Likewise it would also be foolish to stop honoring the martyrs because of a few indiscretions.

Conclusion

Considering that the martyr cult in the fourth century faced opposition both from those inside and outside of Christian circles, it was far from a forgone conclusion that it would become as crucially important as it did in subsequent centuries. In every case that we have examined in this chapter issues of power and control permeated the discussion surrounding the veneration of the saints in the presence of their bodies. Athanasius of

⁵⁴ Jerome, *Vigil.* 9, PL 23.346-348: "autem et culpa juvenum vilissimarum que mulierum, qui per noctem saepe deprehenditur, non est religiosis hominibus imputandus: quia et in vigiliis Paschae tale quid fieri plerumque convincitur, et tamen paucorum culpa non praejudicat religioni; qui et absque vigiliis possunt errare vel in suis, vel in alienis domibus. Apostolorum fidem Judae proditio non destruxit. Et nostras ergo vigilias malae aliorum vigiliae non destruent: quin potius pudicitiae vigilare cogantur, qui libidini dormiunt. Quod enim semel fecisse bonum est, non potest malum esse, si frequentius fiat: aut si aliqua culpa vitanda est, non ex eo quod saepe, sed ex eo quod fit aliquando culpabile est. Non vigilemus itaque diebus Paschae, ne exspectata diu adulterorum desideria compleantur; ne occasionem peccandi uxor inveniatur, ne maritali non possit recludi clave. Ardentius appetitur quid quid est rarius." Trans. W.H. Fremantle, G. Lewis and W.G. Martley. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 6*. Ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1893).

Alexandria was concerned with who controlled the locations which housed those remains, and when his opponents simply took the remains from place to place (as he claimed they did) he became apoplectic. Through his biography of Anthony he sought to claim Anthony's authority to dissuade the veneration of the relics.

While Athanasius was fighting for control of the Church in Alexandria, Julian was struggling to bring back what he considered to be the true religions of the Empire. As such he argued against practices that he either felt were offensive or that his audience would perceive as being offensive (or most likely both), those associated with the graves of the martyrs. His interest in the martyr cult demonstrates the widespread nature of the cult as well as the fact that it was far from universally popular in the middle of the fourth century.

Despite the widespread appeal of the cult of the saints during this period, it was far from universal in the fact that the saints that were venerated were predominantly local heroes. With the exception of Constantinople which had no local martyrs, the various locations from Rome, to Milan, to Alexandria all strived to commemorate their local saints, to promote their own sites. The result of which was a fragmented Christian cultural memory throughout the empire. In the next chapter we will look at how the rise of pilgrimage within Christianity smoothed over those differences, and allowed for the creation of trans-local cultural memory at various pilgrimage sites: the tombs of the martyrs.

Chapter Five: To Accept Unification Through Travel

The yearning for the martyrs has disposed all of this inequality.¹

In the mid to late fourth century Christians began to travel to various locations which were important to their spiritual lives. Initially these locations were those associated with the life of Jesus, or other Biblical narratives. The earliest recorded Christian pilgrimage was performed by Melito of Sardis in the middle of the second century.² This instance of long distance sacred travel to the Holy Land was in order to accurately ascertain the authenticity of the books of the Hebrew Scriptures. According to Melito's account, as recorded by Eusebius, there was no desire to visit any particular place, but only to gather information about the scriptures. During the course of the later fourth century, pilgrims also began to visit shrines associated with the remains of the martyrs, for reasons other than personal edification. Their travel was due to the increased belief that the locations of the martyrs' remains could bring them closer to those who acted as intermediaries between themselves and God. Christian pilgrimage, like the Christian interest in the important dead, was not unique to Christianity. Sacred travel had significant antecedents in the Roman world among both the Jewish population and non-Christian gentiles.

¹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Mart.* 31. PG 50.661-6. John Chrysostom, "Homily on Martyrs," in *John Chrysostom*, Trans. Wendy Myer and Paul Allen (New York: Routledge, 2000), 76.

² See Eusebius *HE.* 4.26.14. See also Hunt "Were there Christian Pilgrims Before Constantine?" in *Pilgrimage Explored*, ed. J. Stopford (Woodbridge, Suffolk: York Medieval Press), 25-40.

Jewish pilgrimage often focused on those who lived outside of Jerusalem visiting the Temple in Jerusalem. According to Exodus 23.17 there was a requirement to visit Jerusalem three times per year, and at least according to Josephus this Jewish practice of pilgrimage to Jerusalem was attested to in the Common Era.³ Early Christians pushed back against place-based holiness within the New Testament, in general arguing that worship should be done in spirit rather than in a particular place.⁴ This denial of sacred space was echoed by Christians in the second and third century: “Christian writers of this period were concerned to demonstrate that Christianity in distinction to both Paganism and Judaism required neither temple nor altars nor even specific places for worship since this was to be done in the spirit.”⁵

Despite the professed desire to worship in spirit rather than in place, we have early evidence of individuals in Rome (presumably Christian) who visited the *trichia* on the Appian road dedicated to Peter and Paul.⁶ Graffiti left by the visitors to the location make reference to meals dedicated to Peter and Paul, and frequently ask for the martyred Apostles to remember those who dedicated those meals. Two examples of these inscriptions will suffice here: “Peter and Paul, Tomius Coelius made (this) refrigerium,”⁷

³ Josephus, *Ant.* 4.203.

⁴ E.g. Acts 7:47-49, Jn 4:21, and Jesus’ criticism of the Pharisees who (according to Matthew) built and beautified tombs for the prophets.

⁵ Pierre Marval, “The Earliest Phase of Christian Pilgrimage in the Near East (Before the 7th Century),” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002): 63. See also Robert L. Wilken, *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); R. A. Markus, “How on Earth Could Places Become Holy?” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 257-271.

⁶ Excavated under S. Sebastiano. Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 251ff., discusses what he considers to be the 13 most useful of the 222 inscriptions discovered at this site. See also Eastman, *Paul the Martyr*, 72ff.

⁷ “Petro et Paulo, Tomius Coelius, refrigerium Feci.” (Tav. II). Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 252.

and “Peter and Paul, come to the aid of Primitivos, a sinner.”⁸ Eastman dates these inscriptions to the latter half of the third century.⁹ In the first inscription Tomius Coelius noted that he performed a commemorative meal for Peter and Paul, and wanted that fact to be remembered. In the second Primitivos, after labeling himself a sinner, explicitly sought the aid of Peter and Paul.

It is unlikely that these inscriptions were made by what we might think of as pilgrims who traveled great distances (as they would eventually) to visit the cultic site of Peter and Paul. These visitors probably originated from the local Roman population endeavoring to travel outside the walls of the city to this one specific location to beseech the Apostles for their aid and intervention. This is a form of pilgrimage that was present in the Roman Empire, amongst its non-Christian population. It was common for Romans to travel to various cult locations seeking healing or other forms of divine aid.¹⁰

Concerning the relationship between Christian pilgrimage and its Roman predecessors Jas Elsner and Ian Rutherford observe that “since almost every observable practice of early Christian pilgrimage can be paralleled by, and was surely borrowed from, pre-Christian pagan (and Jewish) practices, it is surely absurd to deny all continuity.”¹¹ It would appear that the only caveat to that continuity that Elsner and

⁸ “Petre et Paule sub venite Prim[itivo], peccatori,” (Tav. VII, #9). Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 253.

⁹ Eastman, *Paul the Martyr*, 72.

¹⁰ Jas Elsner and Ian Rutherford, introduction to *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods*, eds. Jas Elsner and Ian Rutherford (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 12-27, for a discussion of various types of pilgrimages made in the Graeco-Roman context.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

Rutherford profess is the Christian pilgrimage to the remains of the saints, which they describe as “a radical Christian innovation by comparison with Antique activity.”¹²

I am attempting, perhaps, to walk the fine line between a simple continuity and a radical departure from the past. While there was no Roman practice of traveling to worship at the relics of the important dead, there was both a Roman practice of pilgrimage, as well as a familial aspect of travel to the graves of their important dead at specific times of the year in order to share a ritualistic meal. The Christian practice of revering the local saints and traveling to worship at their tombs is in no way a radical departure, but at the same time it is not a simple continuation of the previous practice. Likewise long distance travel was performed by the Roman antecedents of the Christian fourth century, for various reasons (e.g. healing, initiation, to visit sites of battles, “sacred tourism”).¹³ Many of these practices were common around the tombs of the saints, as we shall see, especially in our discussion of Augustine and Prudentius below.

Often when pilgrimage is examined in the context of the Church in the late fourth century the discussion is focused around the desire of the faithful to travel to the “places where Christ was physically present.”¹⁴ This is such a preoccupation of modern scholarship that often when people discuss Gregory of Nyssa’s cautioning against visiting Jerusalem they take it to refer to a cautioning against pilgrimage of any sort.¹⁵ This, of

¹² Ibid., 29.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 49.14. PL 61: “ut loca, in quibus corporaliter praesens fuit Christus.” Trans. P. G. Walsh, *Letters of St. Paulinus of Nola* (New York: Newman Press, 1967)273.

¹⁵ Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 2, also referred to as “On Pilgrimages.” For a discussion of various interpretations of Gregory of Nyssa’s stance on pilgrimage in this work see Wes

course, is far from what Gregory argued in this letter. Rather he was concerned not with theological issues surrounding the problematic idea that any one location could be more sacred than another, as was Origen.¹⁶ Gregory's primary concern was that pilgrimage to Palestine is unnecessary, and more importantly dangerous. Not only might there be physical temptations through the interaction of men and women who must of necessity travel together (apparently women were unable to mount a horse on their own), but Jerusalem itself was home to various unsavory activities including rascality, adultery, theft, idolatry, poisoning, quarrelling, and murder. Gregory remarks that, after visiting the holy land himself, the local spaces are far holier than those in other lands.

It is easy to come away from this letter with the impression that Gregory is against pilgrimage in its entirety. This is simply not the case, Gregory is in favor of pilgrimage; he even invites other bishops to partake in travel for sacred purposes. For Gregory and his brother Basil, the focus of sacred travel should not be Jerusalem, but the shrine of the martyr.¹⁷ Christian pilgrimage may have been initially focused on Palestine, but increasingly toward the end of the fourth century pilgrimage became aimed towards the matrix of sacred locations centered on the remains of the important Christian dead.

