COMMUNITIES OF THE BLESSED: THE ORIGINS AND
DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL CHURCHES IN NORTHERN ITALY,
C. 250-381 C. E.

Mark Humphries

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St. Andrews

1997

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Communities of the Blessed
The origins and development of regional churches in northern Italy, c. 250-381 C.E.

MARK HUMPHRIES

Department of Ancient History

A thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D
at the University of St. Andrews
3 September 1996
Frontispiece. Tombstone with baptismal scene. Museo Paleocristiano, Aquileia.

‘vincuntur tenebrae notcis lumine devotionis’
Chromatius of Aquileia, Sermo 16.3
Abstract

This thesis argues that the origins and evolution of Christian communities in northern Italy between c. 250 and 381 are comprehensible only within the region’s social environment. Whereas previous studies of early Christianity in Italy have sought to explain its origins in terms of modern diocesan structures, this thesis shows that the evidence for this view is untrustworthy and that a new methodology is needed to explain the rise of the church. To this end, the thesis describes the ‘north Italian human environment’, which consists not just of the physical landscape, but of the social networks within it. This environment allows an understanding of why Christian communities had developed in some places and not in others by c. 300.

The development of the church continued to be influenced by this human environment in the fourth century. Christian diffusion remained a partial and variable phenomenon. In the cities Christians found themselves confronted by the adherents of other religions, notably Judaism. Thus, in the fourth century, Christians did not yet dominate the communities in which they lived. Moreover, the active participation in ecclesiastical affairs of emperors after Constantine—particularly the intervention of Constantius II in Italy during the 350s—added a new dimension to the human environment. Such interventions defined how north Italian Christianity came into contact with ecclesiastical and theological affairs throughout the empire. In sum, the history of early Christianity in northern Italy is circumscribed by the social environment within which it developed. This thesis argues that for northern Italy—indeed for the rest of the Mediterranean—a proper understanding of Christian growth can only come from an appreciation of the particular social context of the region within which it occurred.
Declarations

(i) I, Mark Humphries, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 98,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Date: \(3.: i.: 1996\)  Signature of candidate: 

(ii) I was admitted as a research student in October 1993 and as a candidate for the degree of Ph.D in October 1994: the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St. Andrews between 1993 and 1996.

Date: \(3.: i.: 1996\)  Signature of candidate: 

(iii) I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate to the degree of Ph.D in the University of St. Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

Date: \(2.: i.: 1996\)  Signature of supervisor: 

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### Abbreviations

For journals, I have usually used the conventions of *L'Année Philologique*. For primary sources, see below pp. 311-13. Note also the use of the following:

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<tr>
<td>AASS</td>
<td>Acta Sanctorum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANRW</td>
<td>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AqN</td>
<td>Aquileia Nostra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BHL</td>
<td>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BS</td>
<td>Bibliotheca Sanctorum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCL</td>
<td>Corpus Christianorum, series latina.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cessi, Origo</td>
<td>R. Cessi (ed.), <em>Origo Civitatum Italae seu Venetiaram</em> (Rome, 1933).</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIL</td>
<td>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSEL</td>
<td>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DACL</td>
<td>Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHGE</td>
<td>Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAC</td>
<td>Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique, Fondation Hardt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILCV</td>
<td>Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILS</td>
<td><em>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>IMU</td>
<td><em>Italia medioevale e umanistica.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>MGH, <em>SS</em></td>
<td><em>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Sscriptores.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>NSc</td>
<td><em>Notizie degli Scavi</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td><em>Patrologia Latina.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLS</td>
<td><em>Patrologia Latina Supplementum.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIS</td>
<td><em>Rerum Italicarum Scriptores.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>SChr</td>
<td><em>Sources Chrétiennes.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Verona</td>
<td><em>Verona e il suo territorio</em> (Verona, 1960).</td>
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Preface

The theme of this study is how human activity is embedded in its social and cultural context. It is only right, therefore, that I should begin by defining my own context. While this is a social history of religion, I write neither as a committed Christian, nor as a sceptical atheist, but as one sympathetic to all varieties of religious belief. At the same time, however, I write as one whose formative years were spent in a country where Christian churches exercised considerable social leverage, and where religious hatred extended to murderous extremes. It seems incredible to me that this should not have influenced the present study, especially where matters of tolerance or intolerance are at issue.

More immediately, this study is the product of three happy years of research in St Andrews, during which I have incurred many debts of gratitude. I owe most to Dr Jill Harries, my supervisor, who has guided and supported all stages of this project with exemplary skill and sympathy, giving me freedom to explore my own interests. Others among the Ancient History staff have also been supportive: Christopher Smith, Jon Coulston and especially Tom Harrison. I was fortunate to conduct some of my research and field work in Italy and Slovenia, and I am grateful to all those who facilitated my work there. The David Russell Trust in St Andrews supported my travel with a generous grant. For a month I was a guest at the Istituto di Filologia Classica at the University of Urbino: I should like to thank the Director, Prof. Roberto Pretagostini for his hospitality, and Dr Adrian Gratwick (St Andrews) and Prof.ssa Maria Rosaria Falivene (Urbino) for their assistance in arranging this visit. While I was there, Prof.ssa Maria Cesa kindly took time to discuss my work with me. In Udine the staff of the university library provided a warm welcome even though I arrived unannounced, and did much to find obscure Aquileian material for me. A productive period of study at the University of Bari was facilitated by
Dott.ssa Liana Lomiento (Urbino), Prof. Gennaro Lomiento (Director of the Istituto di Studi classici e cristiani, Bari) and Prof. Aldo Corcella (who, with his wife Sotera, gallantly provided accommodation). Towards the end of my research I spent six months teaching Ancient History at the University of Leicester: I am grateful to my colleagues there, especially Graham Shipley, for their encouragement.

Other debts are more personal. In Italy I have been fortunate to have many generous friends who supported my research one way or another: special mention must be made of Angela Cremaschi (Bergamo and Milan), Marisa Depascale (Bari), Piero Giulianini (Grado and Trieste), Guisy Gnoni (Urbino) and Carla Sari (Udine). I could never have finished this thesis without the support of many friends in St Andrews: Andrea Bradley, Angela Poulter and, above all, Catherine Parker, did much to make the period of writing up a happy one. Over the years, the wisest counsel came from friends who now, unfortunately, live elsewhere: Gavin Cameron, Heather Ann Thompson, Shaun Tougher and, above all, Michael and Mary Whitby. Finally, none of this would have been possible without the love, patience and understanding of my parents. Neither has ever had leanings towards academe, but I have learned most from them.

Mark Humphries
St Andrews
3 September 1996

MARTYROLOGIUM HIERONYMIANUM, III Non. Sept.

‘in Aquileia dedicatio basilicae et ingressio reliquiarum sanctorum Andreae apostoli, Lucae, Iohannis et Eufemiae’
Introduction

Regional history and religious history

This is a study of the origins and development of Christianity in northern Italy down to the third quarter of the fourth century. It aims to liberate that history from the conventional models of ecclesiastical narrative, by demonstrating the unreliability of many of the traditional sources and by constructing a new methodology which locates the development of the Church in the context of what will be termed the north Italian human environment. In other words, it is an attempt to understand the growth of Christianity in the social and cultural context of a region of the Roman empire. Before beginning my investigation, it is necessary to offer some explanation and justification for the subjects discussed and the methodologies adopted.

AUTHORITY, HISTORY AND THE STUDY OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

On 2 February 1351, the faithful of the patriarchal see of Aquileia entered the cathedral in Udine at the end of their procession to celebrate the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This procession concluded with a recitation of the names of all the previous patriarchs of the Aquileian see, beginning with St Mark the Evangelist and concluding with Bertrand de Saint-Geniés, who had been murdered seven months earlier.¹ Thus the history of the see was presented as a

¹ The nature of the ceremony is evident from the rubric at the beginning of the patriarchal list: 'In die purificationis beate Marie virginis post processionum recitantur nomina patriarcharum' (MGH, SS 13: 367). The MS of the list is written in various hands, but the first hand concludes with Bertrand’s name; the names of his successors have been added by different scribes (op.cit., 368). For Bertrand, see G. Mollat, 'Bertrand de Saint-Geniés', DHGE 8 (1935), 1075-78. That the ceremonies took place at Udine rather than Aquileia or Cividale, the other major centres of the patriarchate, is impossible to prove, but it seems most likely bearing in mind the artistic
seamless succession, stretching back to the time of the apostles. To the participants in this fourteenth century procession, the need to research the early history of Christianity in northern Italy would be superfluous. That early history was self-evident in the living traditions which surrounded them.  

It may seem absurd to invoke medieval opinion as a justification for this study, but views which we may term ‘medieval’ have had an enduring influence on the traditional historiography of north Italian Christianity. Traditions prevalent in the middle ages have been collected and handed down to the modern era, albeit in a rather more refined form. An important medium was the monumental *Italia Sacra* by the Cistercian historian Ferdinando Ughelli (1596-1670), published in Rome between 1644 and 1662. This was a seminal work, and its impact was felt outside Italy. Moreover, it has had a defining influence on Italian ecclesiastical historiography: subsequent enterprises such as Fedele Savio’s *Gli antichi vescovi d’Italia dalle origini al 1300* (1899-1932) and Francesco Lanzoni’s *Le origini delle diocesi antiche d’Italia* (1923) proceed along similar lines taken by Ughelli’s masterpiece, even though both ostensibly seek to replace it. This similarity is methodological: like Ughelli, both Savio and Lanzoni sought to put the early ecclesiastical history of Italy on a firm footing by rationalising divergent traditions;  

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2 The Aquileians were not alone in this active commemoration of the past: cf. chapter 2 below.  
3 Despite its faults, I have, for reasons of accessibility, used the second edition prepared by Niccolò Coleti (Venice, 1717-22). For a critique of the relationship between the two editions, see S. Ditchfield, *Liturgy, Sanctity and History in Tridentine Italy* (1995), 331-2.  
5 For their views of Ughelli’s work, see Savio, *Piemonte*, v-xiii; Lanzoni, *Diocesi*, 61-64.  
6 For Ughelli’s aims, note especially his letter of 3 February 1625 to fellow scholar Cesare Becelli, in which he bemoans the scale of his labours in trying to distinguish the truth between imprecise and contradictory writings (quoted in Ditchfield, *Liturgy, Sanctity and History*, 338).
also like him, they were obsessed by episcopal successions, defined within the geographical parameters of modern—or in Ughelli’s case, early modern—diocesan boundaries.

This reflects the constraints imposed on the shape of the *Italia Sacra* by Ughelli’s methods. Ensconced at Rome, where he had access to fine archival resources, Ughelli nevertheless relied on contributions by others for the history of other bishoprics. This not only explains the uneven quality of the work, but also highlights its polemical context. Such local ecclesiastical histories were, as Cardinal Carlo Borromeo of Milan (1538-84) noted, essential for the good governance of the church, which depended on the maintenance of tradition. Borromeo’s interests were intensely political: a dedicated agent of Tridentine reform in his own archdiocese, he belonged to the same intellectual milieu as the effective founder of modern ecclesiastical historiography, Cesare Baronio (1538-1607), whose *Annales ecclesiastici*, a chronological compendium of church history, began to appear in 1588. Baronius was not just a scholar, but a dedicated defender of papal supremacy in the face of challenges issued by Protestantism in the sixteenth century. His *Annales* were designed to demonstrate the primacy of the Roman church by emphasising Peter’s preeminence among the apostles and the superior legitimacy of his successors as bishops of Rome. Ughelli’s interests were the same: his work began with ‘Rome, that first of all churches, the mother of sane dogma, the pinnacle of Apostolic honour, the most noble seat of the Supreme Pontiff.’ Even so,

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8 The scale of this dependence is evident from the lengthy list of his correspondents; see G. Morelli, ‘Monumenta Ferdinandi Ughelli: Barb. lat. 3204-3249’, *Miscellanea Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae* 4 (Studi e Testi 338; 1990), esp. 262-80.


11 *Italia sacra* 1 (1717), 1 A.
Ughelli’s appeal has proved to be wider: his reliance on local historians has meant that his work, or that of his correspondents, has underpinned much of the campanilismo (local patriotism) which has characterised Italian historiography, including that of an ecclesiastical variety.\textsuperscript{12}

This traditional approach has been challenged by searching analysis of the source materials—mainly literary—upon which it depends, as well as the marshalling of other types of evidence—primarily archaeology and epigraphy—to add detail to our picture of early Christian life. That chronicles of episcopal successions were later concoctions has been obvious since Duchesne subjected the Gallic lists to criticism,\textsuperscript{13} while his extension of his methodology to Italian material, in the form of his edition of the Roman Liber Pontificalis (1886-92) has shown that the manipulation of the ecclesiastical past is a broad phenomenon. In recent years, such critical analysis has been applied to north Italian episcopal lists and cults by Jean-Charles Picard with dazzling results (see chapter 3) which effectively undermined those sources used by Ughelli and his successors.

Scholarship has moved on too from the political or theological mentality which determined the shape of much analysis of early Christian writings. The development of social-scientific criticism of New Testament texts, for example, has opened up new vistas of historical discussion, by moving towards an interpretation of early Christian thought which locates it in an anthropological, social and cultural context.\textsuperscript{14} Instead of using such texts to write histories of doctrine or hierarchy, historians such as Lellia Cracco Ruggini and her followers, most importantly Rita

\textsuperscript{12} For Ughelli’s appeal to those with local and Italian, rather than papal, interests uppermost in mind, cf. Ditchfield, Liturgy, Sanctity and History, 352-6. Much local historiography is criticised by Otranto as for its ‘eccesivo amore municipalistico’ (Italia meridionale, 11).

\textsuperscript{13} L. Duchesne, Fastes épiscopaux de l’ancienne Gaule (1907-15).

\textsuperscript{14} I am thinking, in particular, of works by the likes of J. H. Elliott, A. Malherbe, B. J. Malina, W. A. Meeks and L. M. White: for a sample of such studies, with a useful consolidated bibliography, see P. F. Esler (ed.), Modelling Early Christianity (1995).
Lizzi, have quarried these texts to write the social history of north Italian Christianity for the late-fourth, fifth and sixth centuries. What this new breed of Italian ecclesiastical historians is seeking to achieve has been elegantly set out in Daniela Rando’s recent study of the emergence of the Venetian Church, where she characterises much Italian historiography ‘by the schism between a secular historiography and a confessional ecclesiastical historiography.’ Even where modern ecclesiastical historiography is not to any major degree confessional, much of it still concentrates on church hierarchies and matters of dogma, despite the considerable advances made in recent decades on the social history of late antiquity. Two recent books on Ambrose of Milan amply demonstrate this historiographical divide. Daniel Williams’ Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts (Oxford, 1995) leaves little room for any social influence on the early years of Ambrose’s episcopate. It contrasts markedly with the all-encompassing treatment offered by Neil McLynn’s Ambrose of Milan. Church and court in a Christian capital (Berkeley, 1994), which ably combines dogmatic and hierarchical concerns with social and political history. Reading the two books side by side is like looking simultaneously at two Renaissance paintings, one from the Netherlands, the other from Italy. Williams’ approach is evocative of Jan Van Eyck, with all its details beautifully refined, but with its overall perspective misshapen and unbalanced; McLynn is more like Titian, with blurred details here and there, but looking just right when viewed as a whole.

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My own study aims to fit into the new trend which seeks to reconcile ecclesiastical and social history. By setting it firmly in its social context, I will offer an explanation, rather than just a description, of the origins and development of the Christian communities of northern Italy. It seems to me that, even where the causes of church development are not explicitly narrated, it is possible to reconstruct the mechanisms which would have encouraged it. In a recent, challenging, if not altogether satisfactory, analysis of the spatial dynamics of religion, Chris Park has identified the sorts of circumstances conducive to the diffusion of a proselytising faith like Christianity.\textsuperscript{17} His typology of diffusion practices explains that ‘the number of people who adopt the innovation grows by direct contact [where] an idea is communicated by a person who knows about it to one who does not, so the total number of knowers increases through time.’ This can happen either by ‘contagious diffusion’, where conversion occurs ‘as a product of everyday contact between believers and non-believers’; or by ‘hierarchical diffusion’ where a deliberate missionary strategy is developed which targets major centres and social élites. Christianity will have spread in a variety of ways, mixing the various types of diffusion which Park distinguishes, but the paucity of explicit sources means that the

\textsuperscript{17} C. C. Park, \textit{Sacred Worlds} (1994), 93-127. For his faults, see the next note. A less successful effort at utilising theories derived from modern social sciences to study early Christianity is R. Stark, \textit{The Rise of Christianity. A Sociologist Reconsiders History} (1996), which reached me only days before completion of this thesis. Stark’s grasp of social conditions in the ancient Mediterranean is lamentably poor. His comparisons between modern and ancient religions (e.g. his forced parallels between early Christianity and modern Mormonism at pp. 39-44) show no sensitivity to the very different social environments of such cults. Moreover, his mathematical models of Christian growth in the first four centuries (pp. 4-13) are too rigid and do not allow for temporal or geographical fluctuations. He rightly notes the importance of urban centres (pp. 129-62), but his statements are naive and mark no advance on what historians have already realised.
exact nature of the process in various parts of the Mediterranean is often unknown.\textsuperscript{18} Much of this is common sense. Religion, like any ideology, requires direct human interaction to ensure its diffusion.\textsuperscript{19} Urban centres, places where such direct contact occurred most frequently, provided fertile ground for the propagation of religious ideas. This fertility increased concomitantly with the extent to which a town or city attracted diverse and changing populations, either because they were centres of trade or administration. Ports and markets were more than just centres for the exchange of material goods. They were environments where people like Demosthenes’ defendant against Apaturius could mix with foreigners (\textit{Or.} 33. 5). They were also places where new ideas and new cults would make their first mark, although this should not be taken as an indication of toleration towards them and peaceful integration—the precise link between the presence of foreigners and the adoption of new gods by natives is often unclear.\textsuperscript{20} Nevertheless, it is interesting to compare the similar distributions of Christianity, Judaism and Isis worship in northern Italy, suggesting that similar social engines powered the diffusion of each cult (see chapter 4).

Of course, any such generalised picture requires qualification. Areas other than urban centres could provide conditions advantageous to the spread of new cults. In chapter 7, for example, it will be shown how the Val di Non (ancient Anaunia), in the Alps north-west of Trento, enjoyed a diverse religious life which

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 99-101 (typology), 105-9 (application to Christianity). Park’s interpretation of early Christian diffusion (pp. 105-6) is, however, flawed, since he derives his picture form sources, such as Acts and the Pauline Epistles, which emphasise the role of aggressively proselytising missionaries.
confounds simple models of a society divided between culturally rich urban centres and relatively poorer rural peripheries. Moreover, no two religions are identical in terms of their beliefs, organisation or the constituency to which they appeal. For instance, both Mithraism and Christianity are soteriological cults in that they offer initiates a picture of the afterlife of the soul. Yet Mithraism, open only to men and favoured by male organisations such as trade associations and the army, had a very different pattern of distribution to that of Christianity. Nor are religions static. Judaism, from which Christianity is traditionally assumed to have inherited its missionary ethos, seems not to have developed this expansionist impulse until the uncertain times after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple by the Romans in 70 CE. Even traditional Roman religion, for all its famed conservatism, was open to change: cults and rituals could be added or jettisoned as required, sometimes quite suddenly. More starkly, Roman religion was intensely local, and the regional varieties of ritual and cult across the empire—or even within a province—were myriad. Diversity, then, is the key factor: diversity of religions, diversity of experiences and, finally, diversity of regions.

(i) Regional analysis and the ancient world

The ancient Mediterranean world presented a bewildering array of linguistic and cultural zones which defies any attempt to reduce it to a single formula. To be sure, it is different from North America or the Far East, and there are some common

21 M. Goodman, *Mission and Conversion* (1994), 38-48. It strikes me, however, that, by ignoring the mentality of those who convert, as opposed to those seeking converts, Goodman's analysis is valid only for active mission, but ignores a more passive variety of mission.

22 J. A. North, 'Conservatism and change in Roman religion', *PBSR* 44 (1976), 1-12; cf. E. S. Gruen, *Studies in Greek Culture and Roman Policy* (1990), 7-10. 33-78, for case studies of the role of the state in assimilating or suppressing 'new' religions.


features shared by the peoples who live around its shores, but equally the Mediterranean, both now and in antiquity, boasts a remarkable diversity of cultures. This raises a primary difficulty with beginning any form of regional analysis. As the anthropologist Carol Smith warns, 'there is no single regional level of analysis, but rather many different regional levels of analysis.' This is because

regions are more than passive receptacles of human activities: they are meaningful partitions of space that subdivide large portions of the earth's landscape. Functionally defined regions represent several levels of integration, with a hierarchy of human settlements, that theoretically culminate in a single all-inclusive system.25

Even Fernand Braudel, who more than anyone focused the historian's attention on the Mediterranean and highlighted those elements which lend it unity, warned that:

The Mediterranean is not a single sea but a succession of small seas that communicate by means of wider or narrower entrances. In the two great east and west basins [into which the Mediterranean is divided by Sicily] . . . there is a series of highly individual narrow seas between the land masses, each with its own character, types of boat, and its own laws of history . . . Even within these seas smaller areas can be distinguished, for there is hardly a bay in the Mediterranean that is not a miniature community, a complex world itself.26

Socrates famously thought of the entire Mediterranean as a large frog pond (Plato, Phaedo 109b), but instead of them all croaking the same language, they would have given off a more discordant noise than even frogs normally do. Any institution aiming to interact with the disparate cultures of the Mediterranean had to develop a variety of responses. Witness the different development of polis institutions in Greece and the Aegean islands, where the Greeks were the only or dominant culture. with that in Sicily and southern Italy, where they were interlopers, seeking to

impose their own way of life on landscapes thick with other cultures.\textsuperscript{27} Similarly, as the Romans extended their rule over the Mediterranean in the middle and late Republic, they had to devise different strategies for dealing with the highly developed kingdoms of Carthage and the Hellenistic east and the diffuse tribal societies of the Celtic west.\textsuperscript{28} On a more local level, it is clear that particular regions of the Mediterranean basin, both now and in the past, have their own peculiar dynamics, defined by factors such as landscape, social networks, language, culture, religion, lifestyle, and the absence or presence of urbanisation.\textsuperscript{29}

The Christian church, like any institution which expanded into the Mediterranean, was challenged by this regional variety and a desire to overcome it. The very writing of the Gospels in Greek represents a quantum leap in cultural terms from rural, Aramaic-speaking Galilee, the focus of Jesus’ mission, to the urbane, Greek-speaking society of the Levantine and Asian coast, where Paul sought his converts.\textsuperscript{30} Studies of later developments emphasise the importance of the regional, just as much as the social, context in shaping Christian communities. Stephen Mitchell’s model study of Anatolia, for example, has set the development of the region’s churches firmly in the context of the social and cultural dynamics of inland Asia Minor.\textsuperscript{31} Such regional studies give force to the thesis propounded nearly half

\textsuperscript{28} S. L. Dyson, \textit{The Creation of the Roman Frontier} (1985), 4.
\textsuperscript{29} The most obvious area where this has been realised is in archaeological survey, although several important historical studies exist. It is notable that the French \textit{Annales} school, particularly Braudel’s \textit{Mediterranean}, has exercised a profound influence: J. Bintliff, ‘The contribution of an Annaliste/structural history approach to archaeology’, in \textit{id.} (ed.), \textit{The Annales School and Archaeology} (1991), 1-33, esp. 4-9; cf. N. Purcell’s editorial remarks in M. W. Frederiksen, \textit{Campania} (1984), xiii; and R. Osborne, \textit{Classical Landscape with Figures} (1987), 201, calling Braudel’s \textit{Mediterranean} the ‘best discussion of the constant (sic) factors governing Greek history.’
\textsuperscript{31} S. Mitchell, \textit{Anatolia: land, men and gods in Asia Minor 2. The rise of the church} (1993).
a century ago by Walter Bauer that the early church, far from being somehow simpler, was at least as diverse as modern Christianity, if not more so (see further chapter 1). Dramatic discoveries such as the Gnostic texts from Nag Hammadi serve as timely reminders of this lack of uniformity, and beg more studies of early Christian communities which set them against their regional background.

This, then, is what a study of north-Italian Christianity between c. 250 and 381 aims to achieve: a demonstration of how, in a given area, the development of the church is influenced by the features of the environment within which it evolves. But for such an approach to be useful, the definition of the region must itself be valid. This question has particular relevance for the study of early Christianity in Italy, much of which has been concerned with the origins of bishoprics and diocesan administration. The very methodology used by Ughelli, Savio and Lanzoni has been justifiably interrogated by Giorgio Otranto’s studies of the early church in southern Italy, especially Apulia. He asks why studies of the genesis of ecclesiastical administration proceed from the assumption that the territorial definition of a bishopric today should any way reflect its definition—or an aspiration to such—in late antiquity. Instead he advises that any search for the origins of Italian bishoprics must begin by setting their development in the context of ancient social relations and administrative structures. Otranto highlights a problem which has been particularly taxing to archaeologists interested in developing regional analysis, and which should likewise present difficulties for historians: ‘Very often . . . regional analysis starts from a definition formulated by modern or early modern observers.’ This, as we have seen, is precisely the problem with the approach taken by Ughelli. Furthermore, the definition must also go beyond merely physical geography. Braudel lamented ‘the traditional geographical introduction to history that often

33 Otranto, Italia meridionale, 16-21.
figures to little purpose at the beginning of so many books. '35 Little wonder, for as Braudel's detailed analysis showed, 'human life responds to the commands of the environment, but also seeks to evade and overcome them.'36

Defining northern Italy, as chapter 2 demonstrates, is no easy matter. Of course, the region has already been the subject of studies which overlap to a minor extent, with this one. Two, in particular, have been profoundly influential on the formulation of some of my own ideas: Jean-Charles Picard's monumental study of the cult of bishops in northern Italy down to the tenth century; and Bryan Ward-Perkins' analysis of urban public building in northern and central Italy between tetrarchic times and the reign of Charlemagne. It is interesting to note why each author chose to study northern Italy. Picard chose the area because of the richness of its documentation which he believed, rightly, deserved to be studied independent of material from Rome and from that found in Germanic Europe north of the Alps.37 Ward-Perkins is refreshingly blunt on the issue:

In geographical range I have tried to cover the whole of mainland Lombard Italy, from Salerno northwards, and the whole of the Byzantine North. I would feel happier if I had included the deep south and Sicily, at least until the Arab invasions. However time and lack of familiarity with these regions excluded any comprehensive treatment.38

In both cases, the choice of northern Italy is informed by the identity of the region in the early medieval period. Neither definition, therefore, is appropriate for a study which seeks to explain the emergence of an institution in late antiquity.

35 Braudel, Mediterranean 1: 20.
36 Ibid., 1: 267.
37 Picard, Souvenir, 1-5: he does not adequately explain, however, why he ignores the gesta episcoporum from Naples (mentioned by him at p. 1).
38 From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages (1984), vi.
(ii) The problems of defining a region

How is it possible to define a region? At the outset it must be stated that a single definition is not really feasible, since it will shift depending on the criteria used, whether temporal or geographical, cultural or economic. Some indication of the potential for overlap between different regions, and different definitions thereof, is clear from the evidence of periods better-documented than late antiquity. In mid-sixteenth century France, for example, a plethora of factors meant that several different regions—ecclesiastical, administrative, economic, linguistic—overlapped in the tiny village of Artigat near Toulouse. The experience of one of my friends, a Scottish nationalist, sums up this potential for disparity between definitions of regional identity drawn up according to different criteria. We recently made a train journey northwards from Peterborough to Edinburgh, and as we were crossing the bridge at Berwick upon Tweed, my friend shifted in his seat and muttered with pleasure, ‘That’s better.’ For him, Scotland begins at the Tweed, even though in administrative terms, laid down by a government in London, the English border is a few miles further north. Between my friend’s cultural geography and the government’s administrative geography there lies a considerable divide.

My own definition of northern Italy is sensitive to the disparity between such different ‘geographies.’ The social compass of Roman Aquileia, for example, will be seen to stretch into the Balkans in apparent defiance of the natural frontier

39 Such apparent inconsistency ought not to be alarming, since it is apparent in something as basic as self-definition: K. P. Ewing, ‘The Illusion of Wholeness: Culture, Self, and the Experience of Inconsistency’, Ethos 18 (1990), 251-78.
41 This reflects the broader problem with territorial definitions of nationalism: see E. J. Hobsbawm, Nations and nationalism since 1780. Programme, myth and reality (1990), e.g. 132-3 on the ‘utter impracticability of [Woodrow Wilson’s] principle to make state frontiers coincide with the frontiers of nationality and language.’
constituted by the Julian Alps. This is because that physical frontier has never been an effective barrier to human movement. Anyone who lives near these mountains is acutely aware of this. In the course of fieldwork undertaken for this project, I found myself having breakfast on the balcony of a friend’s apartment overlooking Trieste. As I took in the view leading up the valleys behind the city, into what is now Slovenia, my friend’s mother, with a dramatic sweeping gesture of her arm, sighed nostalgically, ‘In the past, all this was Italy.’

Less frivolously, these disparities reflect how difficult it is to come up with a single comprehensive definition of a given region. They are reminders, in Edward Said’s words,

of how oddly hybrid historical and cultural experiences are, of how they partake of many often contradictory experiences and domains, cross national boundaries, defy the police action of simple dogma and loud patriotism.