This chapter will explore the way that Christian pilgrimage, as it became focused around the tombs of the saints, created a degree of uniformity in the veneration that had

Williams, *Pilgrimage and Narrative in the French Renaissance: The Undiscovered Country* (New York: Oxford, 1998), 94ff.

¹⁶ Origen, *Contra Celsom* 7.44, Although Gregory does rhetorically ask if the Holy Spirit might be concentrated in Jerusalem, but would then be unable to extend elsewhere.

¹⁷ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Ep.* 122 on invitations sent to bishops to attend martyr festivals in Cappadocia. In general on Gregory of Nyssa and Basil's attitude to the martyr cult and pilgrimage see Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony, *Encountering the Sacred: The Debate on Christian Pilgrimage in Late Antiquity* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 34 ff. on the number of pilgrimages both bishops made to various saints festivals.

escaped the more deliberate intentions of the episcopate as described in earlier chapters. Christianity, especially in the East as well as North Africa, was focused around the local martyrs and veneration at their local shrines. Despite the work of the various bishops that we discussed in chapter three there was still a significant degree of localization surrounding the martyr cult towards the end of the fourth century. The pilgrim, through his or her desire to visit the sacred locations of far off lands (and even visit the shrines and festivals of neighboring cities) eased those local differences. In most of the pilgrim narratives that I discuss in this chapter we will see instances of the pilgrim being instructed as to how to venerate the various martyrs at their shrines, instructions that the pilgrim then relates to their readers, implying that those instructions should be replicated in their own practice. These pilgrims would then entreat their readers to join them in the veneration of these martyrs, and would also have frequently taken contact relics home with them from their travels.¹⁸ Pilgrimage and the subsequent iteration of the pilgrims' accounts then were responsible for taking what were once specifically local cultic activities, and spreading them throughout Christendom, thereby creating a uniformity of the cultural memory that was centered on those sacred sites: the tombs of the martyrs.

Not all of these sites of memory were created for martyrs, or even Christians; several Patriarchs and heroes from the Hebrew Scriptures were smoothly incorporated into Christian shrines that were then visited by Christians during their pilgrimages to the Holy Land.¹⁹ The Christian reception of the burial locations of the important dead was as

¹⁸ Pilgrim flasks often contained oils that had been passed through the tombs of the martyrs, and were believed to have contained the same efficacy as the relics within the tomb.

¹⁹ Some of these sites may predate the Christian interest in visiting the graves of the important dead, others were discovered through miraculous means afterwards.

widespread and divergent as the intentions of those who attempted to harness the power of those locations and their importance. The late fourth and early fifth century saw no consensus in the way that the cult of the dead was celebrated (or rejected) at the location of internment. However, through the process of pilgrimage, the local and widely divergent practice regarding the commemoration of the important dead became an empire-wide phenomenon.²⁰ Pilgrims ultimately were responsible for the breakdown of the local divisions between cultic shrines and practices. They would create a degree of uniformity through their devotions to the martyrs that may have ultimately been impossible through the decrees and protests of the episcopate. Pilgrims crossed geographical boundaries to experience what Peter Brown refers to as the *preaesentia* of the relics.²¹ They desired to visit as many shrines and churches as they could as they sought their *telos* (initially the Holy Land, but eventually it would become the saints' shrines themselves). The new group of pilgrims brought a degree of uniformity to the local practices that had not been seen in Christianity previously.

To each shrine pilgrims visited they brought their own expectations of what practices were appropriate and then would have had those expectations altered by the practices that were acceptable at that location. Each visit to a shrine was drawn upon the previous experiences at martyr shrines, and at the same time a foreshadowing of

²⁰ As discussed in the section on Augustine: He favored more universally popular, and European, martyrs to the local martyrs in an attempt to move beyond such localization. He may have also been working against the Donatist approach to martyrs, which was heavily focused on local martyrs. We see the opposing point of view in Maximus, Bishop of Turin, who focuses on the veneration especially of the *local* martyr (Sermon 12.1-2).

²¹ Peter Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 93. although it may also be appropriate to use Walter Benjamin's notion of the "aura" of the martyr's corpse. See Walter Benjamin "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 217-252.

subsequent experiences. Each repetition altered both the experience of the pilgrim as well as the experiences of those who controlled the shrine. I submit that this repetition and alteration is present at the formation of a language of Christian pilgrimage.

Christian pilgrims developed their own language of pilgrimage, not only in the way that they wrote about their travels, but also through the way that they interacted with and at the martyr's shrines. Not every experience used the same individual "words" from this new language; however they all eventually drew upon a common lexicon, a lexicon that was shaped as much by the lay pilgrim as it was by episcopal control. This would ultimately become the *lingua franca* by which differing Christian communities from vastly divergent regions of the Mediterranean world would use to communicate with each other when they visited the archives of the cultural memory: the shrines of the martyrs.

When she visited the shrines in Milan, Augustine's mother thought that it was perfectly acceptable to bring with her watered down wine, as she had been accustomed to in Northern Africa. However, when she arrived at the martyr's tomb, jar in hand, she discovered that Ambrose had prohibited that practice.²² Being a pious woman, she submitted to Ambrose's decree and stopped. If she had returned to her home in North Africa, she would have brought back the practice of abstinence at the tombs of the martyrs, unfortunately she died en route. Each other pilgrim would have left similar traces of their own practices behind at the tombs that they visited. They would then have been responsible for both spreading the intentionality of the actors described in the preceding chapters, while at the same time subverting those same men in other areas of the empire.

²² Augustine, *Conf.* 6.2.

The travelers themselves, in their new capacity as pilgrims, were the actors who helped to spread an empire-wide Christian cultural memory surrounding the tombs of the important dead. They entered into a new category within Christianity that had been largely absent previously. Through their pilgrimage they would now identify with other pilgrims, share a common identity with this trans-local group over and above their own local circumstances. Victor Turner observes the following regarding the social situation of pilgrims:

Pilgrims cease to be members of a perduring *system* of social relations (family, lineage, village, neighborhood, town, state) and become members of a transient class of initiands and pilgrims, moving *per agros*, through fields or lands . . . Their relations with others are, at any rate at first, no longer those of interconnectedness but of similarity: no longer do they occupy social positions in a hierarchical or segmentary structure of localized status roles; now they are assigned to a class of anonymous novices or plainly and uniformly garbed pilgrims, all torn or self-torn from their familiar systemic environment.²³

Furthermore in, “Christian modes of liminality there are notions that initiands and pilgrims are simultaneously undergoing the death of social structure and regeneration in *comunitas*, social anti-structure.”²⁴ Pilgrims created a social anti-structure that would allow them to travel, experience, and subtly alter the practices associated with the tombs

²³ Victor Turner, *Process, Performance and Pilgrimage: A comparative Symbology* (New Delhi: Naurang Rai, 1979), 122. Turner’s attempt at a systematic and comprehensive approach to Pilgrimage has been the object of a considerable amount of criticism, an overview of which can be found in John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow eds. *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (University of Illinois, 2000), 1-5. I do not intend to speak for the applicability of this theory for the entirety of pilgrimage studies indeed Jas Elsner and Ian Rutherford eds., *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christianity: Seeing the Gods* (New York: Oxford, 2005), 2-3, observed that the terms “pilgrim” and “pilgrimage” themselves can be problematic, as they often require a pro(or retro)jection of the idea based on a Christian understanding onto non-Christian cultures). However for the practice that developed towards the end of the fourth century and early into the fifth century this description is quite accurate, especially within Christian circles.

²⁴ Turner, *Process*, 126.

of the saints. As pilgrims, set apart from their previous communities, they now interacted with other pilgrims who were also part of the same *comunitas*. Men mingled with women, poor mingled with rich, urban and rural boundaries did not matter. In their status as pilgrims, they were responsible for creating the cult of the saints as a uniform phenomenon in a way that bishops and emperors had been unable to earlier in the century, and consequently establishing, or further cementing, the martyr's tomb as the site of Christian cultural memory. This is not to say that they turned every shrine, or church that contained relics, into a homogeneous carbon copy of every other shrine. Rather pilgrims, as we shall see below, learned the appropriate actions and practices at the various shrines they visited, and communicated these to other members of their local communities who could not travel with them, and to people at the subsequent shrines that they visited. Pilgrims did not want exactly the same experience at each shrine, other than the ability (perhaps) to glorify the God of each of the martyrs. However, they did want to have an experience that was recognizable, given reasonable variations appropriate to the localities that they visited. They accomplished this through their community of pilgrims, refreshing and altering that memory every time they visited the shrine of a saint. The cultural memory spread as the community that shared it became larger and more geographically disparate.

The number of early Christian pilgrim autobiographical narratives is quite small. Five pilgrims will be examined in this chapter. The anonymous Boudreaux Pilgrim and the travel narrative of Egeria written some twenty years later, are the earliest autobiographical pilgrimage narratives and afford a view into the development of the importance of the martyr cult. I will also examine a narrative that is included in a sermon

by Augustine which was read aloud to Augustine's congregation by a certain Paul. This leaflet briefly describes the travels that Paul and his sister took as they searched for miraculous healing at various shrines to the first Christian martyr, Stephen.²⁵ Jerome's description of Paula's travels from Rome to Bethlehem is not autobiographical, however, it also makes note of the locations that she visited, and in one instance the shocking sights that she witnessed at the tombs of the saints.²⁶

In addition to these four, I have included Prudentius among the ranks of late fourth-century pilgrims. Prudentius, is best known for his devotional poetry, and not often considered to have been a pilgrim in the same sense that these others were: he did not visit the Holy Land. However, Prudentius did travel significantly within Europe and several of his hymns to the martyrs express his own desire to visit these sacred locations. Even if Prudentius had other reasons for his travels (which he opted not to share with his readers) he was clearly interested in and devoted to the shrines of the saints. He took his place amongst those (native and foreign born) at their altars. His attention to detail allows the modern reader to see not only how one individual pilgrim received the shrines, but also how other Christians worshiped at these sites.

There are also accounts of others who made pilgrimages in addition to those listed above. Eusebius noted that Constantine traveled to a martyr shrine in the hopes of receiving healing prior to his death, and Basil observed that people from Tarsus and

²⁵ Augustine, *Serm.* 324.