The northern Italy of this study is not constrained by the physical straitjacket of its physical boundaries. Even as I have defined it in chapter 2, it is an amorphous thing, sometimes inward looking, sometimes open to influences from the Balkans, Gaul, peninsular Italy, and overseas from Africa and Egypt. Sometimes these influences are intertwined, at other times one or more may dominate. In short, the regional dynamics of northern Italy represent a tension between the internal social, cultural and economic matrices of life, and the pressure exerted upon them by external influences. In real terms this means a region where the complex interrelationships (in themselves never static) between its various communities are periodically confronted with, and sometimes confounded by, factors such as imperial presence and mercantile exchange. In themselves, such factors, both

42 This is in itself a highly terrestrial definition: Aquileia’s population comprised overseas groups too.

internal and external, comprise the engines of social dynamism, provoking the movement of people around, into and out of the region.

APPROACHES

These phenomena, and their impact on the early development of Christianity in northern Italy, are the subject of the first part of this study. The social dynamics of the north-Italian environment are explored in chapter 2. By way of a prologue, chapter 1 outlines the diversity of early Christian experience in the Roman world, admittedly focusing on only a few issues. Chapter 3 examines the conventional views of Christian expansion in the region as recorded in medieval traditions. Although the story they tell obscures the regional dynamics actually responsible for shaping early Christianity in northern Italy, their formulation is as much a product of the north-Italian human environment. These traditions arose in circumstances peculiar to northern Italy: inter-episcopal rivalry, which provided the impetus for developing the traditions, exacerbated by events such as the collapse of west Roman imperial rule in the fifth century, and the Justinianic conquest and Lombard invasions of the sixth. The medieval texts are by no means useless, but what they really narrate is an effort to rationalise the early Christian past by persons active in an uncertain late-antique and early medieval present. Chapter 4 provides a reconstruction of the early diffusion of Christianity in the region, liberated from the model provided by later traditions. Of course, some elements of those traditions remain useful: late-antique and early medieval historians of the church did not invent wholesale, but manipulated (to a cynical mind) or rationalised (to a more sympathetic one) the material they had before them. This was probably a haphazard process; hence there can be no all inclusive theory which determines when a later tradition is, or is not reliable. Each instance must be assessed on its own merits.44

44 For a sympathetic understanding of early medieval traditions and how they impose a framework on the past, see P. J. Heather, Goths and Romans 332-489 (1991). Heather liberates
The second part of the study pursues the theme further, examining how the social context of northern Italy in the fourth century aids an understanding of how its Christian communities developed. Once again, this context was diverse, especially with the regular presence of outsiders, such as the emperors and their courts and exiles such as Athanasius of Alexandria. In general terms, it strikes me that the western adventus of Constantius II in the 350s was an important determinant of ecclesiastical development in northern Italy. In grand terms, the Christological debate, hitherto confined largely to the eastern provinces, was physically brought to the west. Relations between church and state, already an important feature in the eastern church, became an factor in the life of north Italian Christian communities. Chapter 5 will show the pivotal role of Constantius’ reign in the developing relationship between local churches and the imperial government in the decades between Constantine and Gratian. It also transformed the intellectual outlook of the north Italian episcopate, involving them in the theological controversies of eastern Christianity and providing the ideological backdrop to Ambrose’s pro-Nicene campaigns in the 380s.

At the same time, Constantius’ intervention made clear the disparity between north-Italian structures of ecclesiastical power and those with which the emperor was familiar in the east. Northern Italy did not have a highly developed metropolitan administration, but Constantius’ imposition of Auxentius on the church of Milan assumes that he saw Milan as possessing the same sort of eminence as Alexandria had in Egypt or Antioch in Syria. Hitherto, north-Italian ecclesiastical administration had lacked any formal centralisation, being conducted, as far as it is possible to tell, on an ad hoc local basis. But the polarisation of the region’s episcopate into various Christological camps, and efforts by some bishops to displace others, provided conditions which favoured the emergence of a domineering individual prelate. Northern Italy found him in Ambrose of Milan. At

Gothic history from the constructs of Cassiodorus’ Gothic History, as reflected in Jordanes’ Getica, but is sensitive to how much later tradition preserves valuable material.
the same time, transformations of a bishop's prestige in relation to his peers cannot be cut adrift from his relationship with his flock. Thus chapter 6 seeks to examine both the emergence of episcopal hierarchies, albeit loose ones, and the reflection of this process at a local level in the manifestations of a bishop's authority within in his community.

The last two chapters will return to the themes of the early part of the thesis: the expansion of Christianity in northern Italy. Whereas chapters 5 and 6 show that the church had become a crucial social institution in the region's interaction with the rest of the empire, and that bishops had become important players in regional and local politics, it still remains uncertain to what extent northern Italy was Christianised by the time of Ambrose's accession. In chapter 7, an effort will be made to establish to what extent the church had expanded in the generation between Constantius II and Ambrose. It will be shown that, as for the early period, Christian expansion continued to be a piecemeal process, following established social networks, sometimes into surprising places such as the Alto Adige. Chapter 8 continues this theme, by addressing the question of what it was like to live as a Christian in northern Italy in the late fourth century. Concentration on ecclesiastical affairs to the exclusion of all others tends to lend support to glib views of Christian triumph. Yet it is clear that by the time Ambrose became bishop of Milan, northern Italy was far from being an entirely Christian space. Other religions, notably Judaism, maintained their vitality even seventy years after Constantine's conversion. Here, perhaps more obviously than in other areas of this investigation, the importance of social context will be evident: Christian communities of the blessed there certainly were, but the north Italian human environment they inhabited was not yet their own.

The social history of early Christianity in northern Italy is a large subject, too large for the limits of a single thesis, and it is inevitable that some areas have been left out or treated more cursorily than might have been the case. The history of the
region's liturgies could have been explored more deeply, exploiting the rich seam of archaeological evidence from sites such as Aquileia. Likewise, there is little here on popular piety, which can be adequately studied in inscriptions from mosaic pavements and from Christian grave markers, this last a range of evidence left untouched by my investigations. Any disclaimer is likely to be unsatisfactory, but I will offer one nonetheless. The absence of Christian funerary practices from these pages has less to do with a cheerful determination to concentrate on the affairs of the living than that, like those areas of liturgy that I have not discussed, they seem to say most about the internal life of Christian communities. My concern throughout this study has been to argue that Christian development in northern Italy occurred as part of a dialogue with the social and cultural context of the region. I have selected my material, therefore, according to where Christian interaction with a non-Christian (or non-north Italian) environment is thrown into sharpest contrast.

Finally, an explanation of the chronological parameters is necessary. The terminal date, 381, is easiest: in that year, at the Council of Aquileia, Ambrose of Milan's ascendancy was visible for all to see, and with that achievement we enter a new phase in the history of north Italian Christianity. The first date, c. 250, falls in the reign of Decius, the last great persecutor of the Christians before Diocletian. Most north Italian gesta martyrum—with the exception of a few obvious fictions (see Appendix 1)—place their action in the mid- to late-third century. The persecution of Decius then, is the most plausible date at which Christianity seems to have been sufficiently well-established in northern Italy to attract the unwelcome attention of others. Before this date, nothing can be known with any certainty: the history of Christianity in the region can only begin, therefore, sometime around 250.

Ambrose of Milan has practically defined the course of investigations into early north Italian Christianity, and with good reason. His extensive writings, including a valuable collection of letters, the biography of Paulinus, and his obvious significance for a figure like Augustine make Ambrose an attractive, richly
documented subject. In no small measure, this concentration on Ambrose reflects his own self-conscious image making. He single-handedly created a network of bishops in northern Italy who looked to Milan for leadership, while his dealings with the emperors Gratian, Valentinian II and Theodosius I have invested his episcopate with legendary status. As a result many studies of the north-Italian Church take his career as a starting point, or at best see the previous history the region’s churches as a prologue for the Ambrosian achievement.

Yet to allow Ambrose to dictate the narrative is to take a painfully narrow view of what early north Italian Christianity means. No doubt many, like Augustine, knew him and admired him; but others, like Palladius of Ratiaria, Ambrose’s major adversary at the Council of Aquileia, saw him as a self-serving bully. North Italian Christianity did not develop for his sole benefit. It has an existence and logic independent of him. To concentrate on Ambrose is narrow in another sense, in that it privileges one variety of evidence—writings by or about Ambrose—above all others. There exists, however, other evidence, much of it archaeological, demanding interpretation on its own terms and for what it can tell us about the regional development of Christianity in the Roman world. This, then, is the basic task of this study.

46 Williams, Ambrose.
47 For the extent to which Ambrose has dictated the study of his own episcopate, and, indeed, events outside it, see the judicious comments of McLynn, Ambrose, xiii-xix.
Myth, History and Environment:
Christian origins in northern Italy

Why do I tell you this instead of getting on with my story?
Because I want you to understand that, in the Little World
between the river and the mountains, many things
can happen that cannot happen anywhere else.

GIOVANNI GUARESCHI
1
The Embedded Church
unity, diversity and environment
in early Christianity

From its origins, Christianity was a religion that, both in its action and self-representation, was deeply embedded in the Mediterranean milieu within which it developed. Wherever we look in the Gospels, Apostolic writings and Apocrypha, we see the activities of Jesus, his followers and their successors touched by the myriad experiences of life in the Mediterranean world of the early Roman Empire. Its social, political, economic and cultural rhythms permeate the writings of the New Testament and Apostolic age. They were the matrices within which early Christians defined themselves, their aspirations and their expectations. We can feel sympathy, then, for Hermas—a dreadful sinner in those days—when, on the road to Cumae in Campania, he mistook the old woman in his vision for a Sibyl, rather than the personified Church: after all, Cumae was the home of a celebrated Sibyl, and the old woman had insisted on giving him a book full of mysterious prophecy.¹

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of a narrowly defined environment, that of northern Italy, on the origin and development of its Christian communities down to the third quarter of the fourth century. In this chapter I will summarise in more general terms how the environment of the Roman Mediterranean helped to shape the Church. This will provide essential background to my analysis of how, during the late-third and fourth centuries, north-Italian Christianity developed in its own individual, even idiosyncratic, way in terms of organisation, practice and theological interests. But the very origins of Christianity

¹ Shepherd of Hermas, vision 2. 4. 1; cf. 2. 1. 3-4 (the prophetic book). See H. W. Parke (ed. B. C. McGing), Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity (1988), 77-99 (Cumae), 152-6 (Hermas), 190-215 (Sibylline books kept at Rome, whence Hermas travelled to Cumae).
in the region were also influenced by the prevailing circumstances in northern Italy, which I will define in Chapter Two. I will start, therefore, by examining how the dispersal of the Gospel message was largely determined by the Mediterranean environment.

HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS OF THE FAITH

(i) Christian expansion in the New Testament

From the first, some Christian groups had an active missionary impulse. This is clearest in the Acts of the Apostles, a narrative which preserves the missionary ideology of the group—or groups—associated with Paul.² In Acts, Jesus' last recorded words before he ascended into heaven were that the apostles would be his 'witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judaea and Samaria and to the end of the earth' (Acts 1:8). He had promised them that baptism with the Holy Spirit would enable them to do this (1:4-8). At Pentecost, when Jerusalem was filled with 'Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven' (2:5), the Holy Spirit opportune came upon the apostles and they 'began to speak in other tongues' (2:4). A less clear factor is the extent to which this missionary movement was centrally directed. Some forward planning is evident: Paul wrote to the Roman Christians to announce his arrival, and told them that he intended to go on to Spain (Rom 15:28); and after his conflict with the Ephesians he chose not to return there (Acts 20:16). Our earliest missionary narrative, the Acts of the Apostles, focuses on the activities of Paul; but this reflects the motivations of the author of Luke-Acts to provide a coherent

account of early Christian history for a community of worshippers in danger of collapsing from both internal and external pressures.³

Yet even in Acts it is clear that the early spread of Christianity was more spontaneous and that others, apart from Paul, were active in spreading the Gospel message.⁴ Paul's views on Christian organisation and doctrine, moreover, did not find universal acceptance, bringing him into conflict with fellow-believers in Galatia and Jerusalem, where his ideas on Gentile mission were not received with enthusiasm.⁵ Such vignettes provide invaluable evidence of the tension between central organisation and local initiative in the expansion of Christianity, not least because, apart from Paul, much of the early history of Christian missions is lost, especially in the west.⁶ Consequently Acts provides a unique opportunity to contemplate the interaction between mission and environment.⁷

At first, that missionary environment was primarily, but not entirely, urban, despite the origins of Christianity in rural Galilee.⁸ Throughout Acts it is the Graeco-Roman cities of the eastern Mediterranean which provide the backdrop to Paul's journeys. This is hardly remarkable: a privileged Jew with Roman citizenship, from the commercially and culturally dynamic city of Tarsus in Asia

⁶ Cf. R. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (1986), 276; also Ch.3 below.
Minor, 'Paul was'—as Meeks neatly puts it—'a city person.' And with that went a quintessentially urban world-view, where the cities were the powerhouses of administration, connected with each other by a complex network of social, political, cultural and economic communications.\(^9\) For a missionary keen, as Galatians shows, to keep control of the emerging Christian communities, cities provided the obvious focus for Paul's activities.

Paul's missionary journeys show the advantages of communications networks connecting urban centres for the spread of the Gospel. Most of the cities he visited were coastal ones, linked by a regular traffic of merchant ships. Travellers could ask at ports if ships were leaving for their desired destinations, as Libanius did when he hoped to travel from Constantinople to Athens (Or 1.31). Such behaviour is implicit in Acts. When Paul was being taken to Rome for trial, his party passed through Myra in Lycia where they 'found a ship sailing for Italy from Alexandria' (Acts 27:5-6). This was clearly a merchantman engaged in the grain trade between Egypt and Rome, for when it got caught in a storm, its cargo of wheat was jettisoned in an effort to lighten the ship's load (27:18, 38). It was eventually wrecked off Malta, but Paul was able to pursue his journey on another Alexandrian ship, which had wintered at the island (28:11). From Malta he travelled through the straits of Messina to Puteoli, precisely the route taken by the grain ships from Alexandria which supplied Rome (28:12-13).\(^{10}\) Apart from these maritime connections, Paul's use of travel networks is evident from his entirely typical behaviour when seeking accommodation: at Corinth he boasted he needed no letter of introduction (2 Cor 3:1); en route from Puteoli he called at the

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revealingly named Tres Tabernae (Acts 28:15); in Rome itself, having nowhere else to stay, he took lodgings (Acts 28:30). 11

It was not only in his aptitude for finding places to stay that showed Paul was at home in the cities of the empire or travelling between them. He knew also how to exploit the dynamics of the urban environment and make straight for an area of town where he would be guaranteed an audience. This meant looking for places where people normally congregated; it would be even better if they were meeting for religious purposes, providing the ideal environment in which to preach a new soteriology. At Athens, therefore, he preached in the Areopagus (Acts 17:17-34), while at Philippi he sought converts at a riverbank outside the city where 'there was a place of prayer' (16:13). The most obvious such milieu was Paul's use of the synagogues of the Jewish diaspora, scattered throughout the eastern Mediterranean (e.g. 14:1; 17:1; 18:1). 12 Sometimes there could be unexpected results: at Lystra in Lycaonia, the arrival of Paul and Barnabas was mistaken for an epiphany of Zeus and Hermes (Acts 14:12). 13

All this highlights the major advantage of using urban centres as the basis for Christian missions: they provided the ideal circumstances where that interpersonal contact, so vital to the spread of religious ideas, would exist. The phenomenon is clear from very early in Acts: the Holy Spirit's gift to the apostles of the ability to speak many languages was in every sense a godsend at Pentecost, when Jerusalem was filled with Jews from Diaspora communities. There were various criteria which could make a city a magnet for populations from a wide area. The obvious example, because of its connection with how Paul travelled around the

13 Lane Fox, Pagans and Christians, 99-100.
Empire, is trade. It has often been noted how many of the cities Paul visited were major commercial centres: Ephesus with its great port; the wool-markets associated with the cities of the Lycus valley; Thessalonica, where ships arriving in the Thermaic Gulf could unload their cargoes for overland distribution along the Via Egnatia into the Balkans; 'wealthy' Corinth; and Puteoli, the centre of Rome's vital grain trade prior to the development of Ostia. Yet while commerce provides ideal conditions in which a mission could flourish, it is clear that some trades, specifically those dependent on pagan temples, might not facilitate the arrival of Christianity. At Ephesus, for example, we find Paul opposed by a tradesman, Demetrius the silversmith, whose livelihood, based on the production of small replicas of the temple of Artemis, would have been threatened by anyone who denied the power of the great goddess (Acts 19:23-41).

Cities had connections for reasons other than trade. At Ephesus, boasts the author of Acts, 'all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord' (Acts 19:10). This obviously goes too far, but it reflects the importance of the city in provincial administration: as the seat of the governor, it would have attracted visitors—for commerce, petitions, and litigation—from all over the province of Asia. Similar conditions would have obtained at Thessalonica and Corinth, respectively the capitals of the Roman provinces of Macedonia and Achaea. Roman control was also exercised through the foundation of citizen colonies, and we find Paul visiting a number of them in Asia Minor, as well as Philippi in Thrace. The importation of Roman settlers brought with it the introduction of Roman social networks, and these too had an influence on Paul's mission. His journey to the colony at Antioch

15 Mitchell, Anatolia 2:37; cf, Lane Fox, Pagans and Christians, 490, for the importance of this administrative role of Ephesus in ensuring a great number of martyrdoms occurred there. Note also that Ephesus was an important centre of the imperial cult: S. R. F. Price, Rituals and Power (1984), 135-6, 254-7.
16 Meeks, Urban Christians, 42, 45-8.
in Pisidia resulted from his contacts with Sergius Paulus, proconsul of Cyprus. Paulus was the son of a distinguished Antiochene family, and he perhaps suggested that Paul preach there.\footnote{Mitchell, Anatolia 2:5-7.} This last example shows the exploitation in Pauline missions of the diverse networks which bound all levels of society together by ties of association, patronage, or—in the case of slaves—ownership. The first epistle to the Thessalonians, for example, seems to refer to craftsmen, and Ephesians and Colossians to slaves and slave-owners; at Corinth, the wealthier members of the Church acted as patrons for the entire community.\footnote{Meeks, Urban Christians, 51-73, 118-19; on Corinth, cf. J. K. Chow, Patronage and Power (1992).}

(ii) Christian expansion in the west

Looking further west, we can rely less on New Testament evidence to explain Christian expansion. The only western communities it describes are those at Rome and Puteoli. This latter city shared many of the conditions favourable to Paul’s missions in the east: trade links, a large immigrant population, and diverse foreign cults, including Judaism.\footnote{Frederiksen, Campania, 330 and pl.XIII; R. M. Grant, Gods and the One God (1986), 29-32.} Indeed, there were already Christians there by the time of Paul’s arrival (Acts 28:13), as was also the case at Rome (28:14; Rom. passim). For the rest of the western Mediterranean, our picture of Christian expansion will always be incomplete, but we can compare the conditions prevailing in the cities there with those which had been conducive to Paul’s successes in the east.

We have seen Paul exploiting trade-networks and synagogues, and some have argued that traders and Jews were important factors in the westward diffusion of the Gospel.\footnote{See esp. W. H. C. Frend, ‘A note on the influence of Greek immigrants on the spread of Christianity in the West’, in Mullus. Festschr. Th. Klauser (1964), 125-9; cf. A. D. Nock, Conversion (1933). 66.} Such analyses are problematic: it is difficult to point to individual traders in early western churches, and it seems that—apart from Rome and...
Puteoli—the spread of Judaism there was so retarded that it may have expanded not in advance of but concurrently with Christianity.21 This highlights the dangers of extrapolating from the evidence for Rome to reconstruct conditions elsewhere in the west.22 Jews were, moreover, just one group among many resident aliens at Rome, whose presence there can be explained in many ways—of which commerce was certainly one—but which primarily reflect the draw on foreign peoples exerted by Rome because it was the centre of power.23

This is not to deny any Jewish factor, but we must modify the standard view of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, where the rise of the latter is equated with the demise of the former. It is a rhetorical commonplace that Christians began as a Jewish sect, but by the third century had distinguished themselves as a distinct religious body.24 That many pagans continued to confuse Judaism and Christianity may be less a reflection of their ignorance than of the palpable reality that in some parts of the Empire, such as at Edessa on the eastern frontier, Jews and Christians went so far as to attend each others' religious

21 Lane Fox, Pagans and Christians, 272-6 with references. J. B. Rives, Religion and Authority in Roman Carthage (1995), 226 n.116, on Jewish origins—or the lack thereof—for Christian communities in north Africa. For southern Italy: G. Otranto, Italia meridionale e Puglia paleocristiane (1990), 26-7. The problem is complicated by the traditional view of Christian and Jewish missions as exclusive categories: in the very early period at least, this distinction did not exist. Paul’s mission, should not be seen simply as the expansion of Christianity: that would be anachronistic. Rather, it is the extension of a purified Judaism which only later becomes identified as Christianity: Georgi, ‘The Early Church’, esp. 37-46, showing that Paul’s polemical strategies, even those which appear most anti-Semitic, derive in no small measure from a Jewish tradition.

22 Lane Fox, Pagans and Christians, 268-9. An example of this approach is T. M. Finn, ‘Social Mobility, Imperial Civil Service and the Spread of Christianity’, Studia Patristica 17/1 (1982), 31-7, which attempts to reconstruct ‘the work-a-day context of some, perhaps many, Christians’ by examining the incidence of Christians in the civil service. But as this was mainly based at Rome, I am sceptical of the relevance of Finn’s approach to elucidating the process of evangelisation in other parts of the Empire.


services. In other words, in some regions the relationship was more variegated than the rhetorical model of a 'parting of the ways' suggests, and that as late as c.400 it could be just as symbiotic as confrontational.

Even when there is explicit evidence of links with the Greek east, explaining them is not easy. For example, the southern Gallic churches of Lyon and Vienne had contacts with Asia Minor (Eus. HE 5.1.2-3), prompting the interpretation that Greek traders were instrumental in their origins. But a more critical analysis of the evidence suggests that the first Lyonnais Christians may have come from Rome. This of course does not rule out a mercantile factor, but it is startling that the Church at Lyon seems older than those in other southern Gallic ports, such as Arles and Marseilles. A more elaborate explanation is required, and it is not difficult to find. Lyon was not just a commercial city but the effective capital of the Three Gauls, at the hub of an extensive communications network, and a centre of political, cultural, administrative and cultic activity: there were many reasons, then, why Lyon, like Ephesus, should have attracted foreigners.

Yet we cannot but accept the essentially immigrant—and Greek immigrant at that—nature of the early western Churches, most of which had contacts with

27 Frend, 'Greek immigrants', 126-8.
Christian communions in the eastern Mediterranean. Their earliest literature, such as the writings of Hermas, Clement and Irenaeus, was in Greek; and when Polycarp of Smyrna came to Rome in the 150s to stand trial, he preached to the Roman congregations, presumably in Greek (Eus. HE 4.15; 5.24). A shift to Latin culture only becomes apparent in the late-second century, when the impetus came first in north Africa, where the first Latin translations of the Bible seem to have been produced. Indeed, it seems to be Africa which provides the earliest evidence for the evangelisation of the local population. Together with this extension of Christianity to the local population probably came Christian penetration of rural territories. By the second and early-third centuries, Christianity was present in the countryside around Carthage just as in the east it had spread through the rural territories of Asia Minor.

Thus far we have seen that the spread of Christianity was largely determined by the conditions confronting the agents of its expansion in the Roman Empire. In the first place, the movement of Christian missionaries was dependent on the excellent possibilities for travel existing under Roman rule. This mobility occurred primarily between cities, and usually for economic reasons, and such factors had an impact on early Christian expansion. But it is clear that the process of evangelisation was not entirely trade-dependent: the movement of people between cities arose out of other necessities, such as administrative requirements, religious and cultural festivals, and legal procedures. All these were particularly

31 See above for Gaul. For Rome, the Clementine epistles show links with Corinth. For Africa: Rives, Religion and Authority, 225-6.
33 Rives, Religion and Authority, 223-6.
34 Lane Fox, Pagans and Christians, 287-93.
36 Meeks, Urban Christians, 16-19; Stambaugh and Balch, Social Environment, 37-41.
important in relationships between cities and small townships in their rural territories, and the growth of the Church in such areas may have resulted from existing town-country networks. Here as elsewhere, however, the degree of central planning of missions remains unclear. Some texts, mainly from the third century, refer to missionary activity, but nowhere does this seem to have taken place on anything more elaborate than local initiatives.\textsuperscript{37} It is necessary to emancipate our conception of Christian expansion from the linear model illustrated by maps which show missions extending like tentacles from a Palestinian core area.\textsuperscript{38} The reality was probably more complex, seemingly lacking in order from a global perspective, but coherent in terms of local, sometimes spontaneous, eruptions of missionary activity. Indeed this primarily local character of early Christianity is confirmed, as we will now see, by any attempt to find an all-encompassing common identity for the Christian communities spread out across the Mediterranean.

UNITARY ASPIRATIONS AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE EARLY CHURCH

The early Church was characterised by a certain tension between unity and diversity, in both practical and doctrinal matters. Again this was a product of the development of Christianity within the Roman imperial environment. For all its unity, the empire preserved a rich mosaic of regional diversities in terms of cultural, economic and institutional development.\textsuperscript{39} The question of doctrinal unity illustrates this tension beautifully. Although it is certainly true that the contest between competing views of ‘orthodoxy’, such as between the Arian and Nicene groups which dominated ecclesiastical affairs in the fourth century, could only

\textsuperscript{37} Lane Fox, \textit{Pagans and Christians}, 289-91.
\textsuperscript{38} E.g. C. C. Park, \textit{Sacred Worlds} (1994), 97, fig.4.1.
occur at a relatively late stage when Christians in various parts of the empire could engage in open dialogue, it is also clear that the concept of an 'orthodox' or 'normative' Christianity opposed to 'heresy' predates the fourth century. How else could Irenaeus have written his *Adversus haereses* in the late-second century? Yet while such views that there was a normative Christianity existed, the definition of what was normative could change from time to time or place to place: 'during the first and second centuries, Christians scattered throughout the world, from to Asia, Africa, Egypt and Gaul, read and revered quite different traditions, and various groups of Christians perceived Jesus and his message very differently.' This tension between doctrinal unity and diversity persisted into the fourth century and beyond, where the advent of imperial involvement added a new dimension to the forces seeking to impose their version of orthodoxy. With emperors taking up highly partisan positions in these doctrinal disputes, orthodoxy often meant the side best able to coerce its opponents into submission.

(i) *Ritual*

Such diversity was a feature not just of early Christian theology, but also of ritual practice. Early Christian liturgy was performed in a variety of architectural settings which no doubt had some impact on the manner in which these rituals were performed, causing it to vary from place to place. Once again we note the tension between unity and diversity, for in spite of these regional variations Christians

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41 Kelly, *Doctrines*, 35-41.


44 White, *God's House*, passim, esp. 11-25; for north-Italian examples, see M. Humphries, 'Geography, topography, Christianity', *Archaeo* 2 (1994), passim.
throughout the Mediterranean world would have shared notions as to what constituted normative liturgical practices, such as the Eucharist, baptism, and so forth. Liturgical evolution was neither linear nor monolithic: it proceeded at different rates and in different ways in the various Christian communities. Certain single events, notably the conversion of Constantine, led to significant changes. In particular, the post-persecution Church could worship openly in public without fear of reprisal. The processional and ceremonial character of the liturgy increased, as the Church, now an imperial institution, began to acquire many of the characteristics associated with court, such as the use of candles, incense, and indeed basilican architecture. Even so, the Constantinian revolution did not signal uniform change. Even in Jerusalem, a city to which Constantine devoted considerable attention, the fourth century saw continuous liturgical innovation.

That different liturgical observances obtained contemporaneously in different parts

45 See the excellent survey of P. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship* (1992). Unfortunately this book is marred by the lamentable omission of any reference to the relationship between architectural setting and ritual, surely a major fault in a book which seeks 'to help construct...a new matrix for the search for the origins of Christian worship, one which takes seriously...above all the clues which point to the essentially variegated nature of ancient Christian worship' (p.205). Nevertheless, instructive studies of that relationship have been made, although there is scope for a great deal of further research. See for example: J. F. Baldovin, *The Urban Character of Christian Worship* (1987); N. Duval, *Les Eglises africaines à deux absides*, 2 vols (1973); and above all the work of T. F. Mathews, such as *The Early Churches of Constantinople* (1971).


of the Roman Empire is clear from, for example, Egeria’s need to describe the Jerusalem liturgy to her fellow Christians in the west (e.g. *Itin. Egeriae* 18.2), or Jerome’s assertion for a southern Gaulish audience that in eastern churches it was normal to light candles for the Gospel reading, regardless of the time of day (*C. Vigilantium* 8). While these examples may imply an east-west divide only, it is clear that liturgical variations could exist on a much more local scale, like those between the baptismal rites of Rome and the north Italian cities.