²⁶ Jerome, *Ep.* 108. Jerome does pen a letter with Paula inviting, urging, Paula's friends to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and also discusses Jerusalem when he writes to Paulinus of Nola urging him *not* to make such a pilgrimage, *Ep.* 46 and 58 respectively. From these we can get a glimpse of how he viewed pilgrimage: ambiguously. Or perhaps, Jerome viewed pilgrimage as something that was suitable for women, but not for serious men like Paulinus.

Seleucia traveled back and forth from their respective towns, in order to revere Paul and Thecla respectively.²⁷ Gaudentius also was on a pilgrimage prior to his being raised to the rank of bishop in Brescia, and was forced to return from Jerusalem by other western bishops including Ambrose.²⁸ While his desire may have been to visit the holy land, he returned from his journey with relics of John the Baptist ashes from the Forty Martyrs.

Pilgrimage as Unifier

For men of which nations do not send pilgrims to the holy places?²⁹

Traditionally, the emergent church did not hold one place to be more sacred than another.³⁰ All of creation had been the gift from God, as Acts states: “the God who made the world and everything in it, being the Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in shrines made by man.”³¹ Without a clear locus of the sacred, the idea of Christian pilgrimage would have made no sense, as by its very nature pilgrims had to go to the specific place in order to practice some aspect of their religion that was specifically tied to that location. Consequently, it was only once specific locations became important that there arose an itinerant group that desired to make the arduous journey to visit those locations. The cult of the martyrs, as it was located precisely around their remains, and at their tombs, became one of the earliest locations that people desired to visit.

²⁷ Eusebius, *v. C.*; Basil, *v. Thecl.* 4.29. See also Bitton-Ashkelony, *Encountering*, 34-35.

²⁸ Gaudentius, *Sermon*, 16.

²⁹ Jerome, *Ep.* 108.3, PL 22.0879: “Cujus enim gentis homines ad sancta loca non veniunt?” trans. mine.

³⁰ For a discussion on the advent of sacred space in Christianity see especially R.A. Marcus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge University Press, 1991); “How on Earth Could Places Become Sacred,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2, no. 3 (1994): 257-71.

³¹ Acts 17.24.

Pilgrimage as a concept is an ambiguous term. The early Christian pilgrimages that I discuss below have been seen as either a radically new phenomenon, or a continuation of previous Greco-Roman practices. Elsner and Rutherford caution scholars of early Christian pilgrimage that:

In the move from numerous polytheisms to Christianity – a context that combined profound change with certain fundamental continuities in religion – the denial of the term pilgrimage (over-) emphasizes the difference (and hence change), while its employment (over-) emphasizes similarity and hence continuity.³²

Each stance is tied up with other more contemporary debates surrounding the practices of the church at this period. Despite their previous cautioning against drawing sharp boundaries between Christian practice and previous Roman practice, Elsner and Rutherford eventually do observe that the practice of Christian *relic* pilgrimage was, “a radical Christian innovation by comparison with antique activity.”³³ They argue that it was not that the idea of pilgrimage was a radically new idea, but rather that the long distance traveled to the remains of the important dead was something that had no clear Roman antecedents. I submit instead, in the light of the discussion in chapter one about the Church taking over several key features concerning the care and commemoration of the dead, that Christian pilgrimage to the shrines of the important dead continued practices that had been carried out previously, only on a much smaller scale.

In the early decades of the fourth century, there was a significant rise in the importance of elaborate church structures, thanks to the efforts of Constantine and his successors and subsequent bishops. The structures in Rome, Constantinople, and

³² Jas Elsner and Ian Rutherford (eds.) *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods* (New York: Oxford, 2005), 2-3. See 7 n. 26 and 27 for an exhaustive list of scholars who have seen Christian pilgrimage as either radically new or essentially a continuation of previous pagan practice.

³³ *Ibid.*, 29.

Jerusalem were resplendent and excited wonder in all who observed them.³⁴ The rise in impressive buildings and the importance placed upon them has caused many to observe that the place-based holiness (which is ultimately necessary for the advent of pilgrimage) was itself a development of the fourth century. In his essay concerning the creation of a Christian holy space, R.A. Markus observes that: “What began in the 320s and 330s was something quite new.”³⁵ In making a broad statement like this, he is forgetting that nothing like the building projects enacted under Constantine could have been possible prior to the presence of a Christian Emperor, and the wealth that nearly instantly infused the Church. Of course, there were no previous Christian buildings and structures like those that Constantine funded. That does not mean, however, as Joan Taylor observes that: “there is no evidence at all that Jewish-Christians, or any other kind of Christians, venerated sites as sacred before the beginning of the fourth century.”³⁶ Simply because the buildings became more impressive, and more visible, did not mean that there was no veneration of the graves, both of the common Christian dead (by their immediate family) and of the important Christian dead (by the community which claimed that particular Christian, and by extension used the familial trope to tie themselves together around the graves of the dead).³⁷

Not every author from the fourth century believed that there was anything to be gained from an understanding of place-based sanctity. Eusebius argues against it while

³⁴ Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.26 explicitly observes this regarding those in Jerusalem.

³⁵ Markus, “How on Earth,” 260.

³⁶ Joan E. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places: The Myth of Jewish-Christian Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 295.

³⁷ Or as Francois Decret draws the distinction: The cult of the dead was a Family practice; the cult of the martyrs was a Church practice. He only needs to add one further step in his analysis: The Church was the new family. Decret, *Early Christianity in North Africa*, trans. Edward Smither (Eugene OR: Cascade, 2009 [orig. 1996]), 95.

shortly thereafter Cyril of Jerusalem seemed especially fond of the idea that items of Biblical importance had taken place in Jerusalem.³⁸ Gregory of Nyssa argued against the notion that pilgrimage to any particular place could bring one closer to God,³⁹ Athanasius of Alexandria argued against the importance of the church structures, and the ownership of the relics that they may have contained. Moreover, as we have discussed previously, Augustine's views on the importance of the place of the relics seems to have shifted significantly over the last few years of his life. I would like to argue here that these disagreements had less to do with theological arguments than they did with the politics of power and control. Those who controlled the locations that might have been considered Holy, either through their association with Biblical events, or through the control of the bodies of the important dead, deemed the location of these items to have been important, and indeed something that created prestige within the larger Christian population (even before the advent of wide-scale pilgrimages) while those who did not command such areas were much less inclined to view them as important. If you argued that there was no importance of place, then it did not matter that you did not control that place. If you argued that there was an importance in the fact that Rome held the remains of Peter and Paul then it was good to be the Bishop of Rome, or more likely vice-versa.

One aspect that neither Brown nor Markus discusses is the way in which the act of pilgrimage subverted this movement towards public practice, while at the same time increasing the universality of the Christianization of space. Pilgrimage is an inherently individual form of devotion, especially pilgrimages that crossed great distances. They

³⁸ See Jan Willem Drijvers, *Cyril of Jerusalem: Bishop and City* (New York: Brill, 2004), 154.

³⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Ep. 2*.

would only cross these great distances, alone or in small groups, if there were a significantly noteworthy *telos*. Yet despite the solitary existence of the pilgrim, the act of pilgrimage was one that created solidarity and cross-cultural identity between those lonely individuals. Philo of Alexandria had noted in the first century that pilgrimage, for Jews, “was a social rite that united the people and created in them a sense of duty.”⁴⁰ Likewise Philo’s contemporary (and estranged) countryman Josephus observed that pilgrimage fostered “mutual affection” among Jews, “for it is good that they should not be ignorant of each other since they are members of the same race and share the same pursuits.”⁴¹

Brown’s *Cult of the Saints* does discuss the rise of an elite group of pilgrims, but discusses its importance in the light of the transmission (and associated authenticity) of relics, which brought about concord within the church.⁴² According to Brown, this established itself in the place of structures of patronage, as well as the *preaesentia* that was part of the ceremonial reception that accompanied an imperial visit. The translation of relics did more than cement power structures through patronage; it also created varied *foci* for pilgrimage, both short and long distance. These *foci* were an important place for Christians, both pilgrim and local, to interact with each other, further cementing the catholic nature of the church.

Early Pilgrim Narratives, the Bordeaux Pilgrim and Paula

⁴⁰ Philo of Alexandria *Spec.* 1.66-70. Trans. Robert Louis Wilken, *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 36.

⁴¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 4.206. Trans. Wilken, *The Land Called Holy*, 105.

⁴² Brown, *Cult*, 96-99.

After 313 Constantine's mother, Helen, worked in and around Jerusalem, to find the True Cross and build a basilica at the site of the Passion of Jesus.⁴³ With Helen's work at preserving, or re-discovering, important locations within the holy land, there was a sharp rise in Christians who likewise were interested in visiting these sites for themselves, in a way that was non-existent in the years prior to Constantine.

We see that the first pilgrim narratives began to appear in the middle decades of the fourth century. It takes the form of a detailed discussion of the distances from one point of interest to another and the number of horse changes made by the Bordeaux Pilgrim. In the *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, the anonymous traveler describes his journey to the Holy Land.⁴⁴ The first section describes little of what he saw on his journey, whereas the section dealing with the area in and around Jerusalem is quite detailed. As we will see below Egeria visits and prays (see below) at the churches that had been built over the sepulchers of the important dead, the Bordeaux Pilgrim barely mentions them. Graves and tombs only show up four times in his itinerary, and not one of them belongs to a Christian.⁴⁵ In general, all of the named tombs belonged to important figures from the Hebrew Scriptures: Joseph,⁴⁶ Isaiah and Hezekiah (both of whose monuments were of "wondrous beauty"), and one single tomb (which appears to be underground or in a cave) near Bethlehem (and the church of the Nativity) that contained the remains of Ezekiel,

⁴³ On Helen's work see David Hunt, *Holy land pilgrimage in the later Roman Empire AD 312-460* (New York: Oxford, 1992); and Kenneth G. Holum, "Hadrian and Saint Helena: Imperial travel and the Origins of Christian Pilgrimage," in *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*, ed. R. Ousterhout (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 66-81.

⁴⁴ Typically thought to have been written c. 330.

⁴⁵ To be fair one tomb is anonymous, it is only given as a reference to the location that the sycamore tree that Zacchaeus climbed to see Jesus.

⁴⁶ *Itinerarium Burgalense*, 588.

Asaph, Job, Jesse, David, and Solomon.⁴⁷ At no point is the Pilgrim interested in locations of martyrdom or the graves of the martyrs.