Rather than the introduction of any specific innovations, the real significance of Constantine’s conversion for liturgical development was that Christians became increasingly aware of differences between their own liturgical practices and those of their brethren elsewhere. This produced a varied response. On the one hand, there was an effort to impose liturgical unity in certain areas. For example, the Council of Arles (314) sought a solution to the problem of the date of Easter, announcing that ‘it should be observed by us on the one day at the same time throughout the whole world’ (Munier, *Conc. Gall.* p.9). Even so, the issue continued to vex ecclesiastical assemblies into the medieval period. Liturgical diversity persisted in spite of the efforts of councils, not least because bishops had few qualms about introducing innovations. Thus Ambrose, at the height of his struggle with the Arian empress-regent Justina, introduced liturgical singing after the eastern fashion (*secundum morem orientalium partium*) to Milan (Aug., *Conf.*

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52 The key text is Ambr., *de sacr.* 3.5: ‘Non ignoramus quod ecclesiae romana hunc consuetudinem [i.e. the washing of feet] non habeat.’ See further Bradshaw, *Christian Worship*, 115-6 (authorship of text), 179-81 (analysis); also E. J. Yarnold, ‘The Ceremonies of Initiation in the *De Sacramentis* and *De Mysteriis* of S. Ambrose’, *Studia Patristica* 10 (1970), 453-63, esp. 460-1.  
That Ambrose knew about eastern-style chanting reflects both the increased mobility of Christians and the polyethnic cultural milieu of northern Italy—especially Milan—in the late-fourth century (see further Ch.2). This movement of Christians from one cultural area to another was itself a spur to liturgical change. Egeria’s description of the Easter Day services at Jerusalem c.381/3 records that while the bishop officiated only in Greek, a presbyter was on hand to translate into Syriac, while alii fratres et sorores grecolatini explained what was going on to Latin-speakers (Itin. Egeriae 47.3-4). In the west, bilingualism is known to have been a feature of the Roman, Beneventan and Ravennate liturgies. Manuscripts from Rome recording Old Roman chant (the precursor of so-called Gregorian chant) show that it had an oriental character and included elements such as a bilingual version of the Trisagion, which seems to have originated at Jerusalem in the late-fourth or early-fifth century. These eastern elements seem to stem from the Byzantine influence exerted on the Italian Churches after Justinian’s reconquest in the sixth century.

Liturgical forms and innovations could, in turn, influence the architectural design of churches. This relationship is most clear at Constantinople, where archaeological evidence and literary evidence can be examined side-by-side. It is clear that changes in church-design observable in middle Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture can be related to liturgical changes. Similarly, the disappearance of monumental baptisteries in most parts of Europe, but not northern Italy and Provence, in the twelfth century probably reflects different developments in those

56 Wellesz, Eastern Elements, passim, esp. 17-18, 50-77.
58 Mathews, Early Churches, esp.177-9.
areas in the relationship between civic and liturgical ritual.\textsuperscript{59} In late antiquity, the churches of north Africa featured elements very different from those in other parts of the Empire. The altar, for example, occupied a central location in the nave, as opposed to a more normal position near the apse, while the whole building was often oriented towards the west, rather than to the east as was usually the case. The precise relationship between these arrangements and liturgical practices peculiar to the African Church is unclear. In the sixth century, however, following the Byzantine reconquest of these provinces from the Vandals, these particular African features were supplanted by ones which seem to indicate that African liturgy was being brought into line with Constantinopolitan practice.\textsuperscript{60} It seems clear, therefore, that church architecture mirrors liturgical performance. In turn, liturgy reflects something of the cultural profile of the Christian communities of the Mediterranean world. As we shall see (below Ch.6), liturgical and architectural forms in northern Italy may help to elucidate the spheres of influence, and perhaps authority, within the region’s Church.

(ii) Organisation

A comparable fluidity can be seen in the evolution of the episcopal office. The word bishop (\textit{ἐπίσκοπος}) is Greek and indicates the impact of the cultural environment of the Hellenistic east on the developing Christian cult: it occurs in secular and pagan contexts also, although the precise relationship between Christian and non-Christian usage is unclear.\textsuperscript{61} The exact origins of the office are obscure, but it is possible that it reflects an increasing need for formal organisation among


Christians beginning to accept the indefinite postponement of the *Parousia*. The tension between unity and diversity observed in definitions of what constituted normative Christianity is also apparent in the development of the episcopate. Bishops were present in most parts of the Roman world where there were Christians, but the nature of episcopal office varied from place to place. In Africa, for example, bishops seem to have resided even in very small towns: but in Asia Minor there was a distinction between ἐπίσκοποι in cities and χώρεπισκοποι (‘country-bishops’) in more rural areas. Again this implies local environmental influence on the development of the Church in a given region.

Similarly the prerogatives of bishops developed differently in different areas. This is particularly clear in the genesis of regional hierarchies. These hierarchies were implicit in the germination of conciliar organisation which became particularly prominent after c. 200. Its origins, however, go back to the Apostolic Age, when there was a gathering of apostles and elders (πρεσβυτέροι) to consider the issues raised by the admission of Gentile converts to the fledgling Christian community (Acts 15:1-35). Also, these young Christian communities sought to keep in contact with each other and regulate their affairs by means of frequent correspondence. These early attempts at broad organisation were a response to the propensity of individual communities to develop independently their own practices and doctrine, just as we have seen them do in matters of ritual. The persistence of this pattern can be seen in the combination of conciliar and epistolary activity in Asia Minor in the second century to suppress Montanism in Phrygia.

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(Eus. *HE* 5.16, 19) and achieve conformity on the celebration of Easter (5.23-4). It seems likely that in areas where Christianity was most widespread, in Africa and Asia Minor, such meetings of bishops came to be held at regular intervals, perhaps annually, by the end of the third century. Again it appears that the Church was mimicking structures found in the Graeco-Roman environment, in this case the habits of secular or pagan-religious organisations, such as *collegia* of tradesmen or provincial and town councils.

With the tendency of Church leaders from several centres to meet to discuss problems came the growth of regional hierarchies. Again the origins lie in the New Testament period. It is significant that Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to discuss the issues raised by Gentile conversion (Acts 15:1-3). This reflects the city’s early pre-eminence among the Christian communities of the east. Jerusalem’s position as a ‘mother-church’ in its region is mirrored by developments elsewhere in the Mediterranean world. Rome in sub-Appennine Italy, Carthage in north Africa, and Alexandria in Egypt and Cyrenaica all seem to have been centres for dissemination of the Gospel and consequently held some form of ‘mother-church’ status within their regional hierarchies. Such hierarchies reflected the emergence of a doctrine of tradition which attached much importance to apostolic

succession in dogmatic and organisational matters.\textsuperscript{70} It was perhaps natural that provincial capitals should be the ‘mother-churches’, as these cities were usually centres of intense economic and social activity, and therefore were likely conduits for Christian missionary efforts.\textsuperscript{71} But as always, the situation varied between regions: Carthaginian ecclesiastical pre-eminence, for example, extended beyond the confines of Africa Proconsularis to Numidia and Mauretania, while in Gaul, the early bishops of Lyon never seem to have held any sway over their episcopal neighbours.\textsuperscript{72} This tension between the unity of a see and the independent tendencies of local bishoprics threatened the bishop of Alexandria’s grip over the Christian communities of the Libyan Pentapolis in the early fourth century.\textsuperscript{73}

Within the city, the Church was sucked into the quagmire of civic politics, as parish priests became a focus for partisan neighbourhood loyalties, a development which in the fourth century helped fuel the violence characteristic of the Arian controversy at Alexandria.\textsuperscript{74}

The development of the episcopate was not, however, conducted on entirely \textit{ad hoc} grounds. As the ecclesiastical hierarchy grew, there was a concern to define the authority of the emerging leaders. To an extent, this was limited to the power of bishops within their own communities, such as the manner in which the bishop acted as a medium between his flock and God.\textsuperscript{75} But there was increasingly an attempt to define the powers of bishops \textit{vis à vis} each other. The symbolic act \textit{par excellence} of this relationship between bishops was the consecration of one by a number of his colleagues. In Rome and Carthage this practice is known from the mid-third century (Eus. \textit{HE} 6. 43.8; Cyprian, \textit{Ep} 67.5); at Alexandria, by contrast,

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item[70] Kelly, \textit{Doctrines}, 29-51; Hanson, \textit{Tradition in the Early Church}, esp. 157-68.
\item[71] Zeiller, ‘Organisation’, 400.
\item[72] Zeiller, ‘Organisation’, 401-2; Griffe, \textit{Gaule chrétienne} 1: 77-9, 404-6.
\end{thebibliography}
it appears to have been introduced only at the consecration of Athanasius in 328.76
This was one area which the councils endeavoured to regulate, not least because the
Donatist and Arian disputes often hinged on the validity of a bishop’s consecration
and, therefore, his office.77 But conciliar legislation, designed to resolve confusion
on this issue, was not always in agreement. At Arles in 314, seven bishops were
prescribed as the ideal number to perform a consecration, but a minimum of three
was considered acceptable (Munier, Conc. Gall. p. 13).78 At Nicaea in 325, it was
decreed that all bishops in a province should attend a consecration; immediately,
however, the impracticality of this is acknowledged and the presence of three
bishops with the subsequent written consent the others is suggested (Conc. Nic.
can.4). Decrees of the Council of Antioch (?341) and Serdica (343) continued to
attempt to define procedures.79 Despite these provisions, a considerable diversity of
practices persisted. The compiler of the Apostolic Constitutions, writing in Syria in
the second-half of the fourth century, states that two or three bishops are equally
valid (3. 20; 8. 47. 1); in Spain, Priscillian of Avila was consecrated by two bishops
in 381.80

Priscillian’s case is instructive, for his election was also ratified by the laity
of Avila (Sulp. Sev., Chron 2.47. 4). Yet his opponents regarded the manner of his
election and consecration as invalid, an accusation against which Priscillian argued
with vigour.81 This highlights an important divergence between conciliar decrees

76 Above all see R. Gryson, ‘Les Élections ecclésiastique au IIIe siècle’, RHE 68 (1973), 353-404,
12.
77 E.g. Lucifer of Cagliari opposed Arian bishops (pseudoepiscopi Arriani) to Pro-Nicenes
(sacerdotes Domini); Gottlieb, ‘Les évêques et les empereurs’, 41-2.
79 On Nicaea, Antioch and Serdica, see R. Gryson, ‘Les Élections épiscopales en Orient au IVe
siècle’, RHE 74 (1979), 302-12.
81 H. Chadwick, Priscillian of Avila (1976), 33-4 and 34 n.1. T. D. Barnes, ‘Religion and Society
in the reign of Theodosius’, in H. Meynell (ed.), Grace, Politics and Desire (1990), 163, asserts that
and actual practice. None of the councils allows for the role of the laity and minor clergy, although their participation in episcopal elections is clear from an early period.\textsuperscript{82} The laity, in particular the urban \textit{plebs} or \textit{demos}, continued to play an important and often disruptive role in ecclesiastical affairs. In Alexandria, for example, the people were deeply involved in the violence associated with the Christological disputes of the fourth century;\textsuperscript{83} in 366/7 at Rome, popular involvement in a disputed papal election left 137 dead (Amm. Marc. 27. 3. 11-13). Well into the fifth century, urban popular upheaval was ‘a significant ingredient which cannot be ignored’ in many aspects of religious dispute.\textsuperscript{84} Of course, such popular involvement was not always violent, as we will see with the elevation of Eusebius of Vercelli.

The occurrence of councils was itself a reflection of growing attempts to regulate interepiscopal relations. Evidence from Carthage in the time of Cyprian (mid-third century) suggests that his councils were rigidly organised, with set procedures.\textsuperscript{85} The conciliar canons themselves sought to introduce regulations. At the Council of Nicaea a serious attempt was made to formalise the provincial hierarchy of the Church, which had hitherto developed informally. The fourth canon laid down the supremacy of the bishop of the provincial capital (\textit{μητρόπολις}) over the other bishops within the secular administrative province.

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Priscillian was not a bishop because his election did not conform to the precepts laid down at Nicaea. But it is clear from the debate between Priscillian and his opponents that there was considerable variety in opinions as to what constituted a valid election and consecration. For a good example of how the procedure at episcopal elections could continue to be the focus of debate, see C. Guarneri, ‘Nota sull’elezione episcopale in Apulia all’inizio del V secolo’, in E. De Sanctis (ed.), \textit{Puglia paleocristiana e altomedievale} 4 (1984), 97-106.

\textsuperscript{82} Gryson, ‘ Elections episcopales en Occident’, passim.


\textsuperscript{85} Amidon, ‘St Cyprian’s Synods’, 328-30.
Furthermore, the same council sought to define the authority of the bishops of Alexandria over the Libyan Pentapolis (can. 6). In so doing, it made vague allusions to the primacies of Antioch and Rome. But while the ruling on Alexandria had been unequivocal, and was indeed the primary concern of the canon, the statements on Rome and Antioch were hopelessly vague. The meaning of this particular canon became a source of contention in subsequent disputes over the authority of these sees. An examination of the various Latin translations made of this ruling show how the text of the sixth canon of Nicaea could be adapted to suit the specific needs of particular western bishops and support the pretensions of the papacy from the pontificate of Damasus I. 86 Also at Nicaea provision was made for the authority of the bishops of Jerusalem (Conc. Nic. can. 7). As with the authority of Rome, Antioch and Alexandria, this was awarded in accordance with ‘custom’ and ‘ancient tradition’ (can. 7: συνήθεια, παράδοσις ἀρχαιά cf. can. 6: τὰ ἀρχαιά ἑθη). This was intended to assert the independence of an important traditional centre of the faith, and as such it coincides with and complements Constantine’s investment in massive building projects in Jerusalem. 87 Yet it also represented a certain tension between the association of authority with traditional centres of the Church and the identification of chief bishoprics with provincial capitals, for Jerusalem, although undoubtedly an ancient Christian centre, fell within the secular, provincial jurisdiction of Caesarea.

The issue of regional primacies was further complicated by the foundation of Constantinople. It seemed inconceivable that the bishop of the new imperial capital should have no jurisdiction. The possibility of attaching some provincial authority to the bishop of Constantinople was aided by the fact that in the east, where many sees could look to Peter or Paul as founder, apostolic succession counted for rather less in administrative terms than it did in the west, where only

86 On canon 6, see Chadwick, ‘Faith and Order’, esp. 180-90 on the various interpretations of it at Rome and Antioch.
87 Chadwick, ‘Faith and Order’, 182.
Rome could claim an apostolic foundation. Obviously there could be no statement on Constantinople at Nicaea in 325: the new capital was not dedicated until 11 May 330. But at the council of Constantinople in 381, the city’s episcopal prestige was affirmed. Henceforth Constantinople was to hold ‘privileges of honour’ (τὰ πρεσβεϊα τῆς τιμῆς) in second place to Rome ‘because it is itself the new Rome (διὰ τὸ εἶναι αὐτῆν νέαν Ρώμην)’ (Conc. Const. can. 3). This set the tone for future Constantinopolitan advancement: henceforth the city’s ecclesiastical rights were judged solely on the basis that it was an imperial capital. Indeed, at the Council of Chalcedon (451), precisely this criterion was applied to the primacy of Rome: ‘For to the throne of the older Rome, the Fathers naturally gave privileges because that city is an imperial city (διὰ τὸ βασιλείαν τῆς πόλις ἐκείνην)’ (Conc. Chalc. can.28). Thus Constantinople joined the ranks of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem and Rome. It is also worth noting that only at Chalcedon was the jurisdiction of the bishop of Constantinople given precise territorial definition, extending over Pontus, Asia and Thrace ‘and bishops from the aforementioned provinces in barbarian territories’ (Conc. Chalc. can.28). Before this, the jurisdiction of the Constantinopolitan see had been relatively fluid. Similarly, the bishops of Antioch and Jerusalem sought to redefine their jurisdiction after the Council of Nicaea, bringing their sees into a conflict which was only resolved at Chalcedon.

These various conciliar rulings demonstrate that throughout the fourth century and into the fifth, the ideology of episcopal administration was flexible and in transition. Precise definitions were being formulated and reformulated to meet

88 F. Dvornik, Byantium and the Roman Primacy 2 (1979), 40-4. Of the evidence surveyed by Hanson, Tradition in the Early Church, 157-68, it is noteworthy that most comes from the west (see esp. p.158).
89 Date: G. Dagron, Naissance d’une capitale (1974), 32-3.
90 Dvornik, Byantium and the Roman Primacy, 44-54; Meyendorff, Imperial Unity, 179-84.
91 Dagron, Naissance, 461-73.
92 Chadwick, ‘Faith and Order’, 182-7; Meyendorff, Imperial Unity, 179.
new exigencies, such as the rise of Constantinople. Old definitions could be rewritten, as with the sequence of Latin translations of Nicaea Canon 6. It is not surprising, therefore, that our available evidence on the practice of episcopal power should reflect the ambiguities inherent in the developing hierarchy. From Cappadocia, two letters of Basil of Caesarea (d.379) show that χωρεπισκοποι were flouting the jurisdiction which he believed he wielded over them (Epp 53-4). Clearly the hierarchy lacked formal definition so far as the rural bishops were concerned. A related problem confronted the participants at the Council of Serdica. They strongly advised against the appointment of bishops in villages of small towns where a single priest would suffice, giving as their reason that the episcopal name and authority (αυθεντια) would suffer humiliation (Conc. Serd. can.6). So imprecise could be the hierarchy, then, that it was necessary to issue instructions even on where to create a bishopric.

CONCLUSION

In sum, the period during which I will examine the growth of north-Italian Christianity was one when both the expansion and subsequent development of Christianity was guided by the environment of the Roman Mediterranean world. It was this milieu which defined the attitudes and expectations of Christians, and imposed certain limits of possibility on what they might achieve. Local circumstances in particular, and the regionalist character of the Roman empire in general, had a profound influence not only on the development of Christian culture, but on the nature of evangelisation itself. Christianity, while born in Palestine, did not spread from that area in a sequence of centrally directed Gospel missions. Rather it emanated from various local centres, such as Rome, Carthage and Lyon, in

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93 Chadwick, Role of the Christian Bishop, 2; Meyendorff, Imperial Unity, 43.
94 Hefele-Leclercq, Conciles, 1: 782; Meyendorff, Imperial Unity, 42.
a manner which from an Empire-wide perspective seems inchoate, but which retained coherence in regional terms.

By the time of Constantine's conversion, Christianity had enjoyed some three centuries of this regional development. But now that the various communions scattered across the Mediterranean were able to interact with one another on a regular basis without the threat of persecution, there was a drive—often directed, tacitly or otherwise, by the imperial power—to achieve not just doctrinal unity, but practical and organisational coherence across the Empire. Attempts to achieve this, however, were often defined and interpreted in terms of regional interests, as is shown by the controversy arising as to the precise meaning of the sixth canon of Nicaea. In no small measure, the difficulties experienced by these early imperial councils were the inheritance of a Church which had developed along diverse, regional lines for nearly 300 years, but which was now required to develop a unified structure. Yet attempts to achieve this were constantly confronted by the tension between unifying and diversifying tendencies: the Church found itself involved in a tug-of-war between opposite poles represented by its tradition of development within the cultural mosaic of the Mediterranean region, and the new role it was expected to play in a united, Christian empire.\textsuperscript{95} Taken together, these various tensions are a useful reminder that throughout late antiquity the Christian Church continued to exist in a state of evolutionary metamorphosis.

\textsuperscript{95} Cf. Ch. 5 below.
Having seen how different environmental circumstances influenced the development of the church in other regions bordering the Mediterranean, it is time now to consider the situation which obtained in northern Italy. In later chapters, I will argue that the arrival, expansion and development of Christianity in northern Italy were determined by the environmental dictates of the region. To understand these processes, then, it is crucial to have a picture of the region's dynamics, and in this chapter I aim to provide a sketch of the conditions which shaped north Italian Christianity. Since the first Christians arrived in a region already deeply influenced by a Roman presence, it is not enough to examine the north Italian environment in purely geographical terms. We must also consider the human structures which existed within the geographical context. These human structures were highly complex, ranging from visible, concrete features which added to the physical appearance of the region, such as roads and settlements, to more intangible ones, like the social, economic and cultural networks through which the local populations of northern Italy interacted with each other and the outside world. Together with the enduring influence of the physical landscape, these factors constitute what I call the north Italian human environment.\footnote{Cf. M. Humphries, 'Geography, topography, Christianity', \textit{Archaeo} 2 (1994), esp. 25-8.} In what follows I will naturally concentrate on towns and cities, since Christianity was at first a primarily, if not exclusively, urban phenomenon. It was towns, moreover, which offered the ideal environment for the direct personal contact crucial to the dissemination of religious ideas. Yet physical geography is a good enough place to begin, since it provides the canvas upon which human activity is painted.
When Caesar and his army crossed the Rubicon, they performed a deed resonating with profound symbolism for many Romans. Hence Suetonius made the crossing a watershed, a moment of high drama (Suet. *Iul.* 31.2). Five centuries later when Sidonius Apollinaris, en route from Gaul to Rome, encountered the river, he paused to contemplate Caesar’s action (*Ep.* 1.5.7). It is Sidonius who most explicitly expounds the symbolism: the Rubicon was once the boundary between Italy and Cisalpine Gaul (*olim Gallis cisalpinis Italisque veteribus terminus erat*). It was close to Rimini from where the road from the north led south to Fano and thence inland through the Appennines towards Rome. The Rubicon, then, was a neat conceptualisation, an articulation in Roman terms of the frontier between two parts of Italy, one north and the other south of the Ligurian and Tosco-Emilian Appennines. The distinction went further: north of the Rubicon was not even properly part of Italy. Designated Cisalpine Gaul, it was where barbarian Europe encroached closest on the comfortable heartland of Roman Italy (cf. Strabo 5.2.10). By the time of Augustus, however, northern Italy had come to be seen as a geographical unit in its own right, a gulf of land bounded by mountains (Strabo 5.1.3; cf. Polybius 2.16.6-10). This view was the product of a gradual process of experience, perception and definition, beginning with the first Roman forays into the region in the third century B.C.E.2

(i) **Mountains.**

Mountains, as Strabo noted, defined northern Italy: the Alpine arc stretching from the Riviera in the west to Istria and the headwaters of the Adriatic in the east; and the diagonal sweep of the Appennines, running south-east from Liguria, where they are contiguous with the Maritime Alps, to Rimini, where they hem the Adriatic

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2 N. Purcell, ‘The Creation of Provincial Landscape’, in T. Blagg and M. Millett (eds.) *The Early Roman Empire in the West* (1990), 9-12.
coast. Of these the Appennines are far the greater obstacle to human movement. Even at their narrowest point, between Tortona and Genoa, they still separated societies with profoundly different social and economic bases. For all its importance as a trading port (Strabo 5.1.3), Genoa seems to have enjoyed only limited commercial contacts with the regions north of the Appennines: as in the middle ages, its trade seems to have focused primarily on the sea. In the early middle ages, the relative isolation of Genoa from the rest of northern Italy across the Appennines was emphasised not least by political differences. In 569, for


4 P. Garnsey, 'Economy and Society of Mediolanum under the Principate', *PBSR* 44 (1976), 16-17, 21, employs a Vercellese inscription (*CIL* 5.7373) recording C. Marius Aelianus, a native of Tortona who was magistrate at both Genoa and Vercelli, to demonstrate active commercial links between Genoa and the Po valley. But the evidence he used was, by his own confession, too sparse to permit such conclusions. Moreover, I cannot agree with Garnsey (p.17 n.17) that Strabo's description of Genoa as the emporium of Liguria (Strabo 5.1.3) means that its trade ordinarily stretched as far as the banks of the Po. This is to make Strabo's definition of Liguria conform to that of the Augustan *regio IX*, called Liguria, which extended this far (Thomsen, *The Italic Regions* (1947), 126-31). But Strabo's conception of Liguria is patently different. Towns such as Tortona, which were part of Augustan Liguria, are included in Strabo's description of the Po valley (5.1.11), which he clearly distinguishes from Liguria (5.2.1), a region which he apparently considered no more extensive than an insignificant coastal strip (cf. 5.2.1). Brunt, *Italian Manpower*, 180-1, offers, to my mind, a more sensible appraisal of the economic realities of attempting to transport goods overland from Genoa across the Appennines. This is a useful reminder that administrative and commercial geography do not always overlap.

5 For example, analysis of the Italian amphorae retrieved during the excavations between 1982 and 1985 in the S. Silvestro district of the castle hill revealed that most of them came from Etruria, Latium and Campania: M. Milanese, *Genova romana* (1993), 82-91, esp. 88-91. Perhaps in antiquity, as in the middle ages, Genoa's economic importance lay not in its role as an entrepôt between Liguria and the wider Mediterranean world, but as a centre of exchange from where imported goods were re-exported: cf. D. Abulafia, *The Two Italies. Economic relations between the Norman kingdom of Sicily and the northern communes* (1977), esp.217-54, noting instances where luxury goods from the east being exported to Sicily, via which they had come to Genoa in the first place; cf. S. Origone, *Bizanzio e Genova* (1992), 51-60.

example, when the Lombards took Milan, the bishops of that city fled to exile at Genoa, at that time still in Byzantine hands.7

The easiest crossing of the range was further east, via the Marecchia valley from Arezzo to Rimini (Strabo 5.2.9). This sector, the Umbrian Appennines, was the crucial channel of communication from Rome and its surrounding areas to northern Italy.8 It was here that the earliest contacts occurred between Italians from the north and those of the centre and south. In the fifth century B.C.E. the Umbrians seem to have occupied territory in the Romagna, including Ravenna, Rimini and Sarsina (Strabo 5.2.10).9 The first Roman penetration of northern Italy also came by this route. Rimini was founded at the estuary of the Marecchia in 268 B.C.E. and a road, the Via Flaminia, was constructed nearby along the route of the river Metaurus in 232 B.C.E. This was the route taken by Caesar and Sidonius in later centuries. Even in the early modern period it remained the most convenient crossing from northern Italy to Rome.10 Yet, as Sidonius’ graphic account relates,

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7 Paul. Diac., HL 2.25; cf. Origone, Bicanzio e Genova, 18-23, for the importance of Genoa at this period. Note, however, that this was not entirely the upshot of geographical factors, since the passes of the Ligurian Appennines were heavily garrisoned at this time: N. Christie, ‘Byzantine Liguria’, PBSR 45 (1990), 257-64; and in greater detail, id., ‘The limes bizantino revisited: the defence of Liguria, A.D.568-643’, Rivista di Studi Liguri 55 (1989), 5-38.

8 It remained so in the early middle ages, when the duchy of Perugia formed a vital link between Rome and the Byzantine Pentapolis round Ravenna: Ch. Diehl, Études sur l’administration byzantine dans l’exarchat de Ravenne (1888), 68-72. This route was, however, never secure, and was regularly under attack from the neighbouring Lombard duchy of Spoleto: T. F. X. Noble, The Republic of St Peter (1984), 5, 156-7. This emphasises the continued strategic importance of the Umbrian Appennines, which the Romans knew only too well: cf. G. Tabacco, The Struggle for Power in Medieval Italy (1988), 75.

9 M. Pallottino, A History of Earliest Italy (1991), 104.

crossing the Appennines via this route, even with the *cursus publicus* at his disposal, could be extremely gruelling (Sid., *Ep.* 1. 5. 2, 8-10).¹¹

By contrast the Alps, punctuated by a greater profusion of easily negotiable passes, were a less serious barrier to communication. This was especially so in their central and eastern reaches. North of Verona, the valley of the river Adige cut a cleft through the mountains that allowed easy passage to the lands bordering the upper Danube. In the north-east, the gentle, low-lying Julian Alps have never offered any serious barrier to human movement to and fro between northern Italy and the middle-Danubian region. From prehistoric times, the peoples of northern Italy have had more in common with their neighbours north of the Alps than those south of the Appennines.¹² When the Romans first entered the plain, much of it was occupied by Celtic peoples, and this affinity with Gaul was accentuated by the similar climates enjoyed by both regions. Consequently the Po valley came to be known as Gallia Cisalpina: Gaul on the nearer side of the Alps. Apart from the connections with Gaul through the Maritime Alps, there were contacts through the central Alps with the Celts of Rhaetia, who established *oppida* at Trent and Verona.¹³ In the east, the Venetic peoples had long standing connections via the Julian Alps with the peoples of the Balkans and the Hungarian plain.¹⁴ This

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¹¹ I am informed by a friend, who works in Urbino, lives in Florence and commutes weekly, that even with a car, the autostrada, and a comprehensive system of tunnels, trans-Appennine travel is still tortuous.

¹² The recent discovery (September 1991) of the quasi-mummified corpse of `Ötzi the Iceman', dating perhaps as early as the fourth millennium B.C.E., has shown human activity high in the Alto Adige at a very early period. Konrad Spindler, the prehistorian involved in the recovery of Ötzi's body, advanced amongst others the theory that he may have been involved in trade between one side of the Alps and the other. For other interpretations, and a full review of the issues: L. Barfield, 'The Iceman reviewed', *Antiquity* 68 (1994), 10-26.


tradition of contact between these areas has persisted into modern times, as the sway of political fortunes has seen national borders creep back and forth across these miniature Alps. In our own century, the bloodshed on the Carso above Gorizia during the First World War and the march of d'Annunzio to Fiume in 1919 are violent testimony to Italy's total lack of geographical definition at its north-eastern frontier.\(^{15}\)

(ii) Rivers.

Within the arena formed by the encircling mountains, the other great geographic feature of northern Italy was its network of rivers, above all the Po.\(^{16}\) Snaking its way from the Alps to the Adriatic, drawing its waters from the mountains north and south, it is the Po which gives unity to the plain. To the Romans, with their penchant for conceptualising the landscape, it could function as a barrier. Both Polybius (2.16.6-7) and Strabo (5.1.4) talk of the regions of northern Italy in terms of Transpadana (across the Po) and Cispadana (on the near side of the Po). This view informed the Augustan division of northern Italy into regiones in which the Po acted as a dividing line.\(^{17}\) Occasionally, such as when it was in flood, the Po could indeed constitute a physical barrier.\(^{18}\) But more important was its role as a major communications artery. Because land transport was slow, bumpy and expensive, the river offered an attractive alternative means of moving cargoes.

\(^{15}\) Such bloodshed was in part driven by delusions concerning Italy's so-called natural frontier in the north-east. On 26 May 1916, for example, King Vittorio Emanuele II told his troops to rejoice because they would share in 'la gloria di piantare il tricolore d'Italia sui termini sacri che natura pose a confini della Patria nostra.' The tragic stupidity of such rhetoric can best be appreciated in the quiet seclusion of the Cimitero dei Caduti behind the Patriarchal Basilica at Aquileia. Cf. G. Tibiletti, Storie locali dell'Italia romana (1978), 35-45, esp.38.

\(^{16}\) Brunt, Italian Manpower, 173-5. 179-81, esp.179: 'The most striking difference between Cisalpina and the rest of Italy was its inland water-system.'

\(^{17}\) On the Augustan regiones see G. E. F. Chilver, Cisalpine Gaul (1942), 1; Thomsen, Italic Regions. Part I, esp. 144.

especially if they were bulky or fragile. It was also used for personal travel: when Sidonius went to Rome, his journey from Pavia to Ravenna was made by boat on the Po (Ep. 1.5.3-5; cf. Strabo 5.1.11). But the Po was just one of a number of rivers used for transport, especially in the areas closest to the Adriatic coast, and above all in the damp, flat plains of Venetia. It was possible to sail from lake Garda to the Adriatic, via the Mincio and then the Po. Padua, some 250 stades from the sea, nevertheless had its own port on the river Medoacus, while minor channels also connected Oderzo, Concordia, Adria, Vicenza, and others to the Adriatic. Indeed Aquileia, the major port of northern Italy, lay more than 60 stades inland on the river Natiso (Strabo 5.1.8).

HUMAN GEOGRAPHY I: BUILDING A ROMAN ENVIRONMENT IN NORTHERN ITALY

By the time Christianity arrived in the region, human activity had added its own features to the environment, and these were to be profoundly influential on the growth of the new faith. In the first place there were physical structures, often built in response to environmental conditions. The construction of canals and drainage ditches in much of the Po valley and Venetia was a necessary prerequisite to bringing once marshy ground into agricultural use. Similarly, the development of Roman cities and road networks in northern Italy amply demonstrates the influence of the physical environment on human activity. And for the Romans both were fundamental to asserting control over newly conquered territories north of the

20 Chevallier, Romanisation, 23.
22 Chevallier, Romanisation, 297-9.
Appennines. Together with them came the checkerboard division of agricultural land by centuriation, which has been justly called 'a reduplication of Roman political structures in a conquered zone.'

We have already seen that the easiest point of access to northern Italy, the Umbrian Appennines, had an impact on the historical development of the Roman conquest, with the foundation of Rimini and the laying of the Via Flaminia. Routes taken by other early roads were similarly dictated by environmental factors. The Po was most easily crossed at the point straddled by the twin Latin colonies of Piacenza and Cremona, both founded in 218 B.C.E. As with Rimini and the Via Flaminia, roads followed the cities. In 187 B.C.E. the Via Aemilia was built, hugging the northern fringe of the Appennines, running north-west from Rimini to Piacenza (Livy 39.2) and flanked on either side by centuriated land. The central position of Cremona and Piacenza (cf. Strabo 5.1.11) was emphasised again in 148/7 B.C.E. with the construction of the Via Postumia from Genoa to Aquileia, which crossed the Po at the twin colonies.

While Cremona and Piacenza were built in advance of the Roman road, most other foundations were later developments. Along the Via Aemilia, for example, lay Bologna, Modena and Parma, together with a host of minor settlements. Similarly, once the Alps began to be brought under Roman control

23 In general, see J. B. Ward-Perkins, 'Central authority and rural settlement', in P. J. Ucko et al. (eds.), Man, settlement and urbanism (1972), 867-882, covering a different part of Italy (southern Etruria), but packed with brilliant ideas on the use of settlement patterns to extend political control. Cities: Garnsey and Sailer, Roman Empire, 189-95. Centuriation: Purcell, 'Creation of Provincial Landscape', 12-20, quotation from 16; cf. L. Bosio, 'Capire la terra: centuriazione romana del Veneto', in Misurare la terra, 15-21, esp. 21; C. R. Whittaker, Frontiers of the Roman Empire (1994), 10-30, esp.18-26, on 'Space, Power, and Society'. Roads: R. Chevallier, Roman Roads (1976), 202-6.

24 Dyson, Creation of the Roman Frontier, 32-5.

25 Chevallier, Romanisation, 7-8, plates V-XIV.

26 Chevallier, Romanisation, 9; Purcell, 'Creation of Provincial Landscape', 13.

27 Dyson, Creation of the Roman Frontier, 40.
in the reign of Augustus, cities were established commanding the mountain passes, as at Turin, Aosta, Susa, Verona and Trent. In the subdued zone these cities, echoing the rhythms of urban life at Rome, became the major centres of a cultural conquest. If native customs were to persist, they would do so in the areas most remote from urban influence, particularly in the mountains. Even in the late sixteenth century, pre-Christian fertility cults endured in the mountain valleys near Cividale in Friuli, not far from Aquileia, one of the oldest centres of Christianity in the region (and indeed, the seat of the patriarchate at this time). But while this shows how in remote areas pre-existing traditions could persist, there can be no all-encompassing rule. In the Val di Non near Trento, an area both rural and mountainous and therefore surely a classic peripheral zone, there was a strong Roman presence. This warning reminds us that local factors are extremely important for understanding cultural change. In the Val di Non the presence of the brick industry and aristocratic estates in the early empire and its importance as a military zone after the fall of the Rhaetian limes in 383 meant that, for all its apparent remoteness, the area saw constant and intensive Roman activity.

The material fabric of the cities constituted an important part of the north-Italian environment by the beginning of the Christian period. Cities here were often based on a strict orthogonal plan which in many cases persisted throughout the middle ages into the modern period. Roman street grids survive at Bologna, Brescia, Como, Parma, Pavia, Piacenza and Verona; until 1585, when Carlo

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29 See n. 24 above.
31 Lizzi, Vescovi, 70-80; id., 'Ambrose's Contemporaries and the Christianisation of northern Italy', *JRS* 80 (1990), 170.
Emmanuele I, Duke of Savoy, initiated a century of total rebuilding. Turin too retained its Roman plan. The persistence of these street grids—and the continuity of effective public control over the urban fabric it implies—emphasises the need of the church, like any private organisation, to develop within the strict confines of this 'built environment'. Analogous developments can be seen in the spread of other private (i.e. not state sponsored) cults, such as those of Isis, Mithras and Judaism. In these cases, which are either slightly earlier than or roughly contemporary with the dispersion of Christianity, we see that while each cult had need of certain architectural features, notably orientation, in their buildings of worship, no two buildings were the same. Each Iseum, Mithraeum, or Synagogue was inserted as a private venture into an existing public, urban framework, which it rarely had the opportunity to override or adapt. As a consequence, such buildings present an astonishing range of architectural adaptation to prevailing local conditions.

**HUMAN GEOGRAPHY II: NETWORKS AND INTERACTION**

Within the physical environment provided by landscapes, urban centres and roads, there developed a complex set of interpersonal relationships. These networks were the engines of change in society, and early Christianity was heavily dependent on them for its expansion and development, since, as we have seen (Introduction; urban change in northern Italy in the early medieval period', in J. W. Rich (ed.), *The City in Late Antiquity* (1992), 161-180.

35 The term is taken from R. S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (1993), 45-54.
36 White, *God's House*, Ch.3 (esp.48-59) and Ch.4 (esp. 85-101) on Mithraism and Judaism respectively. On Isis: R. A. Wild, 'The known Isis-Sarapis sanctuaries of the Roman period', *ANRW* II.17.4 (1984), 1739-1851, a comprehensive catalogue, but lacking the 'adaptation' methodology exemplified by White.
Ch.1), religion was deeply embedded in the social, economic and cultural framework of the Roman world. Plotting such networks is a difficult task: a tension exists between the methodological tendency to view them as distinct categories, and the demonstrable circumstance that they were blurred and not differentiated in practice. Thus while I will now analyse these networks individually, it must be remembered that together they constitute a complex, multilayered and interwoven social fabric.\(^{37}\)

(i) **Economic networks**

Economic activity in the form of trade provided an ideal environment for the personal interface so important to religious change. I have already alluded to the economy with reference to the transportation of goods, but we should not confuse commercial networks with communications networks. The two were certainly linked, but as is known from elsewhere in Italy and the empire, a good location in respect of communications was not always enough to guarantee a settlement importance as a market centre.\(^{38}\) The road network, however, was important in that it provided easy communications to such markets as existed: it is particularly noteworthy that, in the wake of the construction of the Via Aemilia, a number of small market towns, some bearing the giveaway name *Forum*, sprang up along its length.\(^{39}\) It must also be remembered that trade operated on a number of different levels: some goods would have been traded at the most limited, local level, particularly perishable agricultural products of everyday use. But where goods

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37 For central and southern Italy: Dyson, *Community and Society*, 147-79.

38 Roman Apulia provides some well-researched examples. Aecae (modern Troia) commanded the two ancient roads from Benevento to Lucera, but never became an important market. That it was overshadowed by Lucera itself highlights the equal importance of locally available commodities to the location of markets: J. M. Frayn, *Markets and Fairs in Roman Italy* (1993), 41-2. 79-84. Cf. the prosperity of Canusium (Canosa di Puglia) in the fourth century: Dyson, *Community and Society*, 233.

39 Dyson, *Creation of the Roman Frontier*, 40.
could be classed as luxuries, or where a market had access to specialised commodities, then the likelihood of long-distance trade was greater.  

In northern Italy there were a number of such markets which attracted traders from the Po basin and beyond. The textile industry was particularly important: Milan was an important centre for distribution in the upper Po valley, while the linen industry benefitted Faenza. In the Venetic plains especially, ideal grazing conditions which rendered transhumance virtually redundant fostered a flourishing woolen trade, with important markets at Brescia, Verona, Padua and Altino. In many of these instances, towns were not important commercial centres simply because they were markets for raw goods: rather, as Strabo’s description of Padua (5. 1. 7), references to Altino in Diocletian’s Price Edict (21. 2; 25. 4), and numerous epitaphs from Aquileia remind us, a city’s ability to process goods added to its significance as a trading centre.

With excellent communications added to locally available goods and thriving industry, some towns and cities became important markets not just for northern Italy but for the wider world. Milan, for example, commanded a number of trade-routes across the Alps to Rhaetia and Gaul, and consequently became an important node in both transalpine and Cisalpine trade-networks. The city’s trade may even have stretched southwards, if the inscription recording the presence of an Apulian negotiator sagarius (CIL 5.5925) represents anything more than an isolated

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43 *CIL*, 5.5911: a corporation of traders operating in these areas. For commentary: Garnsey, ‘Economy and society at Mediolanum’, 19-22.
Likewise Verona, at the opening of the Adige valley onto the plain, controlled an important route into the Alps to Innsbruck, Augsburg and other markets in Noricum. The fast-flowing Adige seems to have become navigable from Verona, which would have increased the city's commercial potential. Explicit evidence confirms that markets at Cremona in the centre of northern Italy flourished because of its situation on the Po (Tac. Hist. 3. 30, 34).

The greatest centres of trade would have been the sea-ports on the Adriatic. Padua, as we saw, was connected with the sea, which undoubtedly helped its cloth trade in the late-Republic and Augustan period (Strabo 5. 1. 7). Ravenna was situated in antiquity at the mouth of the Po (Sid. Ap. Ep. 5. 1. 11), while Pliny records that the river allowed the penetration of foreign goods deep into the north Italian plain (HN 3.123). This makes Ravenna a likely entrepôt for goods coming up the Adriatic. Distributions of imports in Cispadana suggest that there must have been a commercial port somewhere along its coast, but identifying this with Ravenna is not easy. The city's maritime importance was attributable mainly to the great naval base at nearby Classis, which would certainly have generated its own trade because of the need for supplies. Yet the precise location of a commercial port is still debated, and its significance prior to 402, when the imperial court moved to Ravenna, is impossible to define. Furthermore there was an important port nearby at Rimini (Strabo 5. 1. 11), which, unlike Ravenna, was also at the hub

44 Jones, 'Cloth Industry', 192.
46 CIL 5.4017 records Veronese navicularii.
47 Thus Garnsey, 'Economy and society at Mediolanum', 17-18.
49 Excavations in the Chiavichetta district of Classe have revealed horrea and ceramic manufacturing facilities by the quayside: F. Diechmann, Ravenna: Haupstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes II Kommentar 3 (1989), 33, 45, 48, 263-4, 266, and pls.12-18.
50 Chevallier, Romanisation, 24-7; M. Reddé, Mare Nostrum (1986), 183-6.
of an important road network.\(^{51}\) This is not to deny that Ravenna itself was important, but to suggest that imports may have reached Cispadana through more than one port.

There is no such ambiguity for Venetia, where economic interaction with the outside world was dominated by Aquileia. The city was ideally situated on the navigable river Natiso, which linked the city to the Adriatic, and near the passes through the Julian Alps to the Balkans and the Danube. Contacts with the regions across the mountains began very early indeed and persisted into the Roman period and beyond.\(^{52}\) Strabo emphasised this trade, calling Aquileia an ἐμπόριον τοῖς περὶ τὸν Ἰστρόν τῶν Ἰλαυριῶν (Strabo 5.1.8; cf.4.6.10). This sentiment is echoed by Herodian some 200 years later, but he draws greater attention to the role of Aquileia as a centre of exchange between land and sea, as well as being a considerable agricultural and industrial centre in its own right (Herod.8.2.3). Archaeological and epigraphic evidence confirms this picture. At Aquileia itself there are the impressive remains of the harbour and its horrea, as well as numerous finds associated with trade. The distribution of inscriptions, pottery and amphorae attests the activity of Aquileian traders in the Julian Alps and the Danubian provinces in the early imperial period.\(^{53}\) The extent to which the tentacles of this trade extended westwards into northern Italy is unclear, but it is possible to infer its existence from the social networks which linked Aquileia and other centres in Venetia (see below).

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\(^{51}\) See above, text at nn.9-12.

\(^{52}\) Early contacts: see n.15 above. The foundation of Aquileia in 183 B.C.E. was soon followed by early Roman military expeditions into Pannonia: Dyson, *Creation of the Roman Frontier*, 74.

(ii) Social and cultural networks: the matrix of interaction

The movement of goods meant the movement of people, and it is in connection with trade that we have the clearest evidence of the local populations of northern Italy interacting with each other and with the outside world. The epigraphic record throws up many instances of people moving around and beyond northern Italy for commercial purposes. Members of the Barbii gens from Aquileia, for example, are attested in trading contexts throughout the Danubian provinces, the north-eastern Alps, the ports of the Adriatic, and in cities in northern Italy. Foreign traders too are mentioned in inscriptions found in and around the city, confirming Herodian's early-third century description of Aquileia as 'teeming with local citizens, aliens, and traders' (8.2.3). The Gavii, a prominent Veronese family, had freedmen at Aquileia, and it is possible that they too were engaged in trade. It was not just merchants, however, who moved around northern Italy because of trade. Commerce across provincial boundaries attracted the scrutiny of the imperial government, which established customs stations staffed with imperial officials and their slaves. Transalpine routes in north-eastern Italy came under the aegis of the publicum portorium Illyrici, and the distribution of personnel associated with the portorium confirms the picture of close links between north-eastern Italy and the Danubian provinces. The activities of one Ti. Iulius Saturninus, a praefectus vehiculorum of the customs network in the reign of Antoninus Pius, is recorded on inscriptions along the road leading east through Moesia Inferior and Thrace; his slaves and stewards (vilici) are attested on the routes from Venetia to Noricum, and on the Dalmatian coast. Around the same time, two other officials of the portorium, C. Antonius Rufus and Q. Sabinius Veranus, and their staff were active in precisely the same areas. These networks cluster along a number of trade-

55 Chilver, Cisalpine Gaul, 90-1.
routes, both overland and maritime, emanating from Aquileia, where, moreover, a bureau of the *publicum portorium Illyrici* was based.\(^\text{59}\)

State influence on the social dynamics of the region is visible in other matters. When Roman armies began to bring the Balkans under control, this expansion was buttressed by the foundation of colonies, some of whose settlers seem to have come from northern Italy: at Emona (Ljubljana) and Savaria (Szombathely), for instance, members of the Tiberii-Barbii *gens* which had died out at Aquileia by the early imperial period are found holding civic office in the first and second centuries C.E.\(^\text{60}\) Not only did state directives 'export' people from northern Italy: it drafted them in too, such as at Ravenna, where the marines associated with the imperial naval base came from diverse racial backgrounds.\(^\text{61}\)

These last examples remind us that social networks were not always dependent on trade. Politics and religion provide further instances of non-commercial interaction. Analyses of epigraphic material reveals that certain individuals from one city held priesthoods and magistracies at others. Although the evidence is far from comprehensive, it is possible to see a number of regional clusters. At Tortona, for example, an inscription reveals that one C. Marius Aelianus held office in Vercelli and Genoa, as well as in Tortona (*CIL* 5.7373). Similarly, numerous Milanese filled administrative posts in neighbouring cities.

\(^{58}\) Antonius Rufus etc.: *CIL* 3. 13283 (Dalmatian coast), 5117 (Atrans in Noricum); *ILS* 4244 (Poetovio in Pannonia). Sabinius Veranus etc.: *CIL* 3. 4875, 5184 (Noricum); *ILS* 4243 (Poetovio).


\(^{61}\) Chevallier, *Romanisation*, 204-6; C. G. Starr, *The Roman Imperial Navy*, (1941), 204-6.
such as Como and Lodi,\textsuperscript{62} while we find Barbii, probably related to the Aquileian \textit{gens}, in priesthhoods at Altino and Vicenza.\textsuperscript{63} Such connections might suggest commercial links, especially when a trading family like the Barbii is involved, but it would rash to assume that every connection reflected economic interests. Milan's links with Como could certainly be seen in a commercial context,\textsuperscript{64} but those with Lodi more probably resulted from the traffic between Rome and Milan.\textsuperscript{65} Some of this would have involved trade, but there would have been also much concerned with the political relationship between Milan, an important administrative centre, and the imperial capital and court. Another example of this non-commercial interaction is provided by the inscription of Marius Aelianus from Tortona, which mentions that he had been \textit{iudex inter selectos ex V decuriis}, recording his jury service at Rome.\textsuperscript{66}

To social networks deriving from the administrative actions and ambitions of family groups we must add those connections fostered by the urban culture of northern Italy. Unfortunately, little is known of the religious festivals of north Italian cities, apart from the festival with games held in honour of Antenor at Padua once every thirty years.\textsuperscript{67} There is better evidence for the role of civic spectacles, such as shows at the theatre or games in the arena, in creating social networks.\textsuperscript{68} Such public spectacles would probably have attracted large crowds of spectators, especially to a city like Verona, which boasted one of the largest amphitheatres in

\textsuperscript{62} Tibiletti, \textit{Storie locali}, 279-82; cf. M. Mirabella Roberti, ‘Milano e Como’, in \textit{La città nell'Italia settentrionale in età romana} (1990), 479-98, arguing that Como was originally the more important city.

\textsuperscript{63} Sasel, ‘Barbii’, nos. 62 and 94.

\textsuperscript{64} A Milanese trader was \textit{patronus} of a guild of sailors on lake Como: \textit{CIL} 5. 5911; cf. n. 44 above.

\textsuperscript{65} Tibiletti, \textit{Storie locali}, 1-4.


\textsuperscript{67} Dio 62. 26; Tac. \textit{Ann.} 16. 21. 1.

\textsuperscript{68} Chevallier, \textit{Romanisation}, 508.
Italy. At Verona we have evidence that the gladiators at least came from other parts of the Po valley: epitaphs were set up in honour of fallen combatants from Modena (by his wife and fans!) and Tortona. Verona also demonstrates how such entertainments could provide opportunities for local grandees to play the role of civic patrons. At the highest level of the *cavea* of the theatre on the Colle di San Pietro, there were porticoes from where the Veronese could admire the view across their city: these arcades were built, as inscriptions record, at the expense of the great families of the city, the Gavii among them. Indeed patronage, as the glue which cemented Roman society, both urban and rural, was to be of enduring importance in the development of Christianity, particularly in terms of organisation within the community, as well as in relationships between communions. The personal role of the bishop echoed that of the civic *patronus* as benefactor and protector, administrator and politician.

This pervasive role of patronage at so many levels in ancient society serves to remind us of the complexity of interpersonal networks which existed in northern Italy at the time Christianity first arrived. The matrix of social relations so important to Roman administration, based above all on the cities, was to have important ramifications for the growth of the church in the region, providing the loosely defined framework within which Christians would operate. Trading centres, teeming with foreigners and natives, were ideal places for religions to spread, and, as we will see (Ch.4), there is good reason to suppose that they were important in the process of evangelisation. But trade did not take place in a

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69 *CIL* 5.3466 (to Glaucus, set up by Aurelia and his *amatores*), 3468; also 3471 recording a troupe of gladiators (*familia gladiatoria*); cf. T. Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators* (1992), 114-5.


vacuum: it was deeply embedded in the social fabric, as is shown by the roles of various Barbii and Gavii as patrons, priests and magistrates, as well as traders. The behaviour of Christianity in northern Italy was to be deeply influenced by the complex web of interrelationships I have outlined. One further factor needs to be considered first, however: the changed status and dynamics of northern Italy in the late Roman period.

LATE-ANTIQUE TRANSFORMATIONS

Although in the late Republic and early Principate northern Italy was still largely peripheral to Roman interests, the bloody conflicts fought out there in the civil war of 69 C.E., particularly near the crossing of the Po at Cremona, demonstrated the strategic significance of the zone. From the late-second century, and especially during the third, the political importance of northern Italy became incontrovertible as the need arose for emperors, from Marcus Aurelius onwards, to react promptly to breaches in Rome's defensive curtain along the Rhine and the Danube. Under Gallienus (253-68) this process was accelerated with the establishment of mobile squadrons of troops in the Po valley, the refortification of strategic centres like Verona, and the establishment of garrisons in the Alpine passes. With the embellishment of Milan as an imperial capital in the 290s, the transformation neared completion. By the mid-fourth century, northern Italy, far from being peripheral, was on the central axis of communications between important imperial cities, from Trier in the north, and eastwards, via Aquileia, Emona and Sirmium, to Constantinople and Antioch. It is not the purpose of this chapter to examine the particular circumstances which prevailed during specific periods of imperial

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presence, under Constantine I, Constans, Constantius II and Valentinian I: they will be discussed later (Chs.3-5). Rather I will limit myself here to outlining the general changes to the north Italian human environment in late antiquity.

First, the presence of the emperor and his court for extended periods made new demands on the cities. At Milan, the primary seat of the court, and Aquileia, an important transit city and strategic centre, the arrival of the emperor and his entourage heralded the erection of new buildings, such as palaces and enormous hippodromes, which reflected their new-found status. This reflects a general prosperity in northern Italy during the fourth century, which is particularly evident in the cities, some of which, such as Pavia, even expanded. Aquileia too grew in size, with new walled districts to the south and south-west. This seems particularly linked to the increased economic and strategic importance of the city as a supply base for the troops garrisoning the passes of the north-eastern Alps. Among the new buildings erected was a large horreum which in its plan and location, in the new part of the city, recalls the late-imperial military warehouse at Trier on the Moselle. Similarly, imperial intervention added new vitality to the industrial life of the region, with the establishment of mints, operating at various times in


76 D. A. Bullough, ‘Urban Change in Early Medieval Italy: the example of Pavia’, PBSR 34 (1966), 83, 89.

Aquileia, Pavia, and Milan, and arms factories at Concordia, Verona, Mantua, Cremona and Pavia.\textsuperscript{78}

This expansion of Aquileia and Pavia, together with the embellishment of Milan and Aquileia with imperial buildings, points to how the imperial presence led to a modification in the social, economic and cultural dynamics of northern Italy. From the time of Augustus, the presence of foreign imperial marines at Ravenna had constituted an artificial distortion of the composition of the region’s population. During the late-third and fourth centuries, this situation was exacerbated. At Milan there developed an increasingly cosmopolitan population, attracted by the patronage of the imperial court, or the need to present petitions directly to the emperor.\textsuperscript{79} The heterogeneity of the north Italian garrison troops buried at Concordia was a symptom of the same process.\textsuperscript{80} Even the transformation of trading patterns resulting from the new strategic importance of northern Italy caused changes in the social dynamics of the region, as increased imports brought a new influx of foreign merchants, above all to Aquileia.\textsuperscript{81}

Late antiquity brought considerable continuity too in the vitality of north Italian cities. Even with the increasing bureaucratisation of the Empire and the apparent ‘decline’ of urban centres in late antiquity (never a uniform process

\textsuperscript{78} Mints: A. H. M. Jones, \textit{The Later Roman Empire} (1964), 435-7; factories: Not.Dig.Occ. 9.23-9, also mentioning sword manufacture at Lucca in Tuscany.


anyway), cities continued to fulfil their former role. As 'the secret of government without bureaucracy', their impact on the church’s organisational development, therefore, was likely to be substantial. Their urban institutions provided a template for the behaviour of bishops in cities, and their dominance over smaller settlements in their territories could serve as a model for the development of major episcopal sees with suffragans in their hinterland.

Above all, it was the penetrability of the Alpine passes which was confirmed by the changed circumstances of the late Empire. Much imperial energy was devoted to their fortification, as Rome's grip on her Danubian frontier loosened. After the fall of the Rhaetian limes in 383 there was an increased military presence in the valleys around Trent. Not surprisingly, the most vulnerable area was Venetia, owing to the inadequacy of the Julian Alps as a barrier. From the mid-third century onwards there was considerable effort expended on the defence of this region. An important military base was established at Concordia near Aquileia, and walls were built in the mountain passes, forming a network known as the Claustra Alpium Julianum. In the later years of his reign the emperor Gratian (375-383) identified the Julian Alps as a weak point, vulnerable to the Goths then at large in the Balkans. His judgement was repeatedly confirmed in the next two centuries when Theodosius I (twice), Alaric’s Goths, Attila’s Huns, Theoderic’s Ostrogoths and Alboin’s Lombards all invaded Italy by this route.

These invasions draw attention to a shift in the way northern Italy was viewed. Its designation as Cisalpine Gaul was a perception shaped by prevailing

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83 Garnsey and Saller, Roman Empire, 26.
84 Lizzi, Vescovi, 76.
conditions in the late Republic. At this stage southern Gaul and its inhabitants were well-known, so comparison between two such neighbouring areas was natural. Conversely the Balkans were little known: the main thrust of Roman conquest here did not come until the age of Augustus. The development of trading and social networks under the Empire led to a stark change in the perception of northern Italy, which emphasised its links with regions along the upper and middle Danube, beyond the central and eastern Alps. By the fourth century these ties were formalised in the administrative structure of the empire. Italy formed part of the same praetorian prefecture as the western Balkans. Significantly, northern Italy had now lost the remoteness that had characterised its political and economic development in the Republic and early Empire and had far outstripped Rome and southern Italy in every way. The Eternal City and sub-Appennine Italy were effectively political backwaters, and it was thanks only to a certain cultural nostalgia that they were at all important. Northern Italy had usurped the position once held by the centre and south, and it was Milan—and subsequently Ravenna—which was the centre of Italian political activity. Nomenclature reflected the change. The arena bordered by the Alps, the Appennines and the Adriatic was no longer known as Cisalpine Gaul: henceforth its official title was Italia Annonaria; often, it was simply known just Italia. From an adjunct of Gaul, northern Italy had come to be clearly identified as part of a unity with the Balkans.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, northern Italy at first seems to be a geographically distinct region, defined by its natural boundaries, particularly the Alps, which also seem to serve as the frontier between peninsular Italy and Europe. Closer analysis, however, reveals that this convenient conceptualisation is misleading. Human activity shows that from an early period, the peoples of the north Italian plains had closer links with the neighbouring territories beyond the Alps, particularly in the north-east, with the Danube and the Balkans, but also with Gaul. Following the Roman conquest, this pattern persists, even though political domination from Rome brought close administrative and some economic connections with central and southern Italy. The advent of the Roman peace also saw the rise of inter-regional trade via the Adriatic to the wider Mediterranean world. In late antiquity this maritime trade continued, especially at Aquileia, where supplies were imported to feed the garrisons guarding the north-eastern Alpine passes.

In addition to these relationships with the outside world, we have seen within northern Italy a complex set of networks on both regional and local levels. Communications along the roads and the rivers did much to unify the region and encourage economic and social interaction, as Tacitus’ remarks on the markets of Cremona make clear. At the same time, however, it is clear that much would have happened on an extremely local scale. This includes not just commerce in perishable, everyday goods, but also networks of social and political interface. For example, we have seen connections between urban centres, viewed in the light of those persons holding civic offices, clustering in a number of local patterns: Milan, Como and Lodì in Lombardy; Tortona and Vercelli in Piedmont; Aquileia, Altino and Vicenza in the Veneto. Finally, in late antiquity, the establishment of a quasi-permanent court at Milan superimposed a new set of political relationships on the region.
These personal networks were as important a determinant of human activity in northern Italy in the early Christian period as the landscape itself. The engines which drove this activity were the towns and cities founded by the Romans in the wake of their conquest of the region. With their social, cultural and economic networks, these urban centres provided the template for human behaviour, while the endurance of their street grids in late antiquity and beyond meant that their physical fabric was a crucial facet of northern Italy as encountered by Christianity. The new religion entered a region, therefore, where the elaborate workings of the human environment were determined by a combination of landscapes, networks, and urban centres. It is time now to observe the interaction between the region and the new religion.
It is impossible to be precise as to when and how the Christian faith arrived in northern Italy, but in this chapter and the one following I will attempt to reconstruct as much of this process as is feasible. A substantial difficulty arises from our sources. The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius of Caesarea, that major font of data on early Christian expansion, says nothing about north-Italian Churches in the pre-Constantinian period, in marked contrast to the rich detail it provides on aspects of the early Christian history of Gaul, Africa, and other parts of Italy. Nor do we have any writings produced by north-Italian Christians to compare with Cyprian, Tertullian, Irenaeus or Hippolytus. Rather, Christianity in northern Italy only breaks its silence in the fourth century, after the joint proclamation of religious freedom by Constantine and Licinius at Milan in 313. Our first glimpses of the north-Italian Churches come when their bishops attend the synods called by Constantine in 313 and 314 in a vain effort to resolve the Donatist dispute in Africa. Afterwards they slip back into the shadows, to re-emerge some three decades later in the records of the Trinitarian conflicts of the mid-fourth century.