In the fifty years between the Bordeaux Pilgrim and Egeria, a significant shift transpired in both the geography of the Holy Land, as well the interest expressed by the pilgrims themselves. While the Bordeaux Pilgrim observed the beautiful basilica built by Constantine commemorating the birthplace of Jesus, he mentioned none of the structures that Egeria observed over the graves of the martyrs or those over important figures from the Hebrew Scriptures. Either they had not been built yet, or they just were not important enough for the Bordeaux Pilgrim to name. If it was a combination of the two, this clearly demonstrates the drastic rise in the importance of the gravesites of the important dead as the locus of the holy for Christianity, as well as the development of the cultural memory that produced them. All of which in turn produced the feelings expressed by Egeria.

Paula, who later became well known through her oversight of a monastery and convent in Bethlehem, and her support of Jerome, also made the arduous journey from Rome to the Holy Land. After the death of Paula, Jerome wrote a letter (in 404) to console Eustochium, her daughter.⁴⁸ In this letter, he provides a very specific account of Paula's travels from Rome to Bethlehem. These travels predated her time in Bethlehem by 20 years,⁴⁹ which means that they took place sometime around 384-5, possibly preceding Egeria by about 10 years. After Paula arrived in Bethlehem, she herself became

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 598: “et habet in ispa cripta ad latus deorsum descendentibus hebraeis litteris scriptum nomina supra scripta.” Here one must note that while Egeria has Job's tomb complete with a church, this must have been a different location as there was no mention of the other illustrious inhabitants of the grave in Egeria, and in her description the name was found on a stone, not on the “walls of the grave as you go down into the vault itself.”

⁴⁸ Jerome, *Ep.* 108.

⁴⁹ Jerome, *Ep.* 108.35.

a marvel of the Holy Land that others would meet on their own pilgrimages.⁵⁰ This is an important observation by Jerome as he notes that Paula would have been one consistent source of contact for pilgrims visiting Bethlehem from Europe. Paula would have shaped the experience of their pilgrimage, the experience that they took home with them.

The majority of the places that Jerome listed focused around scriptural events. The few tombs that Paula did visit were primarily Jewish and exclusively those related to the Bible. She visited Rachel's tomb,⁵¹ and the city of Hebron which is also called the city of The Four Men believed to be buried there (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and either Adam or Caleb), she saw the tomb of Lazarus (the one he left or the one in which he was later entombed is unclear— although from the focus on biblical events one should assume the former). In Samaria, Paula visited the tombs of the twelve patriarchs, the tombs of Elisha and Obadiah, as well as that of John the Baptist. This last tomb was the most notable:

Here she was filled with terror by the marvels she beheld; for she saw demons screaming under different tortures before the tombs of the saints, and men howling like wolves, baying like dogs, roaring like lions, hissing like serpents and bellowing like bulls. They twisted their heads and bent them back until they touched the ground; women too were suspended head downward and their clothes did not fall off.⁵²

⁵⁰ Jerome, *Ep.* 108.3.

⁵¹ Jerome, *Ep.* 108.10.

⁵² Jerome, *Ep.* 108.13, PL 22.889: “Ubi multis intremuit consternata mirabilibus: namque cernebat variis daemones rugire cruciatibus, et ante sepulcra sanctorum ululare homines more luporum, vocibus latrare canum, fremere leonum, sibilare serpentum, mugire taurorum. Alios rotare caput, et post tergum terram vertice tangere, suspensisque pede feminis, vestes non defluere in faciem.” Trans. by W.H. Fremantle, G. Lewis and W.G. Martley. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, Vol. 6. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1893.) The reference to the tomb of John the Baptist is unclear, as according to Rufinus, that tomb had been desecrated during the reign of Julian and the relics moved to Alexandria for safekeeping under the watchful eyes of Athanasius. What tomb then did Paula see in 385?

This excitement caused Paula to pity the poor souls and prayed that Jesus have mercy on them, before she continued on her journey. Of the tombs that she visits, it is important to note that the only one wherein extraordinary events were recorded to have taken place was this tomb. We have here evidence of the importance not just of John's tomb, but that Christian tombs, especially those who died a violent death had more power present than the tombs of the patriarchs.⁵³

Egeria

Paula was not the only woman who traveled east on a pilgrimage. It was to the newly Holy Land (for Christians) that a solitary female pilgrim set off on her pilgrimage most likely sometime in the late fourth century.⁵⁴ Egeria recounted the importance of the location of the sacred in the life of a fourth-century Christian woman, one who underwent hardship in order to *physically* visit the sites of this holiness. Burial locations were a significant percentage of the locations that Egeria visited during her pilgrimage. She also provided early evidence of a thriving group of other pilgrims. These pilgrims often went to the newly constructed Christian churches located over the graves of important figures in the Jewish Scriptures. Most often, these graves had previously been unknown, with their presence being made known through dreams. As a result, few if any previously

⁵³ This may well be a problematic description of John the Baptist as "Christian." However as he was one of the first to declare the special relationship of Jesus with God, and as his bones were considered relics, akin to those of the martyrs, the argument is made that in the eyes of those visiting his tomb he is within the fold of Christianity to a degree that the heroes from the Hebrew Scriptures were not.

⁵⁴ See George E. Gingras's introduction to his translation of the text in on the problems of dating this narrative. Gingras, *Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage* (New York: Newman, 1970), 12 -14. He concludes that it was written no earlier than 394 and no later than 404. All translations for Egeria, unless otherwise noted, are taken from this text.

Jewish sites were re-purposed for the Christian faithful. These Jewish figures also took some of the characteristics of the important Christian dead vis-a-vis the locations of the remains in the structure commemorating them. They were physically central, either in the place of the pulpit (as in the case of the Memorial Tomb of Moses on the top of Mt. Nebo,⁵⁵ or under the altar as she takes time to describe in detail in Job's tomb:

Then they had thoroughly uncovered it [a large stone] they found carved on its cover the name JOB. So at once they built this church, in Job's honor. They did not remove the stone coffin with the body, but left them where the body had been found, and so arranged things that they body should rest beneath the Altar.⁵⁶

Here Egeria described the centrality of the remains of the dead as the focus of the church building, but I know of no other example where the dead under the altar is *not* Christian. Egeria related that this was a location that many other pilgrim monks had told her about, demonstrating both that it was noteworthy and that there were enough other pilgrims at this point for there to be a discussion of the sites of interest.

Of course, the majority of the gravesites Egeria visited were those of the important Christian dead, housing anything from fragments of relics to the entire corpse, to the *martyria* in Heroopolis that contained a “great many cells,”⁵⁷ to the *martyrium* of the Apostle Thomas, which she notes contains his entire body.⁵⁸ Egeria specifically notes

⁵⁵ Egeria, 12.1.

⁵⁶ Egeria, 16.6: “Qui fodientes in eo loco, qui ostensus fuerat, invenerunt speluncam, quam sequentes fuerunt forsitan per passus centum, quo ad subito fodientibus illis adparuit lapis: quem lapidem cum perdisco peruisent, invenerunt sculptum in coperculo ipsius Iob. Cui Iob ad tunc in eo loco facta est ista ecclesia, quam videtis, ita tamen, ut lapis cum corpore non moveretur in alio loco, sed ibi, ubi inventum fuerat corpus, positum esset, et ut corpus subter altarium iaceret.” Latin text from: “Egeria,” *The Latin Library*, Accessed: 6/15/2012, <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/egeria.html>. Trans. Gingras, *Egeria*, 74.

⁵⁷ Egeria, 7.7.

⁵⁸ Egeria, 17.2. Which, of course, makes one wonder whose relics were being venerated everywhere else people claimed to have his relics.

that the “entire body” was buried here, which seems to be an important point for her. She does not tell us if that was because the entire body contains more sanctity, more power, or simply that by this time it was odd to have the whole body of an important figure from the early period of the church all together in one place. This site is also a well-known pilgrimage location (perhaps due to the inclusion of the whole body), demonstrated by her observation that no one who takes a pilgrimage to Jerusalem misses the chance to go to Edessa where Thomas is interred.⁵⁹

Egeria provides a very brief description of the church located at the tomb, which was “large and beautiful, built in the new way, just right in fact to be a house of God,”⁶⁰ and containing many other *martyria*. Egeria also visited several other sites of interest, including the martyrium of Thecla, who was the only female martyr mentioned specifically in her travels.⁶¹ Egeria seemed to have strong feelings surrounding the martyrium of Thecla, as she spent a bit of time discussing her stint there. It is impossible to know if these strong feelings were because Thecla was a woman, or if her martyrdom was a popular tale in European Christianity.⁶²

One disappointing aspect of Egeria's account is that she did not spend significant time discussing how she felt about the way in which the martyr graves were presented,

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 19.3: “Ecclesia autem, ibi quae est, ingens et valde pulchra et nova dispositione, ut vere digna est esse domus Dei.” Gingras, *Egeria*, 77.

⁶¹ It is possible that she visited other shrines that included the graves of women martyrs, however they do not receive special attention or are discussed in passages of the travels that are no longer extant.

⁶² Tertullian makes reference to it in *Bapt.* 17, as well as Hippolytus in his *Com. Dan.* 3.29. See Jeremy W. Barrier, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla: a critical introduction and commentary* (Germany: Mohr, 2009), 15. For a description of the cult of Thecla see Stephen J. Davis, *The Cult of Saint Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford 2001).

with the exception of the “new style” of the church built around Thomas' grave, nor did she discuss how she felt about being in the presence of the remains of the important dead. However, it was clear from her account that these were important locations that she and as many other Christian pilgrims felt the need to visit in person.