Such bland snapshots of north-Italian bishops are not, however, the only materials at our disposal. Medieval records of early Christianity, unlike their modern counterparts, claimed detailed knowledge of the first Christian arrivals in northern Italy. This is manifested in a wealth of literature recording bishops, martyrs and confessors, sometimes listing their deeds too. Yet as accounts of the early history of north-Italian Christianity, these medieval sources are at least equally as problematic as the conciliar documents mentioned above. Taken together,
however, they have constituted the traditional body of evidence for the study of the origins of north-Italian Christianity (see Introduction). In this chapter I will examine the nature, problems and limitations of these different sources; then in chapter 4 I will attempt to interpret the data they yield in the context of the north-Italian human environment.

NORTH ITALIAN PARTICIPATION IN COUNCILS AND CONFLICTS

In the period I am discussing in this thesis, north Italian bishops attended five councils. Two were convened to arbitrate in the Donatist schism: Rome in 313, and Arles in 314. A further three arose in the course of the Christological controversy: Serdica in 343, Milan in 355, and Rimini in 359. Shortly after the end of my period, another council was held at Aquileia in 381. North-Italian participation was extremely prominent at this last council, but it is possible that many of the sees mentioned there were relatively recent creations (see below Ch.9).

When these councils concluded, their pronouncements were signed by the bishops who attended and who agreed with the decisions reached. At the outset, then, it is clear that the lists of bishops found in such documents are likely to be both partial and partisan, since those who disagreed with the decisions of the council would not have signed; indeed sometimes they were anathematised.1 This situation is especially obvious at the Council of Serdica, where the assembly split into two diametrically opposed groups. Each promulgated a statement of their findings, together with a list of signatures. As a consequence we have not one but two lists of subscriptions for this council.

This brings us to a major problem concerning these sources. Their preservation is, at best, haphazard, most of them surviving in only one version or

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1 For example, the pro-Athanasian bishops at Serdica issued a list of 'nomina hereticorum' (Hil.Pict., Coll.Ant.Par. B. II. 3).
manuscript. In some cases, the conciliar subscriptions are preserved in narrative works, while others are preserved in collections of documentary sources. It will be easiest to analyse this material council-by-council, noting first the manner in which the evidence survives, and second the north-Italian bishops who are mentioned.

(i) Rome 313

This list survives not as subscriptions, but as part of the introductory narrative to the account of the council given a half-century later in Optatus of Milevus' anti-Donatist work De schismate (1.23). It probably derived from the official documents of the council, which are referred to as gesta by Augustine, writing in the aftermath of the Conference of Carthage of 411 (Brev. Coll. 3.17.31; cf. 3.12.24). It is clear, however, that the version preserved in Optatus has become corrupt. His dating has gone awry, since he states that the bishops 'met in the house of Fausta in the Lateran,' when Constantine, for the fourth time, and Licinius, for the third time, were consuls, on the sixth day before the Nones of October, the sixth being a feast day' ('Constantino quater et Licinius ter consulibus, VI Nonas Octobris die, VI feria'). This yields the date of 2 October 315, which is impossible. As Optatus narrates, the council was presided over by Pope Miltiades, but he died on 11 January 314 (Chron. 354, pp. 70, 76), and so cannot have presided over a council nearly two years later! Augustine's version of the date provides a solution: addressing the Donatists after the Conference of Carthage he referred to the judgement made against them by Miltiades 'when Constantine for the third time and Licinius for the second were consuls, on the sixth day before the Nones of October (ad Don. post

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2 The use of such documents underlies his chronological arguments in ad Don. post. coll. 33.56; cf. also the materials listed in the capitula of the Carthaginian conference itself: 3.318-20, ed. S. Lancel, SChr 195 (1972), 506-9. Gesta is the name given in the MSS to the proceedings of Aquileia 381: CSEL 82/3: 368 app. cnt. to line 916.


coll. 33.56: ‘Constantino ter et Licinio iterum consulibus VI Nonas Octobres’).\(^5\) This date is 2 October 313. The error in Optatus’ probably resulted from an easy error: in the original document it is probable that the date was written ‘Constantino III et Licinio II consulibus’ (the original formula presupposed by Augustine’s date); simply by adding a vertical stroke in each case would this become ‘Constantino III et Licinio III consulibus’, the formula from which Optatus’ date seems to derive.

These textual problems do not diminish when we move to Optatus’ list of bishops. Above all, many of the names of sees given by Optatus are corrupt. He lists, for example, a ‘Florianus a Sinna’: this Sinna is probably meant to indicate Sena (modern Siena).\(^6\) ‘Zoticus a Quintiano’ most probably came from Quintiana positio, on the Tyrrenian coast, near Tarquinia and modern Gravisca.\(^7\) Similarly, a simple case of textual corruption may explain ‘Donatianus a Foro Claudii’: *Forum Claudii* is probably *Forum Clodii*, on the shores of Lake Bracciano north of Rome.\(^8\) More perplexing is ‘Euandrius ab Ursino’: *Ursinum* is most probably *Volsinii* (modern Bolsena), although *Urvinum* (Urbino) may be an alternative.\(^9\) Happily, however, there is no such ambiguity for the bishoprics of northern Italy: ‘Merocles a Mediolano’, ‘Stennius ab Arimino’ and ‘Constantius a Faventia’ make it clear that the sees represented were Milan, Rimini and Faenza.

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\(^5\) Augustine is plainly referring to the Roman Council of 313: cf. *ad Don. post coll.* 15.19, ‘Romanum concilium Miltiadis’.

\(^6\) Thus S. Calderone, *Costantino e il cattolicesimo* 1 (1962), 238-9 n.3; Lanzoni, *Diocesi*, 355-6, lists further possibilities.

\(^7\) Calderone, *Costantino*, 1:238 n.3; cf. *RE* 24.1264.

\(^8\) Calderone, *Costantino*, 1:240 n.5; cf. Lanzoni, *Diocesi*, 335-6.

\(^9\) Calderone, *Costantino*, 1:240 n.4. Cf. Lanzoni, *Diocesi*, 342 n.4, citing early Christian inscriptions from Bolsena, three of which are dated to the late-4th or early-5th centuries. This suggests that Bolsena may be a more likely interpretation of *Ursinum* than Urbino, where there is no evidence for Christianity before the pontificate of Gregory I (Lanzoni, *Diocesi*, 318).
(ii) Arles 314

The list for this council survives in two forms. First there is a synodical letter addressed to Pope Sylvester at Rome, which may, or may not be genuine. In this preamble, the bishops are listed without the names of their sees (Munier, *Conc.Gall.* 4). Second, there is a list of subscriptions, this time naming both the bishops and their sees, preserved in a plethora of manuscripts, drawn up in southern Gaul in the sixth century; these manuscripts are dossiers of canonical documents. Presentation of the lists varies considerably between the manuscripts. The most complete, in a manuscript from Corbie (but now in Paris), puts the name of the bishop first, followed by the name of their see and province; all the others reverse this order (Munier, *Conc.Gall.* 14-22). I cannot explain this difference, but it is interesting to note that the Corbie manuscript is not only the most complete, but also the earliest, dating to shortly after 523. The subscriptions to Arles record the attendance of Bishop Theodore and a deacon, probably Agathon, from Aquileia, and Bishop Merocles and a deacon, probably Severus, from Milan.

(iii) Serdica 343

After a hiatus of nearly three decades, the north-Italian churches reappear when they become involved on the side of Athanasius in the Trinitarian conflicts during the 340s. I have already noted that there were two distinct lists of signatures, both of which are preserved in the fragmentary and disordered *Opus historicum* of Hilary of Poitiers. The first follows the 'decretum synodi orientalium apud Serdicam episcoporum a pane Arrianorum, quod miserunt ad Africam' (*Coll.Ant.Par.* A. IV.1-
3; signatures at 3). The second (B.II.4), in which the north Italian delegates are mentioned, is appended to letters and a list of heretics (B.II.1-3) issued by the pro-Athanasian camp. At the end of the list it is written 'episcopi omnes numero sexaginta et unus', but only sixty bishops are actually named, showing that some form of corruption of the text has occurred. Such anomalies are not uncommon in the extant form of the Opus historicum, which has been much altered at the hands of a late-anteque excerptor, who compiled the extracts 'ex opere historico' (CSEL 65:177 app.crit.), and an early-medieval scribe who copied out these extracts. It would be pointless to speculate as to whether or not the missing sixty-first bishop might have been from northern Italy. As it is, five north-Italian bishops are named: Lucius of Verona (Coll.Ant.Par. B.II.4.20). Fortunatianus of Aquileia (37), Severus of Ravenna (49), Ursacius of Brescia (50) and Protasius of Milan (51). To these we should add Crispinus of Padua, whom Athanasius mentions in his own account of the events leading up to the council (Apol.Const.3.42-3); he also refers to Fortunatianus and Protasius, as well as to the bishop of Verona, whom he calls Lucillus, rather than Lucius (3.40-1, 43, 45-6).

**iv) Milan 355**

This council has always presented problems of interpretation, above all because the decision taken by Constantius II to exile three of the bishops who participated—Lucifer of Cagliari, Dionysius of Milan, Eusebius of Vercelli—made it an important event in the theological politics of the Trinitarian controversy. Most accounts of it, therefore, are primarily polemical, preserved in the works of pro-Athanasian authors and fifth-century historians who inherited their prejudices. In addition, there survive some documents issued at the time of the council, which were preserved in the

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14 P. Smulders, *Hilary of Poitiers' Preface to his Opus Historicum* (1995), 6-17, provides a convenient account of the work's complicated textual history.

15 C. Colafemmina, *Apulia cristiana: Venosa* (1973), 36, suggests that in addition to Stercorius of Canosa, who is mentioned in the subscriptions, 'È probabile che ...partecipassero...altri vescovi pugliesi': the available evidence, however, does not permit such a conclusion.
archives of the Vercellese Church. Although these manuscripts are now lost, they were still extant in the sixteenth century, when they were edited by Cesare Baronius (1538-1607) in his *Annales Ecclesiastici*. Among those archives, Baronius found a list of thirty 'nomina episcoporum qui subscriberunt in Athanasium', which, for some reason, he did not include in the first edition of the *Annales*. Even though they were printed in the second edition (1623), they were ignored by later scholars until comparatively recently.\(^{16}\) The list does not mention the provenance of the bishops, but many are easily identifiable as either Constantius' supporters in the Balkans and the West—such as Ursacius of Singidunum, Valens of Mursa, and Saturninus of Arles—or easterners who accompanied the emperor on his journey to the West—Patrophiilus of Scythopolis, Acacius of Caesarea, and Epictetus, who was set up as bishop of Centumcellae to watch over Pope Liberius at Rome.\(^{17}\) A Dionysius is listed: Baronius and later readers have identified him as the bishop of Milan.\(^{18}\) If this identification is correct, it throws surprising light on the proceedings of the council (see Ch.5). Apart from this, no other north-Italian bishop is mentioned. But the list is not complete: it makes no mention, for instance, of the Eustomius who was one of the delegates sent from the council to Eusebius of Vercelli.\(^{19}\) Naturally, Eusebius himself does not appear: he attended the last part of the Council but refused to condemn Athanasius (Hil.Pict., *Coll.Ant.Par.* appendix II.3). In sum, it seems that the only north-Italian bishops we can identify at this council are Dionysius and Eusebius.


\(^{17}\) See further Ch. 5 below. On Epictetus' appointment to Centumcellae, and its chronology relative to the Milanese council, cf. Pietri, *Roma Christiana*, 245 n.4.


\(^{19}\) *Epistola synodica*, ed. V. Bulhart, CCL 9:119, 'carissimos coepiscopos nostros Eustomium et Germinium', leaves no room for doubt as to Eustomius' episcopal status.
(v) Rimini 359

The sources for the twin councils held at Rimini in Italy and Seleucia in Isauria are so complex that they make those for Milan look like models of clarity. Coverage of Rimini was affected by the controversial nature of the council. Sulpicius Severus, for example, makes much of how various bishops refused to accept state support for their travel expenses as they felt this might compromise their independence of action at the council (*Chron.* 2.41). Those sources which talk about the composition of the council are extremely vague, even on the total number of bishops attending (‘quadringenti et aliquanto amplius Occidentales episcopi’: *Sulp. Sev.*, *Chron.* 2.41). The polemical purpose of most of our sources means that our detailed knowledge of participants is limited to that of the bugbears of the vociferous, pro-Athanasian minority (cf. Ch. 5 below) who saw the whole enterprise as an attempt by Constantius II to impose his will on the western episcopates. Thus we learn that Ursacius of Singidunum, Valens of Mursa, Germinius of Sirmium were there (*Athan.*, *de Syn.* 8; *Ep. ad Afros* 3); the only north-Italian bishop mentioned by name is, unsurprisingly, Auxentius of Milan (*Athan.*, *Ep. ad Afros* 3). Yet considering the enormous importance of the twin councils of Rimini and Seleucia to Constantius’ efforts to achieve doctrinal unity throughout the empire (see Ch. 5), it is unlikely that north-Italian participation was limited to the imperial appointee to the Milanese see. At the very least we might expect the bishop of an important city such as Aquileia to have attended—the limited evidence at our disposal, however, permits no firm conclusions. One other north Italian participant is possible. After the council, a delegation of its bishops brought the synodical letter to Constantius, and was detained at Nike in Thrace. Among these bishops was a certain Urbanus (*Hil. Pict.*, *Coll. Ant. Par.* A. V. 3. 1), who may be the same as the bishop of that name who occupied the see of Parma.21

(vi) Summary

The findings of this analysis are complicated and diffuse; it will be convenient to present them in tabular form.

Table 3.1: Attested north Italian Participation at church councils, 313-359

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bishopric</th>
<th>Rome 313</th>
<th>Arles 314</th>
<th>Serdica 343</th>
<th>Milan 355</th>
<th>Rimini 359</th>
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It is immediately clear from this table that the material extracted from the attendance sheets of ecclesiastical councils is far from comprehensive. First, no list can be relied on to present a complete inventory of the bishoprics of northern Italy at a given date. This is most obvious when we compare the lists for the anti-Donatist councils of 313 and 314. No bishop of Aquileia attended the Roman synod, although one must have existed at this time (see Ch.4). Similarly, Constantius of Faenza and Stennius of Rimini did not travel to Arles in 314, despite having taken part at Rome the previous year. The lists of the north-Italian bishops attending the
Councils of Serdica and Milan are equally anomalous. Crispinus of Padua did not go to Serdica, despite having joined Athanasius' entourage in seeking an audience with Constans shortly before. Similarly, Fortunatianus of Aquileia, a formidable ecclesiastical politician (see Ch. 5), is a surprising absence from Milan in 355. Unfortunately details on the participants of the Council of Rimini are too scanty for any judgement to be made about who attended and who did not.

Further difficulties arise from the very mechanics of convening a council. Imperial intervention could be crucial. Constantine personally wrote to bishops asking them to participate in the Rome and Arles councils (Eus., HE 10.5.18-24). He provided imperial resources to cater for the bishops' travel costs (ibid. 10.5.23), as did Constantius II before the councils of Rimini and Seleucia. Furthermore, emperors took an interest in the bishops who attended their synods. When summoning bishops to Arles, Constantine was concerned to counter criticism that the previous year's Roman council had been too narrowly based (ibid. 10.5.22). Similarly, the list of bishops whom Constantius assembled at Milan in 355 reads suspiciously like an anti-Athanasian quango (see Ch. 5). The later attendance of Eusebius of Vercelli at the same council was also due to Constantius' personal invitation. I will argue in a later chapter that the haphazard north-Italian presence at the councils of Rome and Arles had much to do with Constantine's personal role in inviting the bishops to attend (see Ch. 5).

Another problem with this material is that it is useful in determining the extent of north-Italian Christianity only in terms of episcopal sees. Yet it is abundantly clear from evidence throughout the fourth century that there were many

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22 This should suffice to demonstrate the danger of conclusions, such as those of Savio and Lanzoni, that the origins of the diocese of Pavia must come after the Council of Serdica, since no bishop of that city appears in the subscriptions: see V. Lanzani, 'Ticinum: le origini della città cristiana', in Storia di Pavia 1 (1984), 366-7. with full references.


non-episcopal Christian communities in northern Italy, both in rural areas such as the Alto Adige, and in sizeable towns such as Ivrea and Tortona. It seems that in Eusebius' case, there was a pre-existing Christian community at Vercelli which appointed him bishop (Ambr., Ep. 63.2; cf. Ch. 4 below). This is a helpful reminder that the emergence of a bishopric often represents the culmination of a process of evangelisation, not its initiation. This situation matches conditions elsewhere in the Roman West, such as southern Gaul, where the bishop of Lyon seems for a long time to have had responsibility for non-episcopal congregations in nearby cities which acquired their first bishops only at a later date. At best, then, the details of north-Italian participation in ecclesiastical councils in the reigns of Constantine, Constans and Constantius II provide only a partial guide to the extent of Christianity in northern Italy.

TRADITIONS AND INNOVATIONS:
MEDIEVAL RECORDS OF THE PALEOCHRISTIAN PAST

Our second body of sources dates from the early middle ages, and comprises collections of texts relating to the saints and early bishops of several north-Italian sees. These texts divide into a number of categories: saints' lives, martyrologies cataloguing their feast days, and lists of bishops which enumerate those who held the see ever since its foundation. We must be careful, however, not to drive deep distinctions between the categories. Even where they preserve apparent inconsistencies of attitude, taken together they represent a constantly evolving and metamorphosing map of the sacred past, carefully crafted to the shifting needs of

25 See further the following footnote, and Chs. 6 and 9.
26 Lanzani, 'Ticinum', 356. Cf. the cases of Tortona and Ivrea, the two communities dependent on Eusebius in the 350s, which eventually achieved episcopal status by 381 and 351 respectively: Lanzoni, Diocesi, 476-81, 560-1.
27 É. Griffe, La Gaule chrétienne à l'époque romaine 1 (1964), 27-33.
their producers. Such texts, even when they appear most banal, are never jejune compilations of material: they enshrine particular views of the Christian past formulated with an eye to present needs. I will begin by analysing the general circumstances in which these genres arose, before considering in detail first the episcopal lists relating to a number of north-Italian bishoprics, and then some examples of how the historical past was reshaped in hagiographical texts.

(i) Sacred history and sacred power

From the very beginning of the relationship between Church and State, the manipulation of the past to satisfy present needs has been a persistent feature of ecclesiastical politics. A good example is the Council of Nicaea, convened in 325 at the behest of the emperor Constantine himself. As the doctrinal statement formulated at that council achieved recognition as a definitive statement of orthodoxy, so the wider significance of the council changed. By the end of the fourth century, Nicaea had begun to achieve the status of an Oecumenical synod, while the precise meaning of its rulings on the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem and Rome became the subject of heated debate.

The importance of those sees depended on their antiquity as foundations by Christ’s apostles and this points to an important development in late antiquity which was to reverberate throughout the early medieval period. A city’s status as an ecclesiastical centre depended in no small measure on its Christian past and in particular on the number and calibre of its saints. The period between the fourth and sixth centuries saw an astonishing growth in the cult of saints throughout the

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28 See esp. P.J. Geary, Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages (1994), 9-29, with references. Geary emphasises well the importance of ‘remaining sensitive to the context in which hagiographic production took place, which reflects not a[n abstract] “medieval mind” but a variety of minds, a spectrum of people reacting to the living tradition of the saints in their midst’ (p.28).
western Mediterranean world. In northern Italy, this phenomenon was already well-developed by the opening years of the fifth century, as is clear from a list of saints’ festivals known as the Martyrologium Hieronymianum. Yet it is uncertain to what extent this text reflects traditions earlier than the later fourth century. Some spontaneous veneration of local saints probably developed in northern Italy as it did in the rest of Christendom, but the systematic cult reflected in the Martyrologium seems to be a later development. In this process, the episcopate of Ambrose of Milan (374-97) has pivotal importance. Ambrose brought to his ecclesiastical career the organisations skills he had learned as a provincial governor prior to his election as bishop. He also knew Pope Damasus I (366-84), under whom the cult of SS. Peter and Paul was developed into a tool to help extend the influence of the Roman Church. Inspired by Damasus, Ambrose sought to develop the cult of saints in northern Italy in a similar fashion. At Milan he uncovered the relics of SS. Gervasius, Protasius, Nazarius and Celsus, and imported those of St. Vitalis from Bologna. Of these the discovery of SS. Gervasius and Protasius is instructive: Ambrose’s biographer Paulinus relates that these saints were unknown before their bodies were unearthed (Paul. Med., Vita Ambr 14). Similarly Ambrose’s excavation of the relics of SS. Agricola and Vitalis at Bologna revealed hitherto unknown martyrs (Paul. Med., Vita Ambr 29). The only secure evidence for veneration of saints at Milan prior to Ambrose’s episcopate relates to SS. Nabor and Felix. But the

32 Lizzi, Vescovi, esp.15-57.
description of their shrine, in the cemetery west of the city walls, at the time of the
discovery of Protasius and Gervasius, does not suggest a very elaborate construction
since their graves were simply protected by gratings (Paul. Med., Vita Ambr 14).
Indeed when the site was excavated by Bishop Carlo Borromeo in 1571, the bodies
were found in sarcophagi now known to date from the fourth century, implying
that full development of the shrine may have occurred only in the time of Ambrose.
This area was a major necropolis in antiquity: further along the road lay the
mausolea of the emperors Maximian and (perhaps) Valentinian II. So it is
precisely the sort of area in which a cult of saints could spring up around the tomb
of a martyr, as happened at Rome in the catacombs along the Via Appia and on the
Vatican hill. The other shrines in the vicinity, the chapels of S. Valeria and S.
Vittore in Ciel d’Oro, also seem to date from the fourth century. This evidence
suggests that the development of the cult of saints at Milan received its great
impetus under Ambrose. He also sent Milanese relics to other north-Italian cities
and appropriated their relics to Milan: by so doing, he sought to extend his influence
from Milan just as Damasus had done from Rome. In turn he was imitated by his
fellow bishops in northern Italy, most notably Chromatius of Aquileia (388-
407/8). In northern Italy, as elsewhere in the Mediterranean world, late antique

35 A. Calderini, ‘Milano archeologica’, in Storia di Milano 1 (1953), 607; idem, ‘Indagini intorno
alla Chiesa di S. Francesco Grande in Milano’, RIL 73 (1939-40), 108-9 (sixteenth century
evacuation), 117-8 (sarcophagus).
36 Krautheimer, Capitals, 69-70, 150 n.40.
38 Paul. Med., Vita Ambr 52 relates the story of a man who travelled to Milan from Dalmatia in
order to receive a miraculous cure for blindness; en route he encountered the relics of the martyrs of
Anaunia (the modern Val di Non) which were being brought from Trent to Milan. This happened
after Ambrose’s death, under the episcopate of his successor Simplicianus. It demonstrates, however,
the influence that Ambrose exerted over his own city and Christian communities further afield:
Simplicianus was imitating Ambrose’s policy of acquiring relics, and the presence of the pilgrim
from Dalmatia shows that Milan had a reputation as a centre where miraculous cures might be
effected.
39 Lizzi, Vescovi, 139-69, esp.154-9.
and early medieval bishops used the cult of saints to enhance the prestige of their sees.\textsuperscript{40} Particularly where saints were associated with the veneration of relics, these cults made the cities which held them centres of pilgrimage. In turn, the prominence of a particular see in terms of its sacred heritage could serve to justify its leadership over a number of other ecclesiastical centres in its vicinity.\textsuperscript{41} This could lead to invention, as happened at Milan in the case of SS. Gervasius and Protasius. Piacenza seems to be a further example: here the \textit{Martyrologium Hieronymianum} lists a certain St. Antoninus (or Antonius in some manuscripts: \textit{Mart. Hier.} 2 k.oct.).

His antiquity is ambiguous. Later traditions, including an anonymous sixth century pilgrimage, accord him the status of a martyr (\textit{Antonini Placentini Itinerarium} 1), but this is absent from the \textit{Martyrologium}. The only other early source to mention him is Victricius of Rouen's \textit{De laude sanctorum}, written in Gaul at the end of the fourth century.\textsuperscript{42} Since Victricius mentions 'Antonius' \textit{(sic)} in the same breath as Agricola of Bologna and Nazarius of Milan (\textit{de laude sanctorum} 11.7-10), who were known only from the time of Ambrose, we cannot guarantee that Antoninus is any older.

\textbf{(ii) The north Italian lists}

With so much at stake, it is not surprising that the sacred history of a city should have been subject to revision. As various episcopal sees competed for ecclesiastical authority, they sought to justify their pretensions by reinventing their past. This could take the form of rearranging historical material to make it seem older. Such tendencies are particularly evident in the redaction of episcopal lists for various.

\textsuperscript{40} For example, Chromatius said that SS. Felix and Fortunatus glorified Aquileia (\textit{Sermo} 7).


north-Italian sees, as indeed in the rest of the Christian world. Interest in the early history of bishoprics is as old as Christian historiography itself. Eusebius of Caesarea incorporated in his *Chronicle* and *Ecclesiastical History* lists of bishops from Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem and Rome. It is also clear that such lists soon acquired a propagandist utility. When the unity of the Church was threatened by schism and heresy, episcopal lists were used by the squabbling groups to prove their continuity with the founders of their see: their enemies, of course, were contrasted as interlopers who could claim no such heritage. Competing groups within a Church would produce different versions of a list to support their opposing claims to legitimacy. Thus, as we will see, the patriarchs of Aquileia and Grado both claimed to be the true successors of St. Mark. Similarly, the lists would not mention bishops whose memories had been suppressed by succeeding generations. At Rome the papal chronicle known as the *Liber Pontificalis* gives only a passing reference to the schism which accompanied the accession of Pope Symmachus in 498: it was influenced by a document known as the `Symmachan apocrypha’ which recast certain episodes of earlier papal history to support Symmachus’ claims. Clearly, then, later authors were prepared to revise history to suit a particular view of the past, often crafted to suit the needs of contemporary bishops. In so doing, these authors followed in a long tradition of Christians interpreting and reinterpreting their past.

Similar revisions are obvious in the north-Italian lists. The Milanese list, for example, makes no mention of Bishop Auxentius (355-74). This revision arose early in Milanese tradition: once again Ambrose’s episcopate is the catalyst. In a polemical passage recording his efforts to hold on to his sacred inheritance at Milan, Ambrose—who viewed Auxentius as a heretic and thus regarded his episcopal

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election as invalid—omitted all mention of his immediate predecessor and presented himself as successor to Dionysius, the Milanese bishop exiled at the council of 355.\textsuperscript{46} In the episcopal list from Trent some fifteen incumbents of the see are listed between Abundantius, who attended the Church Council at Aquileia in 381, and Vigilius, who was certainly bishop by 385.\textsuperscript{47} Not only material from the distant past was subject to such manipulation. The recent past could be recast too. A neat example is provided by the list of patriarchs of Aquileia and Cividale, drawn up in the mid-fourteenth century (see below §ii/5). It excises an unhappy chapter from the history of the see by omitting any reference to Philip of Spanheim, who had been \textit{de facto} patriarch from 1269 to 1273. Philip, brother of Duke Ulrich III of Carinthia, had been imposed on Aquileia when the previous patriarch, Gregory of Montelongo, had died in the course of the struggle between Aquileia and Ottokar II of Bohemia. Ulrich and Philip were Ottokar's cousins, and through them he sought to bring much of north-eastern Italy under his sway.\textsuperscript{48} As we will now see, the evidence of several north-Italian episcopal lists is vitiated by this tendency of later generations to reshape them.

\textit{(a) Brescia} The rearrangement of such material could also reflect the varying fortunes of a particular see, as seems to be the case with Brescia, where the earliest surviving list was written by the city's ninth century bishop Rampert.\textsuperscript{49} He lists only the successors of Filastrius (died 396), but refers to a poem written by Peter, Rampert's immediate predecessor, in which Filastrius is designated Brescia's

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{46} Ambr., \textit{Ep} 21a.18: "Sed et hoc addidi: "Absit ut tradam hereditatem est Dionysii qui in exilio in causa fidei defunctus est, hereditatem Eustorgii confessoris, hereditatem Miroclatis atque omnium retro fidelium episcoporum."
\item \textsuperscript{47} Picard, \textit{Souvenir}, 503.
\item \textsuperscript{48} For events at Aquileia, see: F. Ughelli, \textit{Italia Sacra} 5.94; R. Aubert, 'Gregoire de Montelongo', \textit{DHGE} 22:6-9. For a Bohemian perspective: F. Dvornik, \textit{The Slavs in European History and Civilisation} (1962), 27-31, 132.
\item \textsuperscript{49} Edited in AASS\textsuperscript{3}, July, 4: 388-93.
\end{itemize}
seventh bishop. Of the other six names only one—Ursicinus who attended the Council of Sardica in 343/4—is otherwise attested. The names of these bishops are recorded in a twelfth century manuscript in the Bibliotheca Queriniana in Brescia:


An interesting change had been made to the list by this time. The proto-bishop of Milan, Anatelon, was placed at the head of the list, thus making Filastrius the eighth holder of the see. This development is clearly later than the ninth century tradition. It is impossible to know for certain how this alteration came about, but it may be related to the expansionist policies of certain Milanese archbishops in the tenth and early-eleventh centuries. The last of these domineering bishops, Aribert II, is known to have attempted to impose Milanese candidates on other sees which, like Brescia, lay near Milan. Indeed, we know that in the events leading to the coronation of Conrad II as Emperor in 1027, Aribert invoked the legend of Anatelon to vindicate the right of the archbishop of Milan rather than the archbishop of Ravenna to present the imperial candidate to the pope. So it is possible that the episcopal list of Brescia was revised at a time when the Church there was under Milanese influence. As for Clateus, Viator, Latinus and Apolonius (sic), nothing at all is known. By the late fourth century, Brescia had a cult of two saints, Faustinus and Iovitta (Mart.Hier. 15 k.mar.), but neither is mentioned by Gaudentius, Filastrius’ successor, in his many Tractatus.

50 Edited in ibid., 384-5.
51 The only edition of this text is in Picard, Souvenir, 434. I have retained the idiosyncratic spellings of personal names found in the manuscript.
52 Picard, Souvenir, 433-40.
54 Ibid., 7.
55 Lanzoni, Diocesi, 532; BS 5:483-5.
(b) Padua  A more interesting farrago is the list for Padua, which in its various forms dates from the 1260s and is extremely tendentious for any bishop before the ninth century. The earliest Paduan bishop known from other sources, Crispinus, who held the see in the 340s, does not feature in this list at all. Conversely, the first bishop listed, Prosdocimus, is unattested before the sixth century, when a sarcophagus for his relics was set up in a basilica dedicated to a local martyr, St. Justina. On this sarcophagus, Prosdocimus is designated ‘bishop and confessor’, implying that his holiness derived not from the manner of his death but from his exemplary life. We hear nothing else of him until the tenth century, by which stage his cult had spread to the hinterland of Verona. Then in the eleventh century, Prosdocimus was the subject of a cliché-ridden Vita, in which he appears as a disciple of St. Peter, but manages to survive until the persecution under the emperor Maximian (286-306)—a life span of nearly three centuries! Yet it seems that the cult of Justina was more important in the earlier period: after all, it was in her basilica that Prosdocimus had been buried. Both cults, however, may have had a common origin. Neither saint is attested in the Martyrologium Hieronymianum, and when the basilica was constructed in the sixth century, the dedicatory inscription stated that the church had been built ‘from the foundations.’ Furthermore, the patron of the dedication, Venantius Opilio, was an important local aristocrat who

56 Edited in RIS n.s. 8/1: 3-4.

57 A version of the eleventh-century Vita Prosdocimi preserved in a manuscript in Milan contains a prologue which purports to have been written by Prosdocimus’ equally shadowy successor, Maximus. In this prologue, ‘Maximus’ states that he will preach on ‘the life of the most blessed confessor in Christ Prosdocimus’ and goes on to say that Prosdocimus ‘is now positioned above the stars with the angels.’ Text edited in the apparently anonymous ‘Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum latinorum bibliothecae Ambrosianae Mediolanensis’, AB11 (1892), 354.

58 Picard, Souvenir, 466-70, 641-4. For Justina’s death under Maximian, see AASS, October, 3:824-5. A late-medieval account of the discovery of Justina’s relics states that ‘a monastery near Padua was dedicated in honour of the virgin Justina, blessed in God, by a certain blessed Prosdocimus, a disciple of St. Peter’: text edited in AB11 (1892), 354.

59 Picard, Souvenir, 641 n.210; see also A. Guillou, Régionalisme et indépendance dans l’Empire byzantin au VIIe siècle (1969), 278-82, with photograph.
had risen to high office in the Ostrogothic government at Ravenna. This sort of aristocratic patronage of a cult has parallels elsewhere, most obviously in Merovingian Gaul. It suggests that Justina's cult may have been primarily a local phenomenon. Indeed, one of the earliest references to it occurs in the *Life of St. Martin* by Venantius Fortunatus, who came from Duplavis near Treviso, not far from Padua. It is impossible to be certain why SS. Justina and Prosdocimus appear so suddenly with Opilio's basilica. Yet the fact that the fifth and early-sixth centuries, during which the cults may have been in gestation, saw the rise of Aquileia and Ravenna as the major metropolitan sees of north-eastern Italy perhaps offers a solution. Sandwiched between them, the Paduan Church may have felt the need to produce some venerable saints of its own to increase its prestige.

(c) Ravenna  The source for the early bishops of Ravenna is the *Pontificalis* of Agnellus of Ravenna written between 830/1 and the mid-840s. The work clearly reflects the cultural ambience of Ravenna at this time, as well as the author's pride in his city's monuments. It is also a vehicle for his political views. Agnellus is strongly anti-Byzantine and so he relishes the leadership by his forebear George of a revolt against Justinian II in 711 (Agnellus, *Pontificalis* 140); he is less than favourable about the bishops of his own see. But most importantly for our purposes is his distaste for papal jurisdiction over Ravenna, which he could accept in dogmatic matters, nowhere else. His ire is hardly surprising for a man

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61 Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles*, esp.67-8.
62 Guillou, *Régionalisme et indépendance*, 281-2; cf. J. W. George, *Venantius Fortunatus* (1992), 18-20, on his connections with other cults in north-eastern Italy, including Aquileia.
65 Brown, 'Romanitas and Campanilismo', 111.
67 Fasoli, 'Agnello Ravennate', 487.
displaying profound civic patriotism at a time when Ravenna’s independence had been eroded by a sequence of Frankish-papal alliances since the 750s.  

This is significant because Agnellus makes Ravenna’s first bishop, Apollinaris, a disciple of St. Peter at Rome (Agnellus, *Pontificalis* 1), thus justifying Roman spiritual primacy over his own Church. But Agnellus is reflecting rather than inventing a tradition: St. Peter’s teaching of Apollinaris appears in the writings of Paul the Deacon, more than fifty years earlier (*Liber de episcopis mettensibus*, p.261). The origins remain obscure. Peter Chrysologus, bishop of Ravenna in the mid-fifth century, makes the earliest extant allusion to Apollinaris, but says nothing of St. Peter (*Sermo* 128). By 666, however, the emperor Constans II recognised that the Ravennate Church possessed apostolic dignity.  

Ravenna by now boasted two enormous churches dedicated to Apollinaris, one within the city, the other at Classis, its harbour suburb. They belong to the late fifth and mid-sixth centuries respectively, a time when the saint’s legend was perhaps undergoing some sort of metamorphosis. For this was also the period when Ravenna was first flexing its muscles as a metropolitan bishopric, after Pope Sixtus III (432-440) had bestowed this authority upon the city.  

At the same time the bishops of Ravenna increased their influence by exploiting their proximity to the successive courts of Roman emperors, Ostrogothic kings and Byzantine exarchs. The earliest bishop of Ravenna known from other sources is Severus, eleventh in Agnellus’ list, a participant at the council of Sardica. But a Church seeking to rival the prestige of Rome would need a more ancient proto-bishop than a fourth-century incumbent,  

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71 Lanzoni, *Diocesi*, 464-8.  
so the cult of Apollinaris may have been fostered in order to give the city an apostolic succession to rival that of St. Peter.

(d) Milan The earliest episcopal lists for Milan are preserved in eleventh century manuscripts. This date is crucial since, until the collapse of the Patarene movement in 1075, the Milanese Church was involved in a fierce struggle to preserve its independence in the face of an aggressive reform papacy. Information in the lists may have been distorted, if not invented, to suit propagandist purposes, just as a papal polemicist such as Bonizo of Sutri spiced his works with wholesale untruths. Of the bishops listed, the earliest otherwise known is Merocles who attended the Church councils of Rome in 313 and Arles in 314. Before him come five bishops: Anatelon, Gaius, Castricianus, Calimerus and Monas. Ennodius (Carmina 2.6) states that a basilica sancti Calimeri was repaired during the episcopate of Laurentius I (489-510/12). Although we cannot know exactly when this church was built, restoration in the late fifth or early sixth century suggests it may have been constructed before c.450. It was almost certainly on the same site as the present church of S. Calimero, not far from Ambrose’s Basilica Apostolorum, now S. Nazaro, in a large ancient cemetery along the road to Rome. The oldest references to Castricianus and Monas come from a flurry of inventiones between the mid-tenth century and the episcopate of Arnulf II (998-1018). Gaius is first noted, as being buried in the church of S. Nabore, in the Libellus de situ civitatis Mediolanensis (p.34), probably written in the eleventh century.

73 Picard, Souvenir, 442-3.
76 Picard, Souvenir, 26.
78 Picard, Souvenir, 450-9.
significant that these 'discoveries' were made shortly before the lists were drawn up: together they attest to heightened interest at Milan in the years around 1000 in the early history of the see. This surge in activity may be linked to the new situation in which the Milanese archbishopric found itself in the tenth and early-eleventh centuries. Following the collapse of Carolingian authority in Lombardy, the government of the region fell into the hands of local power brokers.79 Among these, the archbishops of Milan maintained links with the Frankish kings north of the Alps who had retained an interest in Italian affairs even if they could impose their will there only infrequently. The strength of the relationship was most apparent when Otto I (936-73, emperor 962) transferred control of a number of his castles in Lombardy to archbishop Walpert (953-70) in 962.80 Furthermore, this was also a period when primacy in north-Italian ecclesiastical affairs was hotly contested between Milan and its rivals, Aquileia and Ravenna.81 Perhaps the Milanese Church sought to boost its challenge for hegemony by promoting its ancient Christian heritage: the appearance of Anatelon as proto-bishop at Brescia between the ninth and twelfth centuries could reflect such a policy.

Ordinarily, of course, Milan's primary sainted bishop had been Ambrose. The Milanese Church was also the Ambrosian Church, with its own liturgical and administrative peculiarities.82 Ambrose himself behaved rather like a patron-deity from pagan antiquity, actively protecting his city through supernatural

79 G. Tabacco, The Struggle for Power in Medieval Italy (1989), 151-76; C. Wickham, Early Medieval Italy (1981), 168-81.
81 Cowdrey, 'Aribert II', p. 2 n. 5.
appearances. Yet distinguished as he was, Ambrose was an inadequate ally when the Church of Milan came into ideological conflict with the reform papacy in the third quarter of the eleventh century, not least because popes such as Gregory VII (1073-85) included the great Milanese bishop in their own armoury of Church Fathers who supported Petrine supremacy. The proto-bishop of the Milanese lists, Anatelon, provided an alternative solution to those desperately seeking to counteract Roman propaganda. When Anatelon first appeared in the eighth century, he was one of a number of missionaries, including Apollinaris of Ravenna, sent to northern Italy by St. Peter (Paul the Deacon, Liber de episcopis mettensibus, p.261). By the mid-tenth century, however, another form of the legend was current, this time making him the disciple of the apostle Barnabas, and so independent of Peter and Rome (Libellus de situ civitatis Mediolanensis, p.18). Even so, it was not incorporated into the first of the episcopal lists of the eleventh century, which concluded with the death of Arnulf II in 1018, suggesting that the legend was not part of the official rhetoric of an autocephalous Milanese Church. Certainly, the historian Arnulf of Milan, writing c.1070, made no reference to Barnabas, preferring to base Milan’s prestige on the reputation of Ambrose (Liber gestorum recientorum, 3.13), and the story was still not incorporated into the second eleventh century recension of the episcopal list, which concluded with archbishop Tedald (1075-85), again suggesting that it may not have become part of official Milanese Church propaganda. However, another late eleventh century Milanese chronicler, Landulf Senior, gave a full account of the Barnabas story (Mediolanensis historiae libri IV, 2.15). It is possible that Landulf reflects a revival of interest in the Barnabas legend by a distinct group of patriotic Milanese polemicists seeking to subvert the rhetoric of Gregory VII, who was invoking his Apostolic Succession to St. Peter as the

83 E.g. Landulf Senior, Mediolanensis historiae libri IV, 2.2; cf. Cowdrey, ‘Aribert II’, p.11, for an eleventh century example described from the point of view of Milan’s enemies. For a pagan deity behaving in a similar fashion, cf. Zosimus, New History, 5.6.1.

84 Robinson, Authority and Resistance, 23, on Gregory’s use of arguments attributed to Ambrose.


Why do the Milanese stray from the truth?—they, who puffed up with scornful pride, say that their Church took its origins neither from Peter nor his successors, but from Barnabas.

There, however, Milanese attempts to challenge the apostolic primacy of Rome ended. Despite the complete collapse of the pro-reform Patarenes in 1075, Milan began to drift into the papal camp as a result of the harsh north-Italian policies of the emperor Henry IV (1056-1106). This transformation of Milanese loyalties was complete by the pontificate of Urban II (1088-99).\footnote{Cowdrey, ‘The Papacy, the Patarenes’, 39-48. For a full study from the perspective of Henry IV, we await I. S. Robinson’s forthcoming study of his reign.}

\textit{(e) Aquileia}  The problems posed by episcopal lists are even more complicated at Aquileia than elsewhere. We have seen that two distinct traditions survive, both preserved in very late manuscripts: one set, from the thirteenth century, comes from Grado;\footnote{Ed. in Cessi, \textit{Origo} , 160-3.} the other, of fourteenth century date, from Cividale.\footnote{Ed. in \textit{MGH SS} 13:367-8.} This resulted from a split in the Aquileian Church. In 543-4 the emperor Justinian had condemned as heretical the ‘Three Chapters’, writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus and Ibas of Edessa; this had been ratified by the Fifth Oecumenical Council, convened at Constantinople in May and June 553. Despite initial resistance, Pope Vigilius joined the chorus of condemnation and his successor Pelagius pursued the same course. But the move was so unpopular in the West that in 556 only two bishops could be found willing to perform Pelagius’ consecration, and even then only under the protection of Justinian’s general Narses. Resistance was fiercest in
northern Italy where it crystallised around the leadership of Paul of Aquileia.\footnote{J. Herrin, \textit{The Formation of Christendom} (1987), 119-27; J. Meyendorff, \textit{Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions. The Church 450-680 A.D.} (1989), 235-45.} In 607 the bishop of Aquileia, resident at Grado since the Lombard invasions of 568, re-entered communion with Rome (Paul.Diac., \textit{HL}, 4.33). But when the see next fell vacant, those hostile to the rapprochement with Rome refused to accept Candidianus, the new bishop at Grado, and elected their own candidate, John. Thereafter there was a schism with two bishops claiming the same see: one resident at Grado, the other at Aquileia and Cividale. The conflict was resolved in 723 when, under Lombard pressure, Aquileia-Cividale returned to the Roman fold; but the see at Grado continued to exist and its independence was guaranteed by the new arrangement with the papacy.\footnote{Noble, \textit{Republic of St Peter}, 27-8.} Consequently our two lists record the bishops of Aquileia-Cividale and Grado, both claiming continuity with the ancient Aquileian Church. They diverge in various ways, not least in their versions of the schism of 607.\footnote{In general, see Picard, \textit{Souvenir}, 411-31.} There are also important differences for the early period: the compilers of the Aquileia-Cividale list, not having access to the episcopal archives at Grado, confused the order of the early bishops well into the fourth century, as well as giving divergent lengths for each episcopal reign.\footnote{For variants, see the notes to the edition in \textit{MGH SS}13:367-8.}

Both lists agree, however, that the apostle Mark was the founder of the see and that he left a certain Hermachora as the first bishop. Legends associating the apostle, his relics and northern Italy are heavily laden with apocryphal elements. Grado, for example, claimed to have St. Mark's episcopal throne, first mentioned at the synod of Mantua in 827.\footnote{K. Weitzmann, 'The Ivories of the so-called Grado chair', \textit{DOP} 26 (1972), 45-94; contra Picard, \textit{Souvenir}, 584.} By the eleventh century the legend of its provenance had become so embroidered as to make the chair the personal gift of the Byzantine
emperor Heraclius (610-41). But this is spurious and can be related to a tradition which viewed Heraclius with some enthusiasm, for example making him the refounder of a certain Civitas Nova, near Venice.

The first datable association of apostle and region comes in Paul the Deacon's *Libellus de episcopis mettensibus* (p.261), written in the 780s, where St. Mark is sent to northern Italy by St. Peter. It has been argued that this was designed to give Aquileia adequate prestige to rival that held by Ravenna because of St. Apollinaris. We have seen, in connection with Ravenna, that when the initiative was given to St. Peter it meant that Rome had dogmatic primacy. Could it be the same at Aquileia? Perhaps. But our earliest source, Paul, although a cleric of the Church of Aquileia-Cividale, wrote *after* the reconciliation with Rome in 723, and displays a consistently favourable attitude to the papacy. He concluded his *Historia Langobardorum* before the Lombards entered conflict with the popes and their Frankish allies. In the same work he eulogised Gregory I, calling him 'beatus' and even 'beatissimus', quite an honour for a pope who, despite all his efforts, never held jurisdiction over Aquileia (*HL* 1.26; 3.13, 23-4; 4.5). So Paul's version, which gives the initiative to the Roman apostle, reflects its author's favour towards Rome at a time when, indeed, the bishops of Aquileia-Cividale were no longer in schism with the papacy. The legend, however, could predate Paul's account and even the reconciliation of 723. During the schism, Aquileia-Cividale had renounced the dogmatic primacy of Rome by refusing to accept papal rulings on the Three Chapters. To assert their ideological independence, the bishops possibly invented a legend of an apostolic mission to the Veneto, but without a Petrine connection,

96 Weitzmann, 'The Ivories', 51-3.
rather as some Milanese may have invented a role for Barnabas in the eleventh century. Only later, after the rapprochement with Rome had been achieved, could the role of St. Peter be inserted in the story. Indeed, such an invention could date back to the sixth century, since until 607 the breach with Rome involved the whole of the Aquileian see, including Grado, and later patriarchs of Grado claimed that they too were successors of St. Mark. All this, however, is mere hypothesis: in the absence of more decisive evidence, the origins of the legend of St. Mark's activities in northern Italy must remain shrouded in mystery.  

(iii) Born-again saints: the coherence of inconsistency

The manipulation of historical material to fit hagiographical needs might seem shocking to some modern historiographical sensibilities. It seems to confirm a cynical view that when the Church looks at its past it tends to revise it in order to 'get the distortions to match the mood of present times.' Yet to take such a view is to impose modern constraints on the perceptions of late-antique and medieval people whose vision of historical veracity differed radically from our own. If their views appear inconsistent to us, that is because they represent a distinct manner of negotiating the past. Whereas our view of personalities such as Ambrose of Milan, Eusebius of Vercelli and Zeno of Verona places them in a remote temporal locale, they would have been far from distant to the minds of people in late antiquity and the middle ages. They inhabited instead a crowded, supernatural cosmos where, as Gregory of Tours said of Eusebius of Vercelli, their miracles proved their continued vitality beyond burial ('post tumulos': Glor. Conf. 3). As such then, it was the symbolic value of their lives which mattered most, not the fine detail of when, where and among whom they had lived. Their lives provided maps of ideals to be

emulated, or at least admired, and the traditions handed down about them amply demonstrate this symbolic function. 103

A number of traditions surrounding north-Italian bishops evokes the nature of such constantly evolving views of the past. Eusebius of Vercelli, for example, was known to have withstood heresy and suffered exile for his determination. In contemporary writings, such as those of his friend and fellow pro-Nicene agitator Hilary of Poitiers, such resistance is portrayed as quasi-martyrdom. 104 Such behaviour earned him some form of veneration by the end of the fourth century (Ambr., Ep. 63.2, 68-70; Mart. Hier. Kal. Aug.) which soon seems to have accorded him the status of martyr by associating him with the Maccabees. 105 Epigraphic evidence from Vercelli attests that the cult early acquired a monumental aspect, not least because this seems to have assisted the metropolitan pretensions of the Vercellese Church. 106 In an acrostic poem inscribed on Eusebius' tomb in the late-fifth or early-sixth century, the first letter of each line read from top to bottom announced the body encased within to be that of EVSEBIVS EPISCOPVS ET MARTVR (CIL 5.6723). 107 Another verse epitaph, this time for Honoratus, Eusebius' disciple and second successor as bishop at Vercelli, twice refers to Eusebius as martyr (CIL 5.6722). 108 Later, an eighth- or ninth-century biography of Eusebius gave a detailed

103 Geary, Living with the Dead, 28.
104 For such polemical literature which presents Constantius II's treatment of the Church as a form of persecution, cf. M. Humphries, 'In Nomine Patris: Constantine the Great and Constantius II in Christological Polemic', Historia (forthcoming).
105 L. Dattrino, 'S. Eusebio di Vercelli: vescovo "martire"? vescovo "monaco"?', Augustinianum 24 (1984), 175-84, on a sequence of eight late-antique and early-medieval sermons, five of which associate Eusebius with the Maccabean martyrs.
106 E. Milano, 'Eusebio di Vercelli, vescovo metropolita. Leggenda o realtà storica?', IMU 30 (1987), 313-15, recording (p.315) an inscription from the main door of the church of S. Eusebio at Vercelli which talks of 'meritis corum [sc. episcoporum] pulcra Vercellis caput inter omnes extulit omnes.'
107 Cf. CIL 5.6725 and 6731 for further acrostic epitaphs from Vercelli; the former honours the seventh century bishop Celsus.
account of how he fell victim to an Arian persecution (*Vita Eusebii* 760c). It is hardly relevant that the persecution is unhistorical: its real importance is that it enhances Eusebius' symbolic significance as a contender against heresy.\(^{109}\)

The case of Zeno of Verona is an even more dazzling display of how a hagiographer Negotiates the past. Like Eusebius of Vercelli, Zeno was commemorated locally soon after his death (Ambr., *Ep.* 5.1), and later he began to acquire the status of martyr (*Greg. Mag.*, *Dial.* 3.19.2; *Versus de Verona* 45), although this seems to have been an intermittent honour.\(^{110}\) Also Zeno's spiritual power, like that of Eusebius, extended *post tumulos*. The most celebrated display of his efficacy occurred on 17 October 589 during a flood of the river Adige,\(^{111}\) which, having burst its banks, surrounded the basilica *Zenonis*, most probably on the site of the medieval monastery at *S. Zeno Maggiore*.\(^{112}\) Although the waters rose to the level of the windows, it did not rush in through the open doors of the church, thus preserving the lives of those sheltering inside (*Greg. Mag.*, *Dial.* 3.19.2; *Coronatus, Vita Zenonis* 9; *Paul. Diac.*, *HL* 3.23). This miracle *post tumulos* was plainly one of the most famous ever performed by Zeno: it opens a fifteenth century poem on the bishop's miracles (*Jacobus, Miracula* 2), and is mentioned in martyrological and liturgical handbooks.\(^{113}\) Such a display of spiritual power over the Adige in the vicinity of *S. Zeno Maggiore* may have helped the crystallisation of certain traditions regarding Zeno's life and career, which found form in the delightful *Vita Zenonis* written by Coronatus, a self-confessed *inutilis notarius*.

\(^{109}\) Dattrino, 'S. Euseblo di Vercelli', 176; Milano, 'Eusebio di Vercelli', 313.


\(^{111}\) The day is fixed by *Paul. Diac.*, *HL* 3.23: 'Facta est autem haec inundatio sexto decimo kalendas novembris.' Gregory the Great tells us that this flood occurred in the same year as one of the Tiber at Rome (*Dial.* 3.19.2), which Gregory of Tours dates to 589 (*Hist. Franc.* 10.1). The year was evidently a wet one in Italy: 'Eo tempore fuit aquae diluvium in finibus Venetiarum et Liguriae seu ceteris regionibus Italiae, quale post Noe tempore creditur non fuisse' (*Paul. Diac.*, loc. cit.)!

\(^{112}\) Paul the Deacon states that the floodwaters rose 'circa basilicam Beati Zenonis martyris, *quaes extra Veronensis urbis muros sita est*' (*HL3.23*), precisely where *S. Zeno* stands today.

\(^{113}\) *AASS*, Apr. II. 69, 72.
probably in the late-eighth century. The text seems to have had little propagandist use or intention, and was compiled primarily to provide a coherent narrative of Zeno's miracles.\(^{114}\) The *Vita* begins with Zeno in his monastery, which he shortly leaves to go on a fishing trip, during which he prevents the Devil from drowning the driver of a cart in the swift waters of the Adige (Coronatus, *Vita Zenonis*, 2-3). Then Coronatus relates Zeno's miraculous cure of the daughter of the emperor Gallienus, who is possessed by a demon (4-5), and having thus earned the emperor's gratitude—which includes a gift of his 'royal' crown which Zeno uses to provide for the poor—Zeno launches into an evangelical campaign which provokes the hostility of local pagans (6-7).

This campaign of evangelisation is treated as if Verona was a thoroughly pagan city, and it goes some way to explaining how Zeno came to be identified as its patron saint.\(^{115}\) Here we seem to reach a problem: Zeno was not the first incumbent of his see—we have already seen that Lucillus (or Lucius) was bishop at Verona in the 340s—but is nevertheless presented more or less as its founder. Yet the inconsistency may be more apparent than real. Witness the testimony of the anonymous *Versus de Verona*, written c. 800 (and so roughly contemporary with Coronatus' *Vita*), which list seven previous bishops before turning to 'Zeno martyr inclitus, qui Veronam predicando reduxit ad bapetismo', before recapitulating how he 'a malo spiritui sanauit Galieni filiam' (*Versus de Verona* 45-7). So Zeno as eighth bishop and Zeno as evangeliser of Verona are harmonised in the poem, as is Zeno's status as patron and the most important link in Verona's sacred panoply: he is the only saint whose miracles are described at all (*Versus* 45-54) and the poem ends with a prayer to him (*Versus* 100).

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It is in the narrative of Zeno's encounter with the emperor that Coronatus and subsequently the author of the Versus present their most surprising detail: the emperor named is Gallienus, who lived a full century before Zeno's episcopate. This link between Zeno and Gallienus may not have been Coronatus' invention, so much as a reflection of local Veronese traditions. More importantly, the choice of Gallienus is not as capricious as it first seems, but fits a context of active commemoration of the Roman past in early medieval Verona. The Versus de Verona makes explicit reference to the visible Roman remains, and an impression of the impact they had on the appearance of the city can be gleaned from the Iconographia Ratheriana, an eighteenth century copy of a mid-tenth century topographical drawing of the city showing various ancient monuments, including the amphitheatre, theatre, walls, marble bridge, and palace. The period when such materials as the Versus, the Vita, and the Iconographia were produced—the eighth to tenth centuries—coincides with a renaissance of interest in the ancient heritage at Verona which found institutional form in the Capitular Library founded by the archdeacon Pacificius (776-844). In this context, the choice of Gallienus makes perfect sense. The circuit of walls which defended Verona in the early

116 Miller, Formation of a Medieval Church, 14-15, conflates the real and symbolic pasts: 'In the fourth century . . . the messengers of a pagan king (Gallienus) found him and begged him to free the king's daughter of a demon's tortures.'

117 Vecchi, 'I luogi comuni', passim, notes how Coronatus' combines elements drawn from Zeno's own sermons with those culled from Veronese tradition. The story of the exorcism in particular is a familiar hagiographical topos.


119 For Verona as a centre of learning: G. Turrini, Millennium Scriptorii Veronensis dal IV al XV secolo (1967), 9-13; B. Bischoff, Manuscripts and Libraries in the Age of Charlemagne (1994), 1-19. R. R. Bolgar, The Classical Heritage and its beneficiaries (1954), 119, admirably sets the scene: 'many Roman customs and institutions still survived in the Italian towns; and the prevalence of urban communities, the fact that Italian life had its cultural centre in the city rather than the monastery, made for a more secular outlook which was by that very token less distrustful of the pagan past'; cf.
middle ages depended on the work of refortification of the city by Gallienus in A.D.265.\textsuperscript{120} Above the arches of one of the principal gates of the ancient city, which retained its importance in the middle ages as the very portal leading to the basilica of S. Zeno, ran an inscription recording Gallienus' work of restoration which justified him, with egotistical panache, in renaming the city 'Colonia Augusta Verona Nova Gallieniana' (\textit{CIL} 5.3329).\textsuperscript{121} For a local tradition seeking to have Zeno meet an emperor resident in Verona, Gallienus was the logical choice.

The case of Coronatus' \textit{Vita Zenonis} — if I have read its formulation aright — is instructive in terms of the apparent inconsistency of such hagiographical materials. In it we can see Coronatus, or the traditions he reflects, reacting to the vibrant past of medieval Verona, slotting the 'facts' of Zeno's life into the most visible Roman context presented by the city. This narrative of Zeno's life was popular and in the twelfth century it was immortalised in a series of sculptures above the main portal of S. Zeno Maggiore: exactly where Zeno's power \textit{post tumulos} had held back the flood-waters of the Adige.\textsuperscript{122} In this way the inconsistency was given monumental form. Observant citizens of Verona ascending the steps of the church could gaze up at the story set out before them, even though next door stood the church of S.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{120} On the medieval walls of Verona: M. Greenhalgh, \textit{The Survival of Roman Antiquities in the Middle Ages} (1989), 69-70, showing that a completely new circuit was not built to replace the Gallienic walls until the late-twelfth or early-thirteenth century; cf. Ward-Perkins, \textit{CAMA}, esp.192-4, 219-20; and Miller, \textit{Formation of a Medieval Church}, 17-20, on the topography of the medieval city.
\item \textsuperscript{121} Miller, \textit{Formation of a Medieval Church}, 19, on the Porta San Zeno, or the Porta dei Borsari as it is better known today. Near the Roman amphitheatre there is a fragment of wall in a small square known as the Piazza Mura Gallieno, in which there is the delightful Bar Gallieno, serving splendid panini. I have no idea how far back such names date (although when ordering I noted that the bar looked very modern), and so I cannot be sure if they represent a continuous influence by the third-century emperor on the toponomy of the city.
\item \textsuperscript{122} R. Fasanari, \textit{Il portale di San Zeno (marmi)} (1964), esp. 5-8 (date), 29-31 with plates III-VII (the sculptures).
\end{itemize}
Proculo—dedicated to the fourth bishop in the *Versus* list (*Versus 42*)—which by its very existence was a reminder that Zeno was not, as Coronatus' life presents him, the founder of the Veronese Church. Yet the fact that the various traditions existed side-by-side suggests that the inconsistency may seem greater to us than to the medieval inhabitants of Verona. Coronatus' little *Vita* represented one negotiation of the past which gave primacy to Zeno; the list in the *Versus de Verona* gave voice to another; and at the neighbouring churches of S. Zeno Maggiore and S. Proculo, the two existed in apparent harmony.