The interest that Egeria demonstrated, as well as that of the other pilgrims that she encountered, for the tombs of the martyrs was apparently a novel addition to late fourth-century pilgrimage. Neither Paula nor the Bordeaux pilgrim expressed the same intensity in their desire to visit these sites. Gaudentius' motivations to visit the Holy Land in 387 were unclear; however, one thing that we do know is that he returned with relics from that journey. If we look at the activities surrounding the development of the cult of the martyrs in Europe, we can see that several important events took place in the brief time between Paula's pilgrimage and that of Egeria. The trans-local martyr relics began to blossom, Ambrose received relics, and then happily sent out the relics of those martyrs that he discovered. There was a growing rise in the European imagination concerning the importance of the relics of the martyrs, as locations of special sanctity for all Christians, not simply the local community. Basil (who was not unique in this practice) traveled to other cities on their local saint's festivals, and likewise invited other bishops to visit Caesarea on similar occasions.⁶³ With this episcopal practice, I submit, the local martyr's fame would also have spread. Likewise once Christian pilgrimage began, those pilgrims

⁶³ For a discussion of Basil and his brother Gregory of Nyssa's frequent pilgrimages to local saint's festivals see Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony, *Encountering the Sacred: The Debate on Christian Pilgrimage in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 33. As well as the occasionally petulant letters Basil sent to those who complained about not getting invited, or did not come when they were invited. See also Y. Courtonne, *Un Témoin du IVe Siècle oriental: Saint Basile en son temps d'après sa correspondance* (Paris, 1973), 356-359.

would have conveyed their experiences (Paula may have shared her harrowing time at John the Baptist's tomb) which would only have made the fame of that tomb spread. As we shall see below Prudentius not only wrote poems concerning his experiences at the tombs of the martyrs, but also claims to have gone home singing their praises. All of which would have been an enticement for other travelers to seek out the tombs of the martyrs.

Consequently, when pilgrims began to visit the Holy Land (which was tremendously famous due to its geographic centrality in the scriptures) they desired to visit not only the already familiar biblical locations, but also the locations of the martyr's tombs. Once the desire to visit tombs, had been initiated, it would not have been difficult for those, whom Shenoute would have been disgusted with, to remember (or invent) long forgotten sepulchers to other important dead.

Healing Pilgrimage

The pilgrims that we have discussed thus far traveled out of a sense of personal piety or at least curiosity. There was another set of pilgrims who made their travels for significantly different and more individually pressing reasons: those that traveled for healing as the martyr's tombs. There was graffiti evidence of thanksgiving for services rendered at the shrine of Peter and Paul in Rome at the Apian way as early as the second century.⁶⁴ We also know, because he addressed those who were looking for Peter and Paul that Damasus was aware of people making pilgrimages to that particular location.

⁶⁴ David Eastman, *Paul the Martyr: The Cult of the Apostle in the Latin West* (Atlanta: SBL, 2011), 72.

However, it is unclear from whence those who etched the walls originated. We also know that Constantine prior to his death in 337 visited hot baths when he felt ill. After that proved ineffective, he traveled to the city of his mother, where he prayed in the church dedicated to the martyrs there.⁶⁵ Unfortunately, for Constantine these prayers and supplications did not provide the desired relief from his remedies. However, the very fact that Constantine traveled to visit the remains of martyrs with the hope of receiving healing, demonstrated an early Christian pilgrimage which looked for physical healing, in much the same way that had been common in previous non-Christian gentile practices.

Most of the time that we have heard of miraculous healings associated with the remains of the martyrs, they came spontaneously (e.g. the healing of the blind man, when Ambrose translated the relics of Protasius and Gervais, who had the good luck to be standing nearby).⁶⁶ Other accounts spoke of the members of local congregations being the beneficiaries of miraculous healings. However there were, like Constantine, pilgrims who traveled to shrines solely for the sake of praying to the martyr to intercede on their behalf, and ease their physical suffering. One such pair of pilgrims eventually made their way to the new shrine of Stephen situated in Hippo; their story was recounted by Augustine in sermons 320-324.⁶⁷ On Easter day in 426 Augustine began what would be a four-part sermon aimed at demonstrating the miraculous cures performed by the martyr Stephen, whose relics had recently been discovered. Some of the dust from those remains

⁶⁵ Eusebius, *v. C.* IV.61.

⁶⁶ Ambrose, *Ep.* 22.2.

⁶⁷ Augustine, *Serm.* 320-324. *Sermon* 322 contains a first person narrative from Paul, who was reading the leaflet that he wrote out loud at the behest of Augustine. The account is also repeated in *Civ.* XXII, 8, 22. It is in the *City of God* that Augustine names the brother and sister: Paul and Palladia. In his retelling of the tale in *City of God* Augustine leaves out the claim made by Paul that Augustine appeared to him in visions several times.

was eventually sent to Hippo, where Augustine constructed a martyr shrine. The aim of the sermon was to show his congregation a certain man who had been healed by the relics of Stephen, and to let him read the leaflet (Augustine was in the practice of preparing leaflets which described miracles) out loud, demonstrating his health. On Easter Tuesday, the pilgrim, Paul, read aloud the account of the tragedies that beset him and his sister, after being cursed by their mother. All of their siblings began to tremble uncontrollably. In order to become cured the siblings all went looking for remedies at the shrines of various martyrs. While visiting another shrine of Stephen in the Italian city of Ancona, where many miracles had been performed, Paul had a vision. In this vision Augustine appeared to him and told him to make his way to Hippo and that he would be healed in three months.

On Easter Sunday, as others who were present could see, while I was holding the railings as I prayed with loud weeping, I suddenly fell down. I did lose consciousness, and did not know where I had been. After a little while I got up, and experienced none of that trembling in my body.⁶⁸

In the midst of Augustine's sermon following the reading of the leaflet, Augustine was interrupted by crowds shouting that Palladia had also been cured.

We know from both the leaflet, as well as the remaining sermon (324) that these siblings had been traveling for quite some time, from shrine to shrine, hoping to be cured. Augustine reminded his audience that they could have been cured at Ancona, or in the African city of Uzalis, both of which had shrines to Stephen. According to Augustine they

⁶⁸ Augustine, *Serm.* 322, PL 38.1444: “Die autem dominico Paschae, sicut alii qui praesentes erant, viderunt, dum orans cum magno fletu cancellos teneo, subito cecidi. Alienatus autem a sensu, ubi fuerim nescio. Post paululum assurrexi, et illum tremorem in corpore meo non inveni.” Trans. Edmund Hill, and John E. Rotelle, *Augustine, Sermons on the Saints* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: New City Press, 1994).

were not healed at either of these other shrines so that they could be healed in Hippo, which would strengthen the church there. Their healing was a gift to the city of Hippo as much as it was to Paul and Palladia.

However, for our purposes we have an account of two pilgrims who traveled from city to city, from shrine to shrine, looking for a cure for their disease. There was no reason to think that they did not travel further afield than these three named cities in their quest for health. They would have taken their experiences with them concerning what was appropriate to do at the martyr shrines,⁶⁹ as well as their expectations of what to expect from the shrines. It was not noteworthy for Augustine in 426 that there would be roving pilgrims going from shrine to shrine, hoping to be healed.

Prudentius

Little is known about the life of Prudentius other than his devotion to the cult of the martyrs, as evidenced by his collection of poems: *Liber Peristephanon*. Unlike other poetic devotees of the cult (e.g. Paulinus), Prudentius was not in control of a cult center. I have listed him amongst the ranks of late fourth-century pilgrims as he recounted his travels and veneration at the tombs of the martyrs. However, the sophistication of his accounts were far beyond the simple travel narratives of Egeria or the Boudreaux Pilgrim. *Peristephanon* (typically translated as “*Crowns of Martyrdom*”) was a collection of 14 poems that he wrote in devotion to various martyrs. There were three explicitly

⁶⁹ We shall see below that their form of worship at the shrine was nearly identical to what Prudentius described at the tomb of Hippolytus in Rome.

pilgrimage related poems: 9, 11, and 12.⁷⁰ In addition to the pilgrimage narratives, Prudentius provided us with a firsthand perspective of the behaviors of those visiting these shrines for their own personal piety.⁷¹ These poems contained details about the site of the shrine of the martyrs, as well as tales of the occasions when the martyrs won their “crowns of martyrdom.” Prudentius was decidedly a creature of the latter half of the fourth century, in the same vein as Paulinus of Nola.⁷² Both men had successful, lucrative, careers before giving all of that up when they became Christian, and subsequently becoming dedicated to the veneration of the martyrs. Prudentius was born in 348, in Spain, and served as a governmental official under Theodosius, before leaving his position and devoting himself to God. Most of his poetry seems to have been written after 390.⁷³ Like Damasus some 50 years prior, Prudentius incorporated the tales of Christian martyrs into traditional Latin poetic forms.

Jill Ross observes regarding his writing that: “Death and writing become one in the transformation of the bodies of the martyrs into texts inscribed with bloody letters.”⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Anne-Marie Palmer, *Prudentius on the Martyrs* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1989), 110-11, groups these thus, however Michael Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs: The Liber Peristephanon of Prudentius* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 132 ff. provides significantly more material.

⁷¹ *Pe.* 2.53-36 describes people throwing themselves on the ground, asking the martyr for help, for the saints’ intercession. *Pe.* 9.95-98 depicts Prudentius himself being instructed to pray in such a way, and that the saint will hear all of the prayers and “fulfills those he finds acceptable.” Tran. Prudentius, “Crowns of Martyrdom” in *Prudentius vol. II*, 1953, trans. H. J. Thomson, LCL. (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press), 229.

⁷² For a more detailed discussion of his life see: Michael Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult*.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 3 n. 7 for a discussion of the dating of his poems. While there is some dispute regarding the 390 date (and that some poems may have predated it) the exact dates are unimportant for the discussion at hand.

⁷⁴ Jill Ross, “Dynamic Writing and Martyrs Bodies in Prudentius’ Peristephanon,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 325.

This creates, she argues, “a specifically Christian conception of writing.”⁷⁵ While her argument is interesting, it seems a bit hasty to place the genesis of such writing in the hands of Prudentius alone, when other previous Christians were engaged in similar endeavors.⁷⁶ Writers from Tertullian to Eusebius were engaged with the hagiography of the martyr’s passion, while authors such as Paulinus and Damasus were engaged in the utilization of Latin poetic styles in order to make their inscriptions speak to a wider audience.

These poems were widely known and referenced for several hundred years after Prudentius’ death.⁷⁷ Consequently, Prudentius had a central role in the production of the cult of the saints in subsequent generations of Christians. His poems were influential, as they contained hagiographic material that was then replicated elsewhere. For the sake of the current work, we shall view Prudentius as perhaps the perfect accumulation of the cult of the martyrs in the fourth century, and the perfect observer of several significant cult centers. He was the receiver Hippolytus’ tomb, a tomb whose intentionality can stretch back 150 years. Prudentius’ poem 11, on his experience at this shrine, allows us to see how the clearly intentional actions of two Bishops of Rome were received at a time when the tombs had become a prominent cult center. Prudentius was clearly enraptured

⁷⁵ Ibid., 328

⁷⁶ For a discussion of Prudentius’ writing style see: Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult*; Anne Marie Palmer, *Prudentius on the Martyrs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); and Martha Malamud *A poetics of Transformation: Prudentius and Classical Mythology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989). See also Marc Mastrangelo, *The Roman Self in Late Antiquity: Prudentius and the Poetics of the Soul* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2007). Although the latter does not deal explicitly with the *Liber*. They demonstrate that he relied on classical Latin styles to convey his devotion to the cult of the martyrs. Palmer observes that Prudentius was influenced by Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Lucan, and Seneca in this widely varied collection of poetry. These poems are so diverse in length and style that Palmer argues they were only collected into a single text after his death.

⁷⁷ See Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult*, 8 n. 21.

with the lives of the martyrs that he wrote about, and was not interested in the initiation of any new aspects of the cult of the saints, so far as we can tell. Yet his very interest in these shrines and subsequent poems concerning them, helped spread the fame of those martyrs that he wrote about, and consequently helped to create a modicum of homogeneity within Christian observation. While there were literary embellishments here and there (primarily with the hagiography) he did recount what he saw at the various shrines, especially in the pilgrimage poems: *Pe.* 9, 11, and 12.

Poems 9 and 12 both have Prudentius *being explicitly instructed* about the object of veneration (the martyr[s]) as well as the manner in which he was to pray. In the first of these two Prudentius visits the shrine of Cassian in Forum Cornелиi (located in northern Italy). After seeing a painting depicting the death of the martyr by the martyr's students (who killed him with their styli), Prudentius was told by the *aedituus* of the shrine the events of his crowning. At the end of the poem, that same *aedituus* instructed Prudentius how to pray and what to pray for: "Declare now any upright and worthy wish you have, any hope, any desire that burns in your heart."⁷⁸ After his prayer, Prudentius observed thankfully, "I was heard. I visited Rome and found all things issue happily. I returned home and now proclaim the praise of Cassian."⁷⁹ Not only was Prudentius influenced by the practices that he encountered at the shrine, but he also carried those practices and even the reverence for Cassian home with him. Through his poetry he encouraged others to likewise venerate the foreign martyr.

In much the same fashion poem 12 begins with Prudentius asking a Roman man

⁷⁸ *Pe.* 9.95: "suggere si quod habes iustum vel amabile votum, spes si qua tibi est, si quid intus aestuas." Thomson, *Prudentius*, 229.

⁷⁹ *Pe.* 105-6: "audior, urbem adeo, dextris successibus utor: domum revertor, Cassianum praedico." Thomson, *Prudentius*, 229.

what all of the excitement was about that he was witnessing in Rome. The reply, with a polite lack of incredulity, was that this was the day honoring the death of Peter and Paul, who according to this account were killed on the same day, one year apart. Prudentius, or rather his anonymous narrator, went on to describe the nature of their martyrdom, as well as the impressive monuments constructed for them, on either side of the Tiber. Within the poem itself, the narrator lays a very protective claim around Peter and Paul as the: “two dowers of the faith, the gift of the Father supreme, which He has given to the toga to revere.”⁸⁰ They were given by God specifically for the city of Rome to venerate, which echoed the inscription set up in the previous century by Damasus. However, the poem ended with the narrator entreating Prudentius: “It is enough for you to have learned all this at Rome; when you return home, remember to keep this day of two festivals as you see it here.”⁸¹ Prudentius was explicitly commanded to take the practices and the memory of the festival with him as he travels home.

Poem 11 is unique in that it begins with an address more appropriate for a letter than a work of poetry. Prudentius frames the poem as a correspondence with the Spanish Bishop of Calahorra, Valerian,⁸² who asked for the names of the martyrs of Rome and the inscriptions cut on their tombs. Here we saw Prudentius acting as a virtual tour guide to an important Bishop in his homeland. Despite this clear objective, Prudentius claimed to be overwhelmed by the task, and instead focused the narrative on Hippolytus, who he just “happened” to find inscribed on a tomb. He wrote that: “[i]n surveying these memorials

⁸⁰ *Pe.* 12.55-6: “ecce duas fidei summo Patre conferente dotes, urbi colendas quas dedit togatae.” Thomson, *Prudentius*, 336.

⁸¹ *Pe.* 12.64-5: “haec didicisse sat est Romae tibi: tu domum reversus diem bifestum sic colas memento.” Thomson, *Prudentius*, 336.

⁸² See Jose Madoz, “Valerian, Bishop of Calahorra,” in *Leaders of Iberian Christianity*, ed. Joseph M.F. Mirique (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1962), 157-163.

and hunting over them for any letters telling of the deeds of old, that might escape the eye, I found that Hippolytus.”⁸³

The description that follows this makes it hard to believe that Prudentius just happened to spy this one inscription; however, the idea that this was one of many in Rome is not unbelievable. Prudentius professes that he focused on Hippolytus in his depiction to Valerian due to the overwhelming number of martyrs to be found in Rome, many of whom are commemorated without name, their tombs only recording the number of martyrs buried therein.⁸⁴ “I remember finding that the remains of sixty persons were buried there under one massive stone, whose names Christ alone knows, since He has added them to the company of friends.”⁸⁵ Prudentius then, focusing his attention on Hippolytus, recorded a history that was clearly dependent on the Damasian inscription discussed in Chapter 3.1. Prudentius, based upon his reception of the inscription left by Damasus, uncritically associated Hippolytus with the Novitian schism, who then recanted his previous position and sought, above all else, unity and wholeness within the Catholic Church as he went to his death.

The account of Hippolytus’ martyrdom that followed was an interesting amalgamation of differing traditions, possibly including the martyrdom of a Hippolytus of Portus, as well as the dismembering of Hippolytus of Greek mythology, which was torn apart by wild horses.⁸⁶ Prudentius combined these three traditions in his account of

⁸³ *Pe* 11.17-19: “Haec dum listro oculis et sicubi forte latentes, Rerum apices veterum per monumenta sequor, Invenio Hippolytum.” Thomson, *Prudentius*, 307.

⁸⁴ *Pe*. 11.10 ff.

⁸⁵ *Pe*. 11.13-16: “Sexaginta illif defossas mole sub una, Reliquias memini me didicisse hominum. Quorum solus habet conperta vocabula Christus, Utpote quos propriae iunxit amicitiae.” Thomson, *Prudentius*, 307.

⁸⁶ See Thomson, *Prudentius*, 304-5 n. “a.”

the martyrdom at the shores of the Tiber. In the midst of the death of less notable Christians, Hippolytus was presented to the judge: “While he was loudly giving these orders, an elderly man enveloped in bonds was suddenly presented before the high judgment-seat, and the young men who crowded round were crying out that he was the head of the hosts which worshiped Christ.”⁸⁷ Here we have a proclamation that Hippolytus was a leader of the church, perhaps even a bishop of Rome, which is not a tradition that is found within the Damasian inscription. Nevertheless, this is consistent with Hippolytus’ historical role as a leader within the church, if not an outright schismatic, as claimed by Damasus. Due to Hippolytus’ place of prominence within the Christian community, the Judge sought an innovative form of punishment: Being torn in two, and dragged behind wild horses “who had never known the bridle.” It is possible that there was a painting representing this scene at the cult center, as described by Prudentius, or that this was a co-mingling of sacred histories, mixing the Greek hero with the same name as that of our own protagonist.⁸⁸ However, Roberts comments that the death of Hippolytus is fitting for the figure that is presented as a member of a schismatic sect by both Damasus and Prudentius. As Hippolytus had previously sought to tear the body of the church in two, so too did his corporeal body suffer the same fate at the hands of Prudentius: “The manner of martyrdom absolves Hippolytus of the crime he had formerly committed against the Church.”⁸⁹ When the judge proclaimed, after hearing his

⁸⁷ 11.70-80: “Haec persultanti celsum subito ant tribunal, Offertur senior nexibus implicitus. Stipati circum iuvenes clamore ferebant, Ipsum Christicolis esse caput populis” Thomson, *Prudentius*, 312.

⁸⁸ E.g. Euripides, *Hippolytus*.

⁸⁹ Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult*, 146.

name for the first time: “Hippolytus let him be.”⁹⁰ The allusion was likely to the classical imagery, if he was called Hippolytus, then he should die in the same manner as Hippolytus.

Prudentius aligns himself with the Roman understanding of the saints’ remains: that they should be complete.⁹¹ As we see after the gory account regarding the dismemberment of Hippolytus, the faithful gather together all of the fresh martyr pieces: “stunned with grief, they were searching with their eyes as they went, and gathering the mangled flesh in their bosoms. One clasps the snowy head, cherishing the venerable white hair on this loving breast, while another picks up the shoulders, the severed hands, arms, elbows, knees, bare fragments of legs.”⁹²

Prudentius went on to describe the location in which they interred Hippolytus, once all of his various pieces were re-united. They laid him in a long cave, which was illuminated by shafts running up to the day light: “Still through the holes pierced in the vault many a gleam of light makes its way down to the hollow interior of the disemboweled mount.”⁹³

At the tomb of Hippolytus, Prudentius was not simply an observer, but rather came as a pilgrim to ask for Hippolytus’ help. “Whenever I bowed in prayer here, a sick man diseased in soul and body both, I gained help. My glad return, my chance to embrace you, reverend priest, my writing these words, I know that I owe to Hippolytus, to who

⁹⁰ *Pe.* 11.87: “ergo sit Hippolytus.” Thomson, *Prudentius*, 311.

⁹¹ Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult*, 16.

⁹² *Pe.* 11.135-40: “Maerore attoniti atque oculis rimantibus ibant, Inplebaptque sinus visceribus laceris. Ille caput niveum complectitur ac reverendnam, Canitiem molli confovet in germio; Hic umeros trucasque manus et brachia et ulnas, Et genua et crurum fragmina nuda legit.” Thomson, *Prudentius*, 315.

⁹³ *Pe.* 11.160: “at tamen excisi subter cava ciscera montis cerbra terebrato fornice lux penetrat.” Thomson, *Prudentius*, 317.