(iv) Summary

Is it possible to view the cults of founder saints such as Zeno as a form of 'structural amnesia' which attempts a cynical manipulation of the past 'to get the distortions to match the mood of present times'? This is, I think, to take a dim view indeed of the workings of medieval hagiographical production, since it argues for disingenuity at every juncture. Not withstanding this, some patterns emerge. First, it is clear that traditions concerning founders, especially apostolic ones, were developed in the early middle ages to enhance the prestige of certain sees in northern Italy. They reflect the competition between various bishoprics, especially in those cases—such as Milan, Ravenna, and Aquileia—where not just prestige but also the justification of autonomy, authority and jurisdiction was at issue. Secondly, the possession of apostolic relics itself became an important factor in establishing the eminence of a bishopric. Although Agnellus of Ravenna tacitly accepted Roman spiritual jurisdiction over Ravenna because of Petrine primacy, he could still speculate on how different things would have been had the city succeeded in acquiring the relics of the apostle Andrew from the emperor Justinian I (Agnellus, *Pontificalis 76*). At the Council of Mantua in 827, part of the dispute between Aquileia and Grado hinged upon whose collection of relics of St. Mark was superior. That same year, the citizens of Venice, unwilling to see their city overshadowed by its neighbours,

pilfered the apostle’s body from Alexandria, and established their city’s prestige as the home *par excellence* of the relics of St. Mark.\textsuperscript{125}

Such actions are testimony to the radically different approach to the sacred past in the complexities of medieval minds.\textsuperscript{126} Our needs are profoundly different, so that the information preserved in these medieval sources deserves to be treated with caution if not suspicion. In view of the propagandist nature of these sources, it must now seem incredible that hitherto they have been used uncritically as major sources for the history of earliest Christianity in northern Italy. Any new account of Christian origins in the region must look to other sources of information to reconstruct a narrative. Data from the episcopal lists can be retained—after all, it would be arrogant indeed to reject everything these medieval chroniclers wrote as nonsense—so longs as it is viewed within a context constructed from other materials.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have shown the strict limitations of and the difficulties imposed by the traditional source material for the early north-Italian Churches. The lists of bishops at councils have been shown to be unsatisfactory for a variety of reasons. First, they always represent a partisan group who agreed with the decrees of the council. Second, they cannot be assumed to offer a comprehensive list of bishoprics then extant since it is clear that attendance at councils was at best partial, so the absence of a bishopric from a list does not necessarily mean it did not exist. Third, the view they offer us of north-Italian Christianity is, at best, severely restricted: they limit us to seeing only bishoprics when we know that there existed a few (and perhaps many) Christian communities without episcopal leaders. Similarly, to use

\textsuperscript{125} P. J. Geary, *Furta Sacra* (1990), 88-94.

\textsuperscript{126} Geary, *Living with the Dead*, 28.
medieval diocesan episcopal lists and local traditions as evidence is to ask them to bear a burden of proof they were never designed to take. Such texts were formulated in the middle ages for reasons wholly alien to our quest. They sought to articulate ideas of Christian origins, often in response to contemporary pressures, and, as the case of Coronatus' *Vita Zenonis* has shown most emphatically, their views of historical personalities boasted a timelessness which confounds modern historical sensibilities.

This is not to say that such materials are useless, but we must acknowledge their limitations. Lists of conciliar subscriptions provide a secure if partial guide to the existence of episcopal sees. The names they list can be helpful, but again in a partial sense, in sketching the involvement of the north-Italian episcopate in broader ecclesiastical affairs. But to reach a full understanding of these processes it is necessary to use them in combination with other sources. Often this can serve as a helpful reminder of the limitations of subscriptions, such as the example we have seen of Crispinus of Padua participating in Athanasius' attempts to gain an imperial audience, but not attending the Council of Serdica. Likewise, medieval material can be used to a certain extent, if with caution. Episcopal lists and *vitae* often provide detailed information on the lengths of episcopates or the geographical origins of bishops themselves. It is impossible to be certain how much of this information is accurate. Tempting though it is to dismiss it all as nonsense, we must remember that it is possible that the compilers of such texts might have had access to source materials or traditions now lost to us.127 Yet when embracing such material, we need to remain sensitive to the variety of forces which shaped the production of the medieval text, discarding material, such as the assertion that Barnabas founded the see of Milan, which can be securely identified either as the invention of an ecclesiastical propagandist, or the natural distortion caused by viewing the early Christian past through the lense of medieval perceptions. Checks need to imposed

127 As Vecchi, 'I luoghi comuni', 143, suggests is very likely to have been the case with Coronatus, who states that he was a *notarius*. 
on the evaluation of the traditions reflected in medieval texts. In the next chapter, I will offer an explanation of Christian origins in northern Italy. I will use some of the material preserved in the medieval traditions, but only insofar as it can be controlled by our understanding of the social matrix of the north-Italian human environment outlined in Chapter Two.
The previous chapter outlined the traditional source material for earliest Christianity in northern Italy, highlighting its inadequacy on its own to reveal anything substantial about the arrival and growth of the new faith in the region. We saw that many bishoprics had elaborate foundation legends, but that these must be viewed with suspicion in view of the influence on their formulation of ecclesiastical power struggles in the early middle ages. Yet while some early legends may have been shameless fictions it is possible that some of these medieval authors were manipulating pre-existing traditions. We have seen in the case of Brescia, for example, political developments did not necessitate the invention of entirely new material: instead we have the adaptation of existing traditions and the importation of Anatelion from Milan. Testing the reliability of such traditions is no easy matter, but in this chapter I will attempt just that by marshalling other types of evidence, such as epigraphy and archaeology, and by viewing them within the context of the north Italian human environment outlined in Chapter 2. From this analysis we may be able to gain some idea of the mechanics and the chronology of the evangelisation of northern Italy.

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES OF NORTHERN ITALY: AN INVENTORY

The first task of this chapter is to analyse all the evidence for early Christian communities in northern Italy: this will combine the data from the traditions discussed in the last chapter with that offered by archaeology and epigraphy. Such
evidence is often of a diffuse nature, and of itself is often difficult to interpret. In particular, we cannot always date archaeological remains with precision. Often the chronology is fixed by stylistic criteria which are, it must be admitted, extremely subjective: we will see that several divergent dates are sometimes assigned to the same items of evidence by different scholars. Nevertheless, I believe that when all this material is taken as a whole, it yields enough data to allow an attempt at interpreting how Christianity came to be disseminated in northern Italy.

(i) Aquileia

The richest single site in northern Italy is Aquileia. The fact that since antiquity the location of the centre of the settlement (now a mere village) has moved to the south of the ancient heart means that archaeological investigation has revealed much about the life of the Roman city, including substantial remains of early Christian edifices. These can be related to the hagiographical traditions (see Ch.3) to render one of the most complete pictures possible for an early-Christian centre in northern Italy. The evidence for early Aquileian bishops and saints is woefully poor: none of it securely predates the late fourth century when, particularly under Chromatius, there was an explosion of activity at Aquileia promoting the city's saints. Imitating the Ambrosian model at Milan, Chromatius erected many new churches, founded several suffragan sees and seems to have promulgated the cult of Aquileian saints. Therefore it is impossible to know how many traditions date back to the earliest years of the church in Aquileia, or how many saints were, like Gervasius and Protasius at Milan, unknown before the late-fourth century.

Of the various names listed in the medieval episcopal catalogues from Aquileia-Grado and Aquileia-Cividale, the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* mentions at least two of the early entrants in those lists. On 30 and 31 May it mentions Chrysogonus (there are two bishops of this name in the episcopal lists) and on 16 and 17 March, Hilarus. The 'Armiger' listed on 12 July may be the same

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as the Hermachora whom we have encountered as St. Mark's disciple, but this is uncertain.² Of these a cult of Hilarus seems to have developed in the fourth and fifth centuries, with a small church dedicated to him inside the walls at Aquileia.³ The burial of a 'Beatissimus martyr Chrysogonus', probably one of the bishops, is attested by his sarcophagus, found near Aquileia at Aquae Gradatae, now S. Canzian d'Isonzo, where reputedly he was executed (ILCV 2018).⁴ He seems to have been associated with a clutch of other Aquileian saints: Protus, noticed on 14 June in the Martyrologium, whose sarcophagus was also found here (ILCV 2017); and the trio of Cantius, Cantianus and Cantianella (30-1 May, 15 and 17 June), who gave the town its modern name.⁵ Their cult is attested in the fifth century when Maximus of Turin delivered a sermon in their honour (Sermo 15). Around this time it seems that a church dedicated to them may have been built at S. Canzian d'Isonzo itself. This was erected over a yet earlier Christian edifice, perhaps dating from the mid-fourth century, but it is uncertain whether this first building had any relation to a cult of the group of Aquileian martyrs apart from the fact of its location in a vicus that contained important cemeteries for the city as a whole.⁶

Two other early saints deserve attention: Felix and Fortunatus, recorded on 14 August in the Martyrologium. Bishop Chromatius (388-407/8) devoted an entire sermon to them, although only a fragment remains (Sermo 7); there was also a shrine to them outside the southern gate of the city (CIL 5.1678, 1698).⁷ This position, near the river Natiso, was alleged to be the site of their martyrdom in their fifth- or sixth-century Passio.⁸ Traditionally, however, these saints were shared

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² Picard, Souvenir, 582; Lanzoni, Diocesi, 493-4.
⁴ AASS, Apr. 1.3 247-8; Picard, Souvenir, 253, 580.
⁵ Picard, Souvenir, 580.
⁷ Chevallier, Aquilée, 108.
⁸ AASS, Jun. 2.3 457. For the date: M. P. Billanovich, 'Appunti diagiografia aquileiese', RSCI
with Vicenza and by the fifth century there seems to have been a church there
dedicated to them.\footnote{Mart. Hier. 19 k.sept.; Venant. Fort. Carm. 8.3.165-6; id. V.Martini 4.658-60.}

But if the early history of the see is dimly lit, it emerges spectacularly from
the shadows in the episcopate of Theodore, who attended the Council of Arles in
314 in the company of a deacon Agathon. To have had deacons, the church of
Aquileia must have had a formal hierarchy. The best evidence for the ability of the
city's Christian community to organise themselves comes from the archaeological
record. Beneath the eleventh century basilica of Poppo lie extensive remains of a
large church, consisting of two parallel halls (the northern one measuring 17.25 x
37.4m, the southern 20.45 x 37.1m) connected by a transverse hall (13.7 x 29m), off
which lay anterooms and a baptistery (fig. 13).\footnote{Chevallier, Aquilée, 106-7.} The floors are decorated with
polychrome mosaics, which are particularly elaborate in the southern hall. While
the mosaics of the northern hall are by and large of a geometric format, those in the
southern hall incorporate more figurative work. Most of this floor is covered with
large panels, subdivided into emblemata (square, polygonal and circular) by
intricate geometric networks, everywhere utilising the guilloche pattern that was to
become so common in fourth-century Christian mosaics in north-eastern Italy.\footnote{On this motif, see: D. F. Glass, Studies on Cosmatesque Pavements (1980), 29-30.}
The emblemata are occupied by various devices: animals, birds, portraits and some
overtly Christian images. These include a Good Shepherd and panel with a Victory
flanked by a basket of loaves and a chalice, presumably holding wine, almost
certainly symbolising the 'Eucharistic Victory'. The most elaborate tableau,
stretching across the entire east end of the hall and occupying a quarter of the floor
space, is an enormous seascape incorporating a narrative depiction of the Jonah
story. The prophet is shown, in a sequence of images running from north to south,
being cast into the sea-monster's mouth, being belched up onto a beach and resting

30 (1976), 5.
under a canopy of gourds. Apart from these overtly Christian elements, the
seascape could easily belong to a secular, pagan context, since it incorporates
several fishing erotes.\textsuperscript{12}

Also amid the seascape is a clipeus bearing a Chi-Rho monogram and an
important inscription (\textit{ILCV1863}; see fig. 9) which fixes the date of the building. It
reads:

\begin{verbatim}
THEODORE FEL[IX]
[A]DIVVANTE DEO
OMNIPOTENTE ET
POEMNIO CAELITVS TIBI
[TRA]DITVM OMNIA
[B]AEATE FECISTI ET
GLORIOSE DEDICAS
TI
\end{verbatim}

(O happy Theodore, with the help of Almighty God and the flock given you by
Heaven\textsuperscript{13} you have blessedly accomplished and gloriously dedicated all these
things.)

Theodore is clearly the leader of the Christian community and surely must be
identified with the bishop of Aquileia who attended the council of Arles, since the
episcopal lists record no other bishop with this name occupying the see. Therefore
this church-building can be dated quite closely. In the episcopal lists, Theodore is

\textsuperscript{12} The bibliography on this pavement is immense. Among the most useful I have consulted are:
Chevallier, \textit{Aquilée}, 101-4; W. Dorigo, \textit{Late Roman Painting} (1971), 169-79; G. C. Menis, \textit{I mosaici
cristiani di Aquileia} (1965.); S. Tavano, ‘La crisi formale tardoantica e i mosaici Teodoriani’, \textit{AAAd}
22 (1982), 549-69.

\textsuperscript{13} Opinions vary on the translation of ‘poemnio caelitus tibi l [tra]ditum’. The reading adopted
here is the most common one, as in Chevallier, \textit{Aquilée}, 101, and G. C. Menis, ‘La cultura teologica
del clero aquileiese all’inizio del IV secolo’, \textit{AAAd} 22 (1982), 465 and n. 6, 482-5. But A. Carlini
(AE 1986: 243) has suggested the reading ‘for the flock given you by Heaven’. See further n. 30
below on the significance of \textit{poemnio}.\n
allocated a reign of 11 years,\textsuperscript{14} estimated to have been between 308 and 319.\textsuperscript{15} As it is impossible that a church on this scale could have been built secretly,\textsuperscript{16} it is perhaps most likely that it was erected late in Theodore’s episcopate, after Constantine’s victory over Maxentius and proclamation of religious toleration.\textsuperscript{17}

These mosaics, particularly the seascape, show great affinity with contemporary north African work:\textsuperscript{18} the device of \textit{erotes} fishing is found in several north African pavements, such as the Triumph of Oceanus and Amphitrite from Constantine\textsuperscript{19} and in the House of the Triumph of Dionysus at Sousse.\textsuperscript{20} It is also found in mosaics laid by north African masters working abroad, the most famous being in the room 22 in the late third century villa at Piazza Armerina in Sicily.\textsuperscript{21} Furthermore an example also occurs at the late Roman villa at Desenzano, on the shores of lake Garda near Verona, where the mosaics also seem to be the work of African craftsmen.\textsuperscript{22} If African mosaicists were active elsewhere in Venetia, why

\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{14} Cessi, \textit{Origo} 162.19.
  \item\textsuperscript{15} Calculations are based on counting the lengths of episcopates, as recorded in the medieval lists, backwards from 388, when Ambrose of Milan installed bishop Chromatius: F. Homes Dudden, \textit{The Life and Times of St. Ambrose} (1935), 371 n.1; cf. C. Truzzi, ‘L'ordinazione episcopale di Cronazio di Aquileia nel suo contesto storico-culturale’, \textit{AAAd} 34 (1988), esp. 31.
  \item\textsuperscript{16} White, \textit{God's House}, 129-31, 146-7.
  \item\textsuperscript{17} An earlier date cannot be ruled out. At Altava in western Mauretania a church may have been built in 309: Lane Fox, \textit{Pagans and Christians}, 587. The inscription attesting the dedication is defective, however, and is especially worn in the part where the date is given: A. Ferrua, ‘Due iscrizioni della Mauretania’, \textit{RAC} 53 (1977), 227.
  \item\textsuperscript{18} Dorigo, \textit{Late Roman Painting}, 169; K. M. Dunbabin, \textit{The Mosaics of Roman North Africa} (1978), 125-30.
  \item\textsuperscript{19} Dorigo, \textit{Late Roman Painting}, pl. 18.
  \item\textsuperscript{20} R. Bianchi-Bandinelli, \textit{Rome: the Late Empire} (1971), 233-5.
  \item\textsuperscript{22} Wilson, ‘Roman Mosaics’, 426; id., \textit{Piazza Armerina}, 80; Dunbabin, \textit{Mosaics of Roman North Africa}, 214-6.
\end{itemize}
not also in Theodorean Aquileia? After all, strong contacts between Aquileia and Africa existed at this time (see Ch.2).

The scale and sumptuousness of these mosaics, together with the possibility of their African workmanship, raises questions about the nature of the Christian community at Aquileia. To require such a large building the Christian community may have been quite numerous; to buy the property on which to build the edifice and to decorate it so lavishly implies the community had access to considerable wealth. In a city which flourished on trade, it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that many Aquileian Christians were themselves merchants. Such a hypothesis seems to be supported by other data. Theodore’s church was built inside the walls, near the south-eastern perimeter. This part of Aquileia is close to the harbour area, and immediately to the south of the church there was, in the fourth century, a large warehouse and market-place. Thus the church lay in a part of the city close to its mercantile quarter.

There may have been a tradition of Christian worship on this site which predates Theodore’s church. Beneath it lie buildings of Augustan and mid-imperial date. Elsewhere in the empire, as we have seen (Ch. 1) at Dura-Europos and the Roman tituli, church buildings often developed by a gradual process of architectural adaptation of a structure in which Christians met for worship. An analogous process may have occurred at Aquileia: Theodore’s edifice, for example, reuses the foundation courses of some walls of earlier buildings, some of which may have


24 This observation was made soon after the discovery of the mosaics in 1909: see the letter of V. Casarola ap. O. Marucchi, ‘Notizie’, Nuovo Bullettino di Archeologia Cristiana 16 (1910), 165. Cf. Lizzi, Vescovi, 13.

been warehouses. If the underlying buildings were used as a venue for Christian worship before the construction of the Theodorean church, it is possible that their owners then donated them for ecclesiastical use. While we cannot be sure who those owners were, in a commercial town like Aquileia there is a possibility that they were merchants.

This hypothesis seems to be supported by literary evidence which suggests that the clergy of the Aquileian church came from those areas with which the city had trading contacts (see Ch.2). In the episcopal list of Grado, Theodore is said to have been ‘natione Tracie Grecie’. Two of his predecessors are designated as having Balkan origins: Hilarus ‘fuit natione Pannonicus’ and Chrysogonus II ‘fuit natione Dalmatie’. The African connections noted in the mosaics of the Theodorean church were also reflected in the origins of the clergy: in the mid-fourth century, the see was held by Fortunatianus, whom Jerome designates ‘Afer’ (de vir. ill. 97). Other names suggest links with the Greek world, not least those of Theodore himself and the deacon Agathon who accompanied him to Arles. By themselves, names are not always compelling evidence, but epigraphic evidence seems to support the presence of a Hellenic or Hellenised element in the Aquileian church in the early-fourth century. In the mosaic inscription in Theodore’s church, the term used to describe the Christian community is poemnium, deriving from the Greek ποιμνίον, meaning ‘flock’. So far as I know, there is no other example of

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27 Cessi, Origo, 162.19.
28 Cessi, Origo, 162.16, 18. Chrysogonus I is recorded as ‘fuit natione Ursantinopoli’ (162.17): I have been unable to identify this place.
29 C. Mohrmann, Études sur le latin des Chrétiens 3 (1965), 72-3.
this transliteration: the word is usually translated into Latin as *grex*. 31 That this ostentatiously Greek word should occur in an inscription recording the activities of a bishop from Thrace once again points to an immigrant element in the Aquileian church. Thus legendary, documentary, biographical, archaeological and epigraphic data combines to present a portrait of a heterogeneous Christian community at Aquileia. Taken together with the hypothesis that Theodore's church was built with mercantile patronage, this evidence suggests that the Aquileian church was closely bound up with the traders who thronged the city.

(ii) Milan

Of the other cities in northern Italy, the most extensive evidence for early Christianity comes from Milan. Here, however, we have seen clear examples of how already at the time of Ambrose, the Christian past was being manipulated, if

equates with the 'Pymenius episcopus' in *Mart. Hier.* XV kal. Apr. I am not altogether sure why Diehl does this. At any rate his reading of the reference in the *Mart. Hier.* cannot be sustained. It occurs in only one MS and seems to be a corruption of the name of Epigmenius, a presbyter of the Roman Church martyred under Diocletian: see in detail H. Delaunay (ed. H. Quentin), *Commentarius perpetuus in Martyrologium Hieronymianum* (AASS, Nov. 2/2: 1931), 151-2. Furthermore, Diehl's interpretation has never gained wide acceptance, and most scholars agree with the assertion made at the time of the mosaic's discovery that *poeninnium* is a transliteration from Greek: Casasola, ap. Marucchi, 'Notizie', 162-3 and n.1; P. L. Zovatto, 'Il significato della basilica doppiu. L'esempio di Aquileia', *RSCI* 18 (1964), 362-4 esp. 364; cf. A. Ferrua’s emendation of *ILCV* 1863 ('multo magis placet intellegere poiyniuur = grege') ap. *ILCV Suppl.* p.15.

31 I have checked Jeremiah 13:17, Zachariah 10:3, Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:3 and Luke 12:32 in the Vulgate. Unfortunately I have been able to examine only 1 Peter 5:3 in the Vetus Latina. Cf. A. Souter, *A Glossary of Later Latin to 600 A.D.* (1949), 166; *TLL* 6.2.2333-4. It has been suggested to me that the Greek word may have been retained because it derived from a liturgical usage, but I can find no supporting proof. A major reason for preserving Greek terms in early Latin liturgies was if the Latin word had some pagan, sacral meaning. I cannot see any such associations for the word *grex*, which is used without any qualms by authors throughout the Latin west. A more likely derivation for the word is that it was a technical term used at Aquileia to refer to the Christian congregation: thus we would have a local equivalent of the more widespread phenomenon of retaining technical words such as *mysterium*: see further C. Mohrmann, *Liturgical Latin* (1959), esp. 11-18, 29-32; and ced., *Études sur le Latin des Chrétiens*, 3 (1965), 171-96.
not invented, for political ends. Unhappily, there is less of an opportunity at Milan to control the details recorded in tradition with archaeological data: the continuous importance of the city and occupation of its site throughout the middle ages mean that, unlike Aquileia, we cannot excavate large tracts of ancient Milan, hoping to find records of its PalaeoChristian past. Worse, occasions such as Frederick Barbarossa's destruction of the city in 1162 mean that many early-Christian remains may have perished forever.32

What, then, can we say about the early Milanese church before Merocles stepped out into the full light of history at the Roman synod of 313? Of his predecessors, we have seen (Ch.3) that Calimerus had a church from about 450, probably in the cemetery outside the Porta Romana of Milan. If so, a martyr shrine may have been on this site prior to construction of the church, although firm evidence for a formal cult (as opposed to informal veneration) of Calimerus is lacking before the eighth century.33 Other martyrs—apart from Felix and Nabor, who seem, in any case, to have been imported from LodI under Merocles' successor, Maternus34—are hard to trace before the intense activity of Ambrose (see Ch.3). A complete portrait of earliest Christianity at Milan based on hagiographical material is not possible.

Archaeological evidence provides little extra help. Thanks to the ambiguity raised by Ambrose's vigorous promotion of Milan's sacred heritage, what little early-Christian material survives cannot be dated with certainty any earlier than the fourth century (see Ch.3). The oldest church of which we have any record is that designated basilica vetus by Ambrose (Ep 20.10). Its precise location has been debated, but it seems likely to have lain to the east of the basilica nova, known in

32 P. J. Geary, Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages (1994), 243-56, on the removal of relics after Frederick's victory.
33 Picard, Souvenir, 251-6, 614-6, 623-4.
34 Picard, Souvenir, 38-9.
the middle ages as S. Tecla.\textsuperscript{35} To be sure, this particular part of Milan, near the eastern walls, was on the periphery of the late-antique city: the palace complex and forum lay further to the west. Yet the building of a large church \textit{within} the walls is—as we have seen at Aquileia—a significant indicator of the prominence of a Christian community.\textsuperscript{36}

At any rate, when Merocles attended the council of Arles in 314, he was accompanied by a deacon, Severus.\textsuperscript{37} That there were minor clergy at Milan points to a formal ecclesiastical hierarchy in the city by 314; in turn this may suggest that the Christian community there was well organised and probably numerous. This would not be surprising considering Milan’s importance by this time as an imperial capital (see Ch. 2). Indeed, it is worth noting that Milan is the only north Italian bishopric to have been represented at the councils of Rome, Arles, Serdica, Milan and Rimini (see Ch. 3 above, esp. Table 3.1).

\textit{(iii) Christian centres in Venetia et Histria}

As in so much else, the situation at Milan and Aquileia cannot be used to draw generalisations for the whole of northern Italy. These cities were privileged by virtue of their enormous importance as imperial centres.\textsuperscript{38} When we turn to other cities, we find that the information is rather less bountiful than it is even for Milan; and we must never forget that a major contributing factor to the richness of Aquileia’s Christian antiquities derives from the city's disastrous fortunes in the post-antique period which left much of the area of the ancient city as open

\textsuperscript{35} For the identification of the site: R. Krautheimer, \textit{Three Christian Capitals} (1983), 76-7. Cf. Ambr., \textit{Ep. 20}.1: ‘basilica nova \textit{hoc est intramurana} quae maior est.’ The basilica vetus was probably associated with the baptistery of S. Stefano, which lay to the north-east of the apse of the present cathedral.

\textsuperscript{36} For a more detailed examination of the churches of Milan in their urban context see below Ch. 8 and Appendix 2.


\textsuperscript{38} R. Lizzi, ‘Ambrose’s Contemporaries and the Christianisation of Northern Italy’, \textit{JRS} 80 (1990), 165-6; cf. Ch. 2 above.
countryside, unoccupied by later habitation levels. For most other cities we must rely on meagre archaeological data supplemented occasionally by allusions in the literary sources.

It is the cities of *Venetia et Histria* which provide the most abundant evidence for the existence of Christian communities by the mid-fourth century. Verona, as we saw in the last chapter, has a rich and complex tradition relating to its Christian past. Like other cities in the region it has an episcopal list, preserved in the *Versus de Verona*, which lists five bishops before Lucilius, the first bishop for whom there is independent testimony (see Ch. 3): Euprepius, Dimidianus, Simplicius, Proculus and Saturninus (*Versus* 40-43). Of these, only Proculus was venerated in the medieval period: in the ninth century, there was a church dedicated to him west of the city. It lay in the midst of an ancient necropolis (see fig. 2), a location which sounds a convincing spot for a martyr shrine. Unfortunately we cannot assert with any confidence that there was a continuous veneration of Proculus in this area: the site seems to have been chosen in the ninth century for its proximity to that of San Zeno, which commemorated the most illustrious Veronese bishop of the later fourth century.

If this church of San Zeno, known from the late-sixth century, marks the site of that bishop’s actual fourth-century tomb, it could reflect a continuous tradition of Christians meeting in this cemetery dating back perhaps to the pre-Constantinian period. Moreover, while the *Versus*’ description of Verona’s extramural zones shows it studded with martyr shrines, yet more convincing evidence for early Christian buildings is found in the north-west of the city, beneath the cloister north of the medieval cathedral complex. Several different layers of ecclesiastical construction superimposed on one another, of which a small, apsidal building.

measuring 31.70 x 18.30 m. perhaps belongs to the mid-fourth century (see fig. 3).

Brescia, another important city on the road from Aquileia to Milan, presents little detailed evidence of Christian presence prior to the mention of its bishop Ursicinus at Serdica. Cuscito asserts that Brescia’s Christian community was small enough to have escaped the attention of the imperial authorities during times of persecution. The evidence from which he deduces this situation, however, cannot bear such an interpretation: Ambrose’s reference to a city ‘sterile of martyrs’ is clearly an allusion to Milan prior to the inventio of Gervasius and Protasius in 386 (‘sterilem martyribus ecclesiam Mediolanensam’ Ep. 22.7). There is, however, one other literary allusion which suggests a Christian group at Brescia. In the mid-310s, bishop Caecilian of Carthage spent a brief sojourn in the city (Optatus 1.26; cf. Aug., c. Cresc. 3.71.83). Despite the efforts of the Donatist party at the Conference of Carthage in 411 to depict this as a period of exile imposed by the emperor (Brev. coll. 3.20.38), it seems that Caecilian’s residence at Brescia was part of Constantine’s complex efforts to establish a peaceful settlement for the Carthaginian church, a process which reached its conclusion with the emperor’s condemnation of Donatus at Milan in 316/17. In these circumstances it seems just possible that Caecilian was put up in Brescia by a Christian community there. Such an inference would place a Christian congregation at Brescia in the time of Constantine.