Christ our god has given power to grant one's request."⁹⁴

Prudentius also recounted that from dawn till dusk countless other pilgrims made their way to the altar to pay their respects. Some of these pilgrims came from Rome, but many others (like Prudentius himself) traveled over great distances. While there may have been great differences between these people, "The love of their religion masses Latins and strangers together in one general body."⁹⁵ "The company assembled in the basilica for the saint's festival embodies the new Christian *civitas*, brought together from various cities and stations in life, united by their common devotion to the saint. . ."⁹⁶ As we noted at the beginning of the chapter, this is precisely what Turner described with regard to the social changes that occurred when people engaged in pilgrimage. They became united into a new community, a community of pilgrims, which defied local stratification.

The masses that gathered from day to day pale in comparison with the multitudes that amass on the saint's festival, the Ides of August.

The majestic city disgorges her Romans in a stream; with equal ardor patricians and plebeian host are jumbled together shoulder to shoulder, for the faith banishes distinctions of birth; and equally from Alba's gates the white-robed troops deploy and pass on in long lines. Loud sounds of rejoicing rise from diverse roads leading from different places; natives of Picenum and the people of Etruria come; the fierce Samnite and the Campanian dweller in lofty Capua meet together, and men of Nola too are there, everyone in happy mood with wife and dear children and eager to get quickly on the way.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ *Pe.* 11.179: "quod laeror reditu, quod te, venerande sacerdos, conplecit licuam est, scribo quod haec eadem, Hippolyto sico me debere, Deus cui Christus posse dedit, quod quis postulet, adnuere." Thomson, *Prudentius*, 317.

⁹⁵ *Pe.* 11.191-2: "Conglobat in cuneum Latios simul ac peregrinos permixtim populos religionis amor." Thomson, *Prudentius*, 319.

⁹⁶ Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult*, 164.

⁹⁷ *Pe.* 11.199 ff.: "urbs augusta suos vomit effunditque Quirites una et patricos ambitione pari confundit plebeia phalanx umbonibus aequis discrimen procerum praecipitante fide."

The crowd grew so large that an above ground church needed to be constructed to house the masses that gathered here to honor the martyr and worship their god through him. Even with such a large church Prudentius notes that there was scarcely room for the masses. By the time that Prudentius writes this poem near the end of the fourth century or very early in the fifth, already there were large gatherings at the graves of the martyrs. What we saw here, and had previously seen with Paulinus' description of the crowds coming from Rome for Felix's birthday, were great numbers of foreigners. The presence of these foreigners was a new phenomenon.

The important dead created their own gravitational pull that drew in the closest bodies, but also now had the power to influence those from further and further away, including those who orbited their own shrines in distant lands. These pilgrims brought their own approach to worshipping the saint from their homeland. Practices which were influenced by both the popular practices of the general population as well as any direct influence that directed that worship by the episcopate.

Conclusion

Through our discussion of pilgrims and pilgrim narratives we have seen how an itinerant group of Christians would become one of the unifying forces of Christianity around the turn of the fifth century. Pilgrims entered into social group, one that was not defined by wealth, gender, age, social status or geographic location. Pilgrims were

Nec minus Albanis acies se candida portis explicat et longis ducitur ordinibus. Exultant fremitus variarum hinc inde viarum, ingigena et Picens plebs et Etrusca venit. Concurrunt Samnitis atrox, habitator et altae Campanus Capuae, iamque Nolanus adest. Quisque sua laetus cum coniuge dulcibus et com pigneribus rapidum carpere gestit iter.” Thomson, Prudentius, 319.

liminal to traditional group identities, and traveled to locations that were by law peripheral to urban centers, but also located great distances from the pilgrim's point of origin. The very nature of the feasts associated with the martyr shrine, only further cemented the degree to which pilgrims would stand outside of social stratification. Martyr feasts were known for their inclusiveness, washing away social barriers.

The earliest evidence for Christian sacred travel revealed that their primary desire was to visit locations associated with biblical stories.⁹⁸ However we have seen that the sixty years or so that separated the travels of the Bordeaux Pilgrim from the pilgrimage of Egeria were possibly the most important six decades in the development of the martyr cult in the fourth century. It should come as little surprise then that where the Bordeaux Pilgrim expressed (or at least wrote about) no interest in the burials of the martyrs, Egeria was captivated by visiting their various tombs and recounting these visits for her readers. Egeria's interest in visiting the sites of the mortal remains of the martyrs and other important dead could not have been coincidental to the rise in the use of the martyrs as a means of creating a Christian social memory that surrounded those remains. Yet, despite Egeria's initial interest in the martyr's tombs being a product of episcopal agendas, her devotion to them was personal and individual. She and the other pilgrims that she discussed meeting and sharing stories with, through their liminal role, traveled from one shrine to another. At each shrine they were influenced by different circumstances, were perhaps party to (and yet separate from) various local disputes surrounding the proper usage of martyrs. These they then carried with them to the next location, where the

⁹⁸ With the possible exception of the evidence for the cult center associated with Peter and Paul three miles outside of Rome which can be traced to the middle of the third century and which most likely only drew pilgrims from the local community.

situation was repeated, again and again. Through their anti-structural status, they also served to create a universal Christianity that smoothed over local differences, especially surrounding the martyr cult.

When Prudentius visited the shrine of Hippolytus, he was foreign from the context of the Damasian inscription in both time and city of origin. His understanding, or reception, of the shrine and practices associated with Hippolytus were far different from those that Damasus intended when he had the inscription placed at Hippolytus' tomb. The struggle for dominance and power that plagued Damasus was no longer an issue at the time of Prudentius, but the repercussions of that struggle were still on display. Prudentius then urged the Spanish church to whom he was writing to commemorate the feast day of Hippolytus on their calendar. Prudentius seems to have been writing out of personal piety, not propaganda. His community of pilgrims through their own piety managed to create uniformity through the veneration of martyr festivals that could only have been the envy of Damasus, who too sought to create a unified church at the shrines of the martyrs.

Conclusion

It is in response to the dread of oblivion that graveyards are created and grave stones inscribed. Who can honestly say he or she has never wondered whether anyone will visit his or her grave?⁹⁹

I began this work discussing Mark Taylor's book, *Grave Matters*; a book that would have been meaningless had it not been for the significance of the graves in our society, especially those of the important dead. More than half of the work was made up of the photographs of the final resting places of his important dead, those philosophers and artists that he claimed as his own. The photographs allowed the reader to become an armchair pilgrim to the sites of Taylor's saints. He was not bound to those whose graves he presents by bonds of blood but rather through intellectual and ascetic commonalities. Taylor's book, unintentionally I assume, neatly encompassed the shifting attitudes towards the remembrance of the important dead that took place in the early centuries of the Common Era, beginning with the shift from exclusively familial care of the dead to a more communal structure found within *collegia*, and ending with pilgrimage as a means of unifying a larger family. For Taylor that larger family was composed of his readers, for our work it was the Catholic Church.

Like Taylor, both Constantine and Damasus were the direct heirs of pre-Christian Roman practices associated with the dead. Voluntary organizations sought to supplement the family's traditional role in collectively commemorating the dead, as well as celebrating the important dead. The Christian community also began to complement that familial role through the burial of those members of their community whose family could

⁹⁹ Mark C. Taylor, *Grave Matters* (London: Realtion, 2002), 36.

not afford to properly bury them. Burial by the Christian community may not have been universal, as those families who could afford it still sought to set themselves apart from the collective group, yet there was a commonality of remembrance for the dead of the Christian community, the new family in Christ. Likewise the important dead of that family, the martyrs, were celebrated and the days of their death (seen as their birth by that community) were collectively remembered, especially by the local community of which they had been a part. This was an extension of the previously traditional festivals held in honor of the dead in the Mediterranean world, mixed to some degree with the traditional cultic activities associated with the gods (e.g. supplication and offerings which outstripped typical mortuary practices). The graves of the important dead were the locations where a local collective memory was created, reinforced, and perpetuated.

Constantine used his building endeavors to position himself as the patron of the Church. The basilicas that he constructed for the church were not random buildings erected wherever it was convenient. They were intentionally built on locations that already had meaning within the Christian community, locations that Christians already visited, dined at, and sought aide from the divine through the physical association with the graves of the important dead. The basilicas were erected over the graves of the important dead, the locations of collective memory. Through his construction of structures that traditionally had been associated with imperial power, Constantine could cement the association of his own authority with that of the Church. Finally through his own chosen place of interment he identified himself to be as important as the Apostles themselves, and consequently equated the power of the Apostles with that of the Emperor. In the course of moving the bodies of Luke, Andrew, and Timothy, Constantine

both granted Constantinople martyrs and initiated the movement of relics (in this case whole corpses) to locations with which they had no connection in their lifetimes.

Slightly later, in Rome, Damasus was struggling to solidify his power as Bishop. After a bloody and contentious fight to gain the episcopal seat he was ingenious in his usage of the cultural memory associated with the martyrs of Rome as a means of solidifying his place as the head of the Roman church. Damasus, through his usage of ornate epitaphs, presented an image of a united church, easing the tensions of decades of infighting between Christians while he continued to purge the last vestiges of those schismatics from his city. He intentionally brought the schismatic Hippolytus back into the embrace of the church through a reversal of Hippolytus' disgust of Callistus and his successors. The only place that this change of heart is recorded is on the epitaph that Damasus penned for his tomb. The image at the seat of Christian cultural memory was unambiguously one of concord. The other ubiquitous feature of these inscriptions was the inclusion of the role of Damasus himself in their placement. Damasus also sought to enhance the prestige of Rome by claiming martyrs as her own, even against other cities that might have had a stronger claim. Damasus places the Roman stamp upon Peter and Paul (who also were once on less than friendly terms, but were now unified in Rome) claiming them successfully forever for Rome. Through his intentional incorporation of some figures over others, and emphasis of unity over discord, Damasus crafted an image of the past which only served to solidify his position in his present.

Constantine and Damasus utilized the martyr cult to consolidate their power very effectively, which laid the foundation for others to build upon, and for those others to add their own innovations. Ambrose of Milan quickly incorporated the Constantinian Basilica

structure in his city, and was eager to incorporate martyr remains into those structures. He may well have received relics from Constantinople, which he then integrated into his “Roman” basilica. Even with the presence of these remains, there was a feeling that Milan was secondary to other locations, as Milan had no local martyrs for veneration. Luckily Ambrose soon discovered the remains of long forgotten martyrs: Protasius and Gervais. After quickly translating their bodies into his own basilica, Ambrose sowed the seed of his new martyrs to other bishops and congregations who likewise had no relics for the consecration of their own buildings. Ambrose’s unprecedented generosity in this regard had the direct consequence that his own fame, and that of his city, would be connected with that of the martyrs’ remains wherever those seeds took root and bloomed. This was exactly the opposite of the practices of his contemporaries in Rome, who jealously guarded the physical remains of their martyrs. The dispersal of the relics from Milan also continued the dissolution of the barriers of the local martyr cults. Ambrose’s generosity created martyrs who were embraced outside of Milan, which had previously only been the purview of biblical heroes, not local martyrs.

Through his control of the newly-minted cult of Protasius and Gervais (as well as the others that he discovered), Ambrose was unique in his ability to determine what practices should and could be performed around their shrine. Unlike other cult centers associated with martyrs, there were *no* pre-existing practices in Milan that Ambrose had to suppress, vis-à-vis this martyr cult. Ambrose could control the cult from its inception, giving him considerable influence over its development. To this end Ambrose sought to limit what he felt were pagan practices associated with veneration paid to the graves, primarily feasting and drinking. The problem of drunkenness at the martyr festivals was

prevalent throughout Europe, North Africa and the East, and would be for decades if not longer. While Ambrose, Augustine, Shenoute, and many Christian critics were censorious of the feast day practices associated with martyr festivals, Paulinus of Nola was explicitly tolerant. For Paulinus, allowing some degree of acceptance of the practices of his countrymen to continue within the embrace of the church was preferable to the alienation of those same countrymen through the prohibition of those practices. That is to say, he allowed some indulgence in wine and feasting, rather than alienating those who would otherwise not have attended the saints' day festivities. While this was Paulinus' explanation for his tolerance, one has to wonder if he would have been as tolerant if there had been any contenders for control of his congregation, much less had there been issues of doctrinal purity at stake. Unlike peaceful circumstances found in Nola, Ambrose struggled with Arians in Milan, and Augustine likewise contended with Donatists in North Africa. It cannot be coincidence that those who sought to control the martyr cult were explicitly engaged in problems with schismatics.

Augustine, early in his life, was at best ambivalent towards that martyr cult. He did not necessarily denigrate or prohibit it, but he did seek to downplay its importance. One reason for this was that his Donatist neighbors had long ago referred to themselves as the "Church of the Martyrs" and vigorously promoted the cult of the local martyrs. However, once he received the relics of Stephen and incorporated them into his church, Augustine began to affectionately promote the martyr cult. Like Damasus he did not promote every martyr equally. There were many North African martyrs that Augustine could have chosen to emphasize. He could have promoted them in the way that Ambrose promoted the martyrs which he discovered, which would have increased the prestige of

Hippo. Augustine did not follow the lead of Ambrose. Instead when Augustine talked of those Christians who had died for their faith in North Africa, he was expounding on why the martyrs of the Donatists should not be considered real martyrs. Those figures Augustine sought to promote were universal martyrs, those who transcended the local cult: Stephen, Protasius and Gervais, Peter, and Paul. These figures united Christendom rather than dividing it into a collection of local churches which honored local martyrs. Of course he too could not vanquish the appeal for the local martyr, which we saw in his lamentation that many more of his congregation attended festivals for the important local dead, and the church was nearly empty for the feast for Peter and Paul.

Of course there had previously been a religious practice that held a degree of uniformity throughout the empire: the Emperor cult and the traditional gods, including a strong aversion to corpses. While the tombs of the dead were sites of cultural memory in non-Christian gentile practice, their acceptance in no way meant that the direction Christians took those practices was warmly accepted by everyone. The emperor Julian “the Apostate” pushed back against the development of the Christian cult when he felt that it infringed on the sensibilities of his subjects, or the functioning of Roman cult sites. Christians were also critical of the martyr cult in the fourth century. Some Christians felt that the excesses of the all night vigils soiled the whole endeavor. Others saw the martyr cult as a tool of their opponents in their struggle for control, and because of its association with their opponents they condemned it. Athanasius of Alexandria was of that latter category; he argued against any need for place-based sanctity. He was also critical of what he claimed to have been a Meletian practice of placing martyr remains on stretchers, which could then be moved from location to location. His opponents embraced

the martyr cult. Consequently Athanasius rejected it, even projecting that refutation into the mouth of Anthony.

As the fourth century drew to a close the newly emergent group of Christian pilgrims began to focus more and more attention on visiting the shrines of the martyrs. Much as the martyr shrines transcended time, linking the past of Christianity with its future, so too did the pilgrims transcend space. Monuments existed both in the present, yet always pointed back to the past, and predicted a future where they would be viewed again. As monuments transcended time, Pilgrims transcended place and status. Pilgrims operated in a special liminality, they were in a location yet not of that location surpassing geographic boundaries. They existed in a world where their status before they became pilgrims was superseded by their status as pilgrims.

Pilgrims initially focused on the holy land, to walk where Jesus walked, to see his places of birth and death. Yet during the late fourth century, the locations of the remains of the dead became more and more important in pilgrimage accounts. Bishops sought to promote their own local cults, drawing pilgrims to experience the physicality of those locations. Some would travel seeking healing, while others simply desired to venerate the remains. As pilgrimage networks developed, perhaps most importantly through the hospitality of Paula in the Holy Land, pilgrims shared with each other the locations that they had visited. When a location became more and more popular, more pilgrims visited it. They would then return home and tell tales about their experiences, and promote the cults that had the greatest effect on them. Pilgrims did not have to travel great distances to continue this dissolution of the local nature of the martyr cult, nor did they always have to travel east. When Prudentius visited Rome, he in turn became an advocate for the

inclusion of the feast day of Hippolytus into the ecclesiastical calendar of his readers. Rome became a tremendously important pilgrimage location, and yet Romans too traveled to Nola to venerate Felix under the tutelage of Paulinus.

Pilgrimage created a network of Christian collective memory. Bishops and emperors had attempted to craft and control the cultural memory of their communities through their use of the remains of the important dead. Frequently those same actors sought to fight schisms within their community or present an image of unified church through the choice of martyr or the epitaphs they erected. Others sought to project the prestige of their city through the dispersal to other cities of relics that they controlled. All of these practices clearly influenced the promotion of the cult of the saints, and directed it as it moved from a familial practice of the commemoration of the dead, to the local family in Christ commemorating their local heroes, the martyrs. However it was only with the advent of trans-local pilgrimages that a uniform Christian collective memory could be produced surrounding the martyr's grave.

The meaning associated with the graves of the saints could never be determined unidirectionally. Meaning and the power to influence were the product of a dialogue. Had there not been a popular cultural emphasis on the importance of proper burial, the Christian community may not have embraced it as one their primary blessings in the third century. Christian leaders from Constantine to Shenoute sought to mold and craft the meaning of Christianity, and one of the battle grounds for that was the shrine of the important dead. Yet, if these locations carried no importance of their own it would have been inconceivable that these Christian leaders would either have effected any change, or have even tried to influence the population through the martyrs' graves. No matter how

hard the Christian leaders sought to influence their populations with the message associated with the martyr's remains, they ultimately were not in control of the dissemination of that message. It was the pilgrims, influenced to be sure by their leaders, who played a pivotal role in the reception of the message, and shared that message as they saw fit, promoting that which they felt was important, and ignoring that which they did not.

The current work has attempted to explain the uses of the locations of the remains of the martyrs as a means of projecting a cultural memory. The observant reader will have noticed that rarely did I explicitly describe that cultural memory, other than to say that there was some association with the suffering of the martyr, and the importance of steadfast faith even unto death. This is because the cultural memory that was created and projected at each of the martyr shrines would have been unique to the martyr venerated and the community which venerated that particular martyr. It has been my intention here to examine *how* those remains were used, what the struggles were that were fought over the dead, and ultimately how that struggle was resolved. This work has laid a foundation for further study into particular martyr veneration through, perhaps, a hermeneutics of power and influence. The structure established here will assist those further endeavors as there remains significant work that can be done on the specific cults. One of those areas would be the initial translation of relics from Constantinople to Milan, the translation which initiated Ambrose's own endeavors. A more detailed discussion of the construction of sacred space, or the usage of ritual surrounding the martyr's graves would also be fruitful. Finally, little work has been done on the hesitancy for the martyrs and holy men

themselves to be commemorated. Ignatius, Anthony, and Hilarion explicitly wanted to avoid such a fate for their corpses, and their wishes were summarily ignored.

Through my discussion of the martyr cult in the west, and presenting it roughly chronologically I have filled a void in most scholarship on the subject. Too often issues of the early fifth century are conflated and presented alongside items from the early fourth with no discussion of the evolution of the martyr cult that transpired in the intervening decades. Aside from the theoretical substructure and the chronological format of the work I have demonstrated a number of original conclusions in material that has been examined previously. These include the discussion on Constantine's originality, not of the martyr cult as a whole, but in his movement of the bodies (or desire for them to be moved) of the apostles to a location that was neither associated with their lives nor their death. Also, while it has been observed elsewhere that Constantine raised himself to be the equal to the Apostles through their inclusion in his mausoleum, no one has noted that this also raised the Apostles to the level of the Emperor. Shenoute is frequently considered to have been an opponent of the martyr cult as a whole. Through my analysis of his works, I have demonstrated that he was critical of its misuse, but did not oppose it outright. Finally the most important contribution that this work makes to scholarship on the rise of the martyr cult is its emphasis on the role that pilgrims, and pilgrimage, played in its development, and the way that they subverted the local bishops while unifying the practices associated with the martyr cult.

Mark Taylor's book comes after nearly two thousand years of the elevation of the status of the graves of the important dead. The cult of the saints ascended in prominence only after the early fifth century. Even if the dissemination of relics is a thing of the past,

we continue to be captivated and drawn to the presence of the final resting places of our important dead. That is the draw of Taylor's book: we have become pilgrims, creating and subverting a unifying meaning through the dominion of the dead.

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Abbreviations

CSEL. – Corpus Scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum.
 PL – Patrologia Latina (Migne)
 PG – Patrologia Graeca (Migne)
 LCL. – Loeb Classical Library

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