Archaeological data too is scarce, but it suggests that in the third century there may have been a martyr shrine in the cemetery south of the city on the site later occupied by the church of S. Afra. This shrine is sometimes associated with

42 G. Cuscito, Il primo cristianesimo nella ‘Venetia et Histria’ (1986), 36-7 with full references.
44 McLynn, Ambrose, 211.
46 Picard, Souvenir, 219-23; Cuscito, Primo cristianesimo, 40-1.
a pair of Brescian saints, Faustinus and Iovitta, mentioned in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* on 16 February. But the cult of martyrs at Brescia is difficult to interpret. Strangely, Faustinus and Iovitta are never mentioned in the *Tractatus* of Gaudentius, bishop of Brescia in the last years of the fourth century, leading some to conclude that they were not venerated at Gaudentius’ time.⁴⁷ The first mention of them outside the *Martyrologium* is in Gregory The Great’s *Dialogus*, in the late-sixth century; but in this case only one of the pair, Faustinus, is mentioned (*Greg. Mag.*, *Dial.* 4.54.2). The text makes clear, however, that there was a church at Brescia dedicated to him, since the patrician Valerian was buried there (‘beatus Faustinus martyr, in cuius ecclesia corpus illius [sc. Valeriani] fuerat humatum’). No such church exists today, but local traditions associate the relics of the two martyrs with the church of S. Afra. This association goes further: the *acta* of Afra are inserted in those of Faustinus and Iovitta. But this seems to be a late association: the hagiographical texts recording their joint martyrdom under Hadrian are late, no earlier than the late-eighth century.⁴⁸

We saw that the early-medieval records of Padua’s Christian past are extremely unreliable, and that we cannot be certain of the existence of any congregation there prior to the mid-340s, when Crispinus was bishop (Ch. 3). Archaeological investigation of the church of S. Giustina confirms the relatively late development of this site associated with Opilio: none of the mosaics found there can be dated any earlier than the late fifth century. The area in which the church was built offers an explanation as to why a martyr cult developed here, since in the late-Roman period the zone was occupied by a necropolis.⁴⁹ Therefore, as I have suggested in the case of the churches of SS. Zeno and Proculo at Verona, it may have been the scene of early Christian veneration.

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⁴⁷ *BS* 5:483: ‘fino al’inizio del sec. V erano assolutamente sconosciuto nella Chiesa bresciana.’


Rather more secure evidence for an early Christian presence at Padua comes from a mosaic brought to light in the 1931 excavations in Via VIII febbraio. In a pavement made up of geometric designs, there is a square panel framing a clipeus bearing an inscription which contains two acclamations, one mentioning a certain Eutherius and his family (fig. 10; see further Ch. 6). It is impossible to date this mosaic with certainty, but on stylistic grounds it most probably belongs to the fourth (or early-fifth) century. The most significant aspect of the mosaic is its provenance. It was discovered during refurbishment of the Municipio at Padua, a building facing onto the Piazza delle Erbe which occupies the part of the modern city which was the ancient forum. Thus we have a Christian cult building not only within the walls—as at Milan, Aquileia and Verona—but in close proximity to the ancient political centre. Unfortunately not enough of the pavement survives to allow us to reconstruct the dimensions of the building it decorated. The excavators and subsequent scholars assume, however, that it belonged to a rather small structure, such as a private chapel. The Christian structure was built inside an insula block which at some earlier stage included a bath complex. This may assist us in a tentative identification of Eutherius. As the cult building seems to have been constructed inside a building close to the political centre of Padua, Eutherius may have been the patron who donated it for ecclesiastical use. In any case, the real significance of the discovery of this mosaic is that it shows that at Padua someone in the Christian community was somehow able to build a chapel in the very centre of their city perhaps before the end of the fourth century. It was, moreover, a property which remained in church hands: in the middle ages, the church of S. Martino rose on this site.

50 Porta, 'Mosaici paleocristiani', 233-5 with figs. 2-3, examines the mosaic and concludes it belongs 'in un inoltrato IV secolo, se non agli inizi del V' (235).
52 Porta, 'Mosaici paleocristiani', 233, 235.
53 C. Bellinati, 'Luoghi di culto', 6, 14.
Archaeological material allows us to postulate the existence of several other minor Christian centres in *Venetia et Histria* which have not left their mark in the documentary records of fourth-century councils. We have seen (Ch. 3) that Aquileia shared its cult of SS. Felix and Fortunatus with Vicenza. No bishop is attested for this city until the sixth century, but archaeological testimony suggests a thriving Christian community existed there perhaps by the mid-fourth century. Outside the city’s western gate, in a cemetery along the road to Verona, there rose a church which came to be dedicated to the two martyrs. At first it was a plain rectangular hall with an attached baptistery, but later was rebuild as a three-aisled basilica. It is impossible to be certain when the various phases of this church were built, and various solutions have been offered placing the earliest construction sometime in the early fourth century or perhaps as late as the fifth. The mosaics bear many similarities to those found elsewhere in northern Italy, with their use of guilloche patterns, geometric panels and clipei bearing inscriptions of donors who paid for the pavement. There are important differences too: the elaborate four-pointed star commemorating the dedication by ‘Splendonius et Iustina c(um) s(uis)’

54 Lanzoni, *Diocesi*, 538.
55 For the necropolis see A. Alfonsi, ‘Vicenza. Antico sepolcro cristiano a grandi sarcofagi sopra terra, e titoli funebri di età classica scoperti presso la chiesa di s. Felice’, *NSc* (1908), 337-40.
56 De Rossi, *Roma sotterranea*, 3.436, suggested on the basis of an inscription recording the martyrs Felix and Fortunatus (see below) a date close to the time of the Diocletianic persecution. For more recent analyses which vary considerably, see e.g. Cuscito, *Primo cristianesimo*, 38-40, favoured a late-fourth or even early-fifth century date for the ‘aula antica’, with reconstruction as a basilica with three naves in the second half of the fifth; cf. however, his earlier assertion in id., ‘Testimonianze archeologico-monumentale’, 658, dating the first phase to the Constantinian period, the second to late-fourth century. This is the interpretation endorsed by the current custodians of the church of SS. Felice e Fortunato, who have labelled the different phases of the mosaics as belonging to the Constantinian and Theodosian periods respectively (personal observation at Vicenza). Different still—and rather vague with it—is the dating offered by Billanovich, ‘Appunti diagiografia aquileiese’. 16 (‘un’antica basilica...risalente...al IV secolo’) and 18 (‘[i]l grande rifacimento della chiesa, appunto alla fine del IV secolo o al principio del V secolo’).
is quite unlike anything found in other Palaeochristian pavements from the region. as indeed is its dramatic colour scheme incorporating the deep red and vivid blue tesserae characteristic of the pavement as a whole. 58 Stylistic parallels suggest that the construction of the two churches belongs to the fourth or fifth centuries, but we cannot be certain. A crudely inscribed stele recording the ‘Baeati martures Felix et Fortunatus’ (ILCV 2002) is not much help in narrowing down the date, despite the efforts of various scholars to place it sometime between the early fourth century and the fifth. 59 Yet even if we cannot date the church buildings more precisely than this, I think we can at least agree with Cuscito’s assertion that by the end of the fourth century there was at Vicenza a well established Christian community. 60

Moving eastwards again along the road to Aquileia, there is evidence of Christianity at Treviso, in the form of a fourth-century mosaic, from a circular building, probably a baptistery, measuring 10 m in diameter. 61 This material is the only testimony we have of a Christian community at Treviso prior to a mention of a bishop Felix who met with the invading Lombard king Alboin in the late-560s

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58 Personal observation at Vicenza: the unique colours are the result of the materials used for the tesserae, and so could be determined by local geological factors.

59 The inscription was erroneously ascribed a Roman location by De Rossi, Roma sotterranea, 3. 436, repeated by Diehl in ILCV 2002, but corrected by Marrou, ILCV Suppl. 2002. For illustrations see Billanovich, ‘Appunti di agiografia aquileiese’, Tav. 1, and BS 5. 590. The stele has clearly been reused. Its original inscription was cut away to make room for the Christian one, which is in clumsy letters, badly arranged on the stone, and technically inferior to the carving of the architectural frame of the stele. For a thorough review of the difficulties posed by the inscription: Billanovich, op. cit., 16-18.

60 Primo cristianesimo, 38-9.

61 Cuscito, Primo cristianesimo, 38 and fig. 5. My own efforts to find this mosaic were fruitless. Having followed the signs in Treviso which directed me to the mosaic, I found nothing but a gravelled pit. I made enquiries at the local archaeological museum, but the custodian on duty could not advise me as to the current whereabouts of the baptistery mosaic.
This Felix seems to have been a friend of the poet Venantius Fortunatus, who was born at Treviso, and the two seem to have made a pilgrimage to Ravenna sometime around 550, which at least provides literary evidence for Christians prior to Felix’s episcopate.

At Trieste there is no evidence for a bishop prior to the Justinianic period, when a certain Fulgentius appears in our records. Tradition and archaeology, however, place the origins of Triestine Christianity rather earlier. The city’s patron saint, Justus, was martyred—so the *Martyrologium Romanum* and an early-medieval *passio* maintain—during the Diocletianic persecution. As with many traditions, it is impossible to verify this one. The *Martyrologium* states that Justus was executed ‘sub Manatio praeside’, but no imperial official of this name is otherwise attested. Any effort to pin down the date more closely soon runs into difficulty. The *passio* begins ‘Temporibus Diocletiani et Maximiani imperatorum, consulatus eorum quarto anno, imperii ipsorum nono, facta est persecutio’, which seems precise enough. But the accuracy is illusory, and the dating criteria do not agree with each other: the fourth shared consulship of Diocletian and Maximian was in 299; the ninth year of their joint rule was 295; and the Great Persecution did not begin until February 303. The text throws up one curious detail, however, since nowhere does it mention a bishop of Trieste; instead, Christian leadership is identified with a priest called Sebastian. We saw in the previous chapter that one of the limitations of episcopal lists and conciliar *acta* was that they obscured the

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64 *Mart. Rom.* 4 id. Nov.; cf. the unlocated Justus mentioned in the *Mart. Hier.* on 2, 3 and 16 Nov. The *passio* has ‘Mannacius’ which is at least closer to Umbronius Mannachius, the one form of the name known from fourth-century Italy, albeit from Aeclanum in Apulia: PLRE 1. 542. But the *passio* is otherwise untrustworthy (see below).
65 AASS, Nov. 1. 429.
67 AASS, Nov. 1. 429.
existence of non-episcopal Christian communities. Could Justus' passio point to such a Christian communion? Unfortunately because the text does not inspire much confidence, so the question cannot be answered satisfactorily. A lack of supporting archaeological evidence prior to the erection in the fifth century of a suburban cemetery church (now visible beneath via Madonna del Mare) and the first basilica (on the site of the cathedral of S. Giusto) suggests that any Christian group in Trieste in the early-fourth century was probably rather small.68

The other north-eastern sites for which there appears to be good evidence for a Christian presence by the mid-fourth century are in Istria. At Porec (ancient Parentium) unequivocal literary evidence for a bishopric is—once again—late, referring to the energetic Euphrasius, who constructed the existing Byzantine basilica in the mid-sixth century.69 It is possible that Rufinus' reference (HE 2.28) to a certain Julian, who brought the relics of John the Baptist to Athanasius after they had been profaned by the emperor Julian, alludes to a bishop of Porec in the second half of the fourth century, but this depends on preferring a reading in one of the three principal manuscripts of Rufinus text at the expense of the others.70 Archaeological evidence taken in conjunction with hagiographical tradition, however, gives less ambiguous evidence for a much older Christian community. Beneath Euphrasius' basilica lie substantial remains of two earlier churches, the

68 Date of churches: B. Marusic, 'Krscanstvo i poganstvo na tlu Istre u IV i V stoljecu', Arh.Vest. 29 (1978), 569, 571 (French summary). I am unconvinced by C. Pross Gabrieli’s effort to link the Bonosus and Crysogonus mentioned in the mosaic inscriptions (AE 1973: 251, 253) with friends of Jerome from Aquileia in the late-fourth century (L'Oratorio e la Basilica Paleocristiana di Trieste [1969], 56-7). The form of the letters in the inscriptions—especially their pronounced serifs and the use of an A with a v-shaped crossbar—is very similar to those in the pavement of S. Eufemia at Grado, which dates to the sixth century (precisely the dating advocated for the Triestine mosaics by Marusic, op.cit., 569). P. L. Zovatto, 'Il “defensor ecclesiae” e le iscrizione musive di Trieste', RSCI 20 (1966), 1-8, dates the mosaics to the late-fourth or early-fifth century, but produces no evidence to support this conclusion.


70 See F. Thelamon, Paiens et chrétien au IVe siècle (1981), 290-4, with full references.
first of which—called the ‘primitive church’—probably dates to the second half of the fourth century. The second—known as the ‘pre-Euphrasian basilica’—was built probably in the early or mid-fifth century when the primitive church was destroyed by fire: with this reconstruction, a new baptistery was built on the same axis as the main basilica, a reorientation which can be paralleled in the rebuilding of the cathedral at Aquileia, perhaps at a slightly earlier date. Underneath the primitive church, moreover, there are further remains descending to the level of a Roman house.

Excavations beneath the altar of the Euphrasian basilica in 1846 yielded an inscription relating the story of the relics of the martyred bishop of Porec, Maurus (I 10/2: 64):

HOC CVBILE SANCTVM CONFESSORIS MAVR[I]  
NIBEVM CONTENET CORPVS  
[H]AEC PRIMITIVA EIVS ORATIBVS  
REPARATA EST ECCLESIA  
[H]IC CONDIGNE TRANSLATVS EST  
VBI EPISCOPVS ET CONFESSOR EST FACTVS  
IDEO IN HONORE DVPPLICATVS EST LOCVS  
[.................................]M [SVBA]CTVS  
[.................................] · S


Degrassi ap. I 10/2: p.31.


Since it was cut, the inscription has had a chequered history. Most of the last two lines of the text (as it survives) have been chiselled away deliberately, confirming that the slab has been reused subsequent to its initial erection. Some have suggested that its original location was in the northern parallel hall of the primitive church, but this has been contested by Degrassi who demonstrates that there is not enough evidence to show where the inscription would have stood when first set up. Even so, it seems most likely that the inscription belongs to the primitive church. In addition to the crucial information which it gives about the early history of the Christian community in Porec, notably concerning the cult of the saints there, it also describes three stages of construction which can be related to the archaeological material contained in the strata culminating in the primitive church.

First, the reference to ‘in honore duplicatus est locus’ plainly refers to the building in which the inscription was set up. In addition, the text alludes to two earlier constructions: ‘haec primitiva eius oratibus reparata est ecclesia’. Thus there was a very early (primitiva) building, which was reconstructed (reparata est). These various phases have been identified with archaeological remains beneath Euphrasius’ basilica (see fig. 4). Sonje identifies these with three different phases of construction observable in the baptistery of the primitive church. He argues that the whole of the last phase in the archaeological record is the same as the third period mentioned by the inscription, which claims ‘duplicatus est locus’. This concurs well with the archaeological record. The primitive church consisted of two parallel halls with an adjoining baptistery (Sonje’s third baptistery). The northern hall seems to have been the earliest, and is associated with Christian worship from

75 Degrassi ap. II 10/2: pp.29-30, with full references.
76 For what follows, see Degrassi’s commentary in II 10/2: pp. 26-31; Marucchi, ‘Recente scoperti’, 14-26, 122-38; Sonje, ‘Kristione’, 289-322 (Italian summary at 318-22); White, God’s House, 114, 117, 128-9; and Zovatto, ‘Basilica doppia’, 380-2. I am particularly reliant on published work because my plans to visit various Croatian sites in late-summer 1995 went awry with President Tudjman’s declaration of war to reconquer Serb-held Krajina.
77 Sonje, ‘Kristione’, 319-20 (Italian summary).
earlier levels (see below). By contrast, the southern hall was a later addition, contemporaneous with the development of the site as the primitive church. This phase seems to be identical with the erection of the third baptistery on the north perimeter of the building: the black and white mosaics in both areas seem very similar. The addition of this second hall doubled the size of the Christian building (it now measured approx. 22.5 x 25 m), just as the inscription describes.

We can say something more about the development of this Christian cult building. As noted above, the primitive church lies over earlier remains, and in these we can see earlier stages of the development of the site. Sonje noted two different levels of construction in the area of the baptistery, and that under these lay a Roman house, parts of which were destroyed in the process of architectural adaptation to Christian cult needs. In part of this Roman building there was uncovered a geometric mosaic with emblemata belonging perhaps to the late-third century (fig. 5). This almost certainly belonged to a pre-Christian period, since at some stage pictures of fish were inserted rather clumsily into the mosaic, partially destroying two of the original emblemata. What we are presented with here seems similar to the development of the Christian building at Aquileia. In the first place there was a Roman domus, and at some point one of its rooms was adapted for Christian use when the fish were inserted in the geometric mosaic. This may have occurred in the earliest years of the fourth century, prior to Constantine’s victory, and perhaps before the persecutions since the inscription states that Maurus was killed in the building (‘hic...ubi episcopus et confessor est factus’). Then during the

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78 I.e. the last baptistery on this site prior to the erection of the new one with the pre-Euphrasian basilica.
79 Compare the illustrations in Sonje, ‘Krstionice’, 299 fig. 6 (the third baptistery), and I I 10/2: pp. 28-9 (the southern hall).
83 Marusic, ‘Krscanstvo i poganstvo’, 550-2 and fig. 1.
course of the fourth century there were further adaptations of the building, culminating with the construction of the primitive church sometime after Valens came to the throne in 364.84

The process by which the Christian complex at Porec developed bears many similarities to the contemporaneous evolution of the Theodorean church at Aquileia. In both cases we see a gradual adaptation of existing structures to suit the requirements of Christian cult. Extant foundation courses were reused and this did much to determine the shape of the Christian edifices in both cities, each consisting of an arrangement of parallel halls. The earliest stages of this process are obscure at Aquileia, but at Porec they are clear in the insertion of the fish symbols into the geometric mosaic pavement of the Roman house. The analogy goes further: as at Aquileia, the early church at Porec rose within the city walls. In both cases, the size of the early Christian edifice was substantial. Just as I have suggested in the case of Aquileia, these factors probably indicate that by the mid-fourth century, the Christian community at Porec was numerous and had access to considerable wealth.

Apart from Porec, however, there are few early-Christian remains in Istria which can be dated securely to the fourth century. Pula, the other great city in the region, may have had a community by the end of the third century: a passio dating from the central middle ages records the martyrdom of a certain Germanus, complete with local colour provided by the saint being tortured in the city’s grand amphitheatre.85 Archaeological evidence, however, does little to corroborate this picture,86 and all the Christian inscriptions from the city are later.87 Between Pula

84 White, God’s House, 114-15, 128-9.
85 Lanzoni, Diocesi, 511.
86 Only one possible Christian edifice earlier than the fifth-century structures on the site of the cathedral. This is a mosaic (badly damaged) depicting a chalice with a swastika cross on it. This is not unequivocal evidence, and the case may be weakened by the inclusion of a splendid hippocampus in the plain, white border of the pavement: Marusic, ‘Krstanstvo i poganstvo’, 569-70 (French summary) and fig. 3.
87 Lanzoni, Diocesi, 511 on CIL 5. 304-7.
and Porec, there seems to have been another Christian building at Vrsar, also on the coast: the evidence here too is a mosaic pavement, measuring 9.30 x 15.20 m. It is only partially preserved, but enough survives to demonstrate that it was an elaborate piece of work (fig. 6). It consists of guilloche scrolls which enclose circular panels, occupied by abstract geometric motifs or by devices strikingly similar to those found in the Theodorean south hall at Aquileia: fish, birds, chalices, human portraits which are perhaps seasons. The date of the building is uncertain, but considering the stylistic similarities with Aquileia—and stylistic differences from other Istrian sites of the fifth century—it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that the building belongs to the mid-fourth century. Apart from this, however, Histria provides no further evidence for a Christian presence until the fifth century, during which the distribution of cult sites increases enormously.

(iv) Christian centres along the Via Aemilia and in the rest of the Po valley

Compared with Venetia et Histria, Christian remains dating from the mid-fourth century or earlier are extremely rare in the rest of northern Italy, with the exception of Milan (§ ii above). From the late-fourth century and through the fifth, of course, the situation is profoundly different, but this seems to relate to a dramatic increase in Christian numbers throughout the region after about 350 (see Ch. 7). We have seen that there are two securely attested Christian communities apart from Milan in the area of Lombardy at Rimini and Faenza, since their bishops attended the Roman synod of 313. Apart from this, it will be seen that our information is sketchy.

While there is to my knowledge no archaeological evidence to add detail to


89 Marusic, ‘Kršcanstvo i poganstvo’, 569-70 (French summary) puts it in the mid-fourth century, and hypothesises that it may have been a residence for the bishops of Porec (unsubstantiated); cf. Mirabella Roberti, ‘Partizioni dei pavimenti musivi’, 419-20, advocating an early-fourth century date.

90 Marusic, ‘Kršcanstvo i poganstvo’, passim.
our sparse knowledge of a Christian community at Rimini, the city does seem a likely candidate for an early see, considering its importance both as a port and as a hub of the road networks leading into and out from northern Italy (see p. 53). There is, however, evidence for Christian communities in nearby cities. One of the most important early centres may have been Ravenna, although there is no documentary attestation of a Christian community until bishop Severus attended the Council of Serdica in 343 (pp. 75-6). We saw in the last chapter that the city boasted a rich hagiographical tradition in the early middle ages concerning its apostolicity, but that the details of Apollinaris' mission were probably developed to suit the political needs of the Ravennate church. Yet this does not necessarily mean that there was no Christian presence in the city prior to the age of Constantine. It is significant that one of the great basilicas built in the saint's honour should have risen in the necropolis outside the southern walls of the harbour settlement of Classe where, according to his passio, Apollinaris was buried. 91 Excavations in the vicinity of the church of S. Apollinare in Classe have revealed many tombs, both pagan and Christian, dated to the third and fourth centuries. 92 Classe has provided other early remains, such as the basilicas of S. Probo and S. Eleucadio, both dedicated to early bishops of the see, and both in the cemeteries south of the town walls, as well as the intramural church of S. Severo, which like the others seems to date from the fifth century. 93 Such early churches are significantly more numerous at Classe than inside Ravenna itself, where many basilicas seem to have been palatine foundations associated with the Roman, Ostrogothic and Byzantine courts there in the fifth and later centuries. 94 In itself, however, the concentration of early Christian sites at Classe, and especially in the cemeteries, is not wholly

91 AASS, lull. 5. 350.
93 Deichmann, op.cit., 323, 355-9, 361-369; Picard, Souvenir, 122-32.
surprising. This is precisely the sort of location where we would expect any early Christian group at Ravenna to congregate. As we saw in Chapter 2, Classe was Ravenna’s port and saw some trading activity. Also, its importance as a naval base made it an important conglomeration of foreigners in northern Italy. The conditions were right, then, for the spread of a new religion. Yet this is no more than an inference, and it would be wrong to forget that apart from the the tombs around S. Apollinare in Classe, evidence for pre-Constantinian Christianity at Ravenna is sparse. The subsequent development of the city as the political centre of emperors, kings and exarchs has probably done much to obliterate the earliest monuments of Ravenna’s Christian community.

Also in the vicinity of Rimini, on the line of the Via Aemilia running inland from the coast, was the bishopric of Faenza, whose bishop Constantius attended the Roman synod of 313. Apart from such documentary testimony, archaeological investigation in the city has yielded further evidence of the early Christian community of Faenza. Excavations in 1960 on the site of the former church of S. Terenzio, behind the cathedral, revealed a geometric mosaic pavement containing dedications similar to those found at Aquileia, Porec, Trieste and Verona.95 Early examinations of these mosaics suggested that they belonged to the late-fourth or fifth century;96 on the basis of the letter-forms—particularly the A with a v-shaped crossbar—which can be paralleled in the inscriptions at Trieste and Porec, I would push the date perhaps further into the fifth century.97 Yet even if the date is problematic, it is worth noting the location of the church to which the mosaic belonged relative to the topography of Roman Faenza. The Christian building is sited within the walls and is perfectly aligned with the urban street-grid, as we

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would expect having examined other examples of intramural church-construction.\textsuperscript{98}

Moving deeper into the Po valley along the Via Aemilia, the evidence for Christian communities becomes less prominent, and there is no documentary proof for many sees prior to the Ambrosian period (see Ch. 9), when bishoprics appear at Imola (Forum Corneli), Quaderna (Claterna), Bologna, Modena, Parma, and Piacenza.\textsuperscript{99} In the late-fourth century, Jerome knew and corresponded with a papal secretary called Eusebius who came from Cremona (Hier., Ep. 53). If this Eusebius was born around the middle of the century, he could attest a Christian community at Cremona by that point: but this is to infer too much from our meagre sources. All we can say is that many of the cities along the Via Aemilia had developed bishoprics—and hence organised Christian communities—by the third quarter of the fourth century. Even though this probably represents the end of a process of evangelisation,\textsuperscript{100} it is impossible to say when the first Christian communities appeared in these cities.

Moving across the river into the central and north-western reaches of the Po valley, the area around Milan provides slightly better evidence for Christian communities by 350. There may have been a bishop at Bergamo, north-east of Milan by this time. Our evidence is late and relates to a text which no longer exists, but it has been universally accepted. In the ninth century, bishop Rampert of Brescia, writing in praise of his fourth century predecessor Filastrius, quoted what he had read among writings—now lost—of Filastrius' successor, Gaudentius. He asserted that Gaudentius, himself writing in praise of Filastrius, had quoted examples of Filastrius' excellent reputation among neighbouring bishoprics. One of these snippets was an epitaph set up by the fourth bishop of Bergamo which stated that his predecessor had been consecrated bishop by Ambrose of Milan, and that

\textsuperscript{98} Monti, 'Faenza', 19-20.
\textsuperscript{100} V. Lanzani, 'Ticinum: le origini della città cristiana', in \textit{Storia di Pavia} 1 (1984), 356.
sometime before he had been made a deacon by Filastrius. If Bergamo had received its third bishop by the last decade of the fourth century, it is just possible that a Christian community existed in the city by the middle of the century.

The last group of firmly attested Christian communities comes from the area around Vercelli. Bishop Eusebius of Vercelli was one of the most important north-Italian politicians of the pro-Nicene cast during the 350s and 360s, and was exiled at Constantius II’s Milanese council of 355 (see Ch. 5). From exile he wrote to his flock; but more importantly, he included in his greetings the clergy and faithful of the neighbouring towns of Novara, Ivrea and Tortona (Ep. 2). None of these centres is known to have had a bishop before the Council of Aquileia in 381, which was attended by a bishop of Tortona, or the Milanese synod of 451, attended by bishops and clergy from Novara and Ivrea. The existence of Christian communities in these centres prior to the appointment of bishops points to a circumstance I have already postulated for a number of other centres: that there may have been Christian communities in certain towns and cities before the appointment of a bishop. Furthermore, it seems that this was the situation in Vercelli itself. No bishop of Vercelli prior to Eusebius is recorded; nor was any commemorated in the middle ages. It seems most likely, then, that Eusebius was the first bishop of the see. But there is good reason to believe that the Christian community at Vercelli, like that of Ivrea, Novara and Tortona, was older than its bishopric. Writing to the people of Vercelli sometime around 396, Ambrose of Milan stated that Eusebius had been made bishop against his will by Christians of Vercelli who had seized him while he was travelling through their city (Ep. 63. 2, 68). Some of the details given

101 AASS, Jul. 4. 393. Accepted by Cuscito, Primo cristianesimo, 46-8; Lanzoni, Diocesi, 573; Picard, Souvenir, 266-8.
102 For Gaudentius’ succession to Filastrius at Brescia, and his own dependence on investiture by Ambrose, see Lizzi, Vescovi, 97-109.
103 Lanzoni, Diocesi, 476-7, 560-1, 566-8.
104 Picard, Souvenir, 667-73.
by Ambrose need to be treated with caution: his account of Eusebius’ involuntary election is suspiciously similar to the account, probably based on Ambrose’s own propaganda, of his own episcopal election in 374 (Paul. Med. V. Ambr. 7-9).\textsuperscript{105} But the detail of Eusebius coming to Vercelli from elsewhere possesses sufficient verisimilitude for it to be trusted. Jerome tells us that Eusebius, a Sard, had been a lector of the Roman church prior to his election (\textit{de vir. ill.} 96). During the period when Eusebius might have been elected—the mid- to late-340s and the early-350s—several delegations from the bishop of Rome made their way north to visit the imperial court at Milan (see Chs. 5 and 6). It is entirely feasible that Eusebius was a member of one such delegation and that he had been appointed bishop of Vercelli when it had passed through that city on its way to court.\textsuperscript{106} Apart from that, however, we cannot be more certain of the events leading to his election; even the chronology remains unclear. Archaeology is of little help, since most early Christian remains from Vercelli are either of a later period, or impossible to date with precision.\textsuperscript{107} One thing, however, seems secure: that in Vercelli and three surrounding centres there were Christian communions by the middle years of the fourth century.

(v) \textit{Summary}

The evidence for early Christian communities in northern Italy is extremely scarce for the period up to 350, but we have been able to make some advance on the number of congregations revealed by sources such as episcopal lists and conciliar \textit{acta}, even to the extent of discovering non-episcopal groups such as those in Piedmont. Furthermore, by analysing the material remains of the early Christian

\textsuperscript{105} McLynn, \textit{Ambrose}, 44-52.

\textsuperscript{106} Savio, \textit{Piemonte}, 412-13

\textsuperscript{107} G. Panto and G. Mennella, ‘Topografia ed epigrafia nelle ultime indagini su Vercelli paleocristiana’, \textit{RAC} 70 (1994), 339-410, provides a convenient summary of the archaeological data. The article should be used with caution, however, since the authors’ dating criteria are often imprecise or over-confident: in particular, Mennella’s section on inscriptions (pp. 384-98) seems too ready to see consular dates in the most fragmentary of inscriptions.
groups it has been possible to observe something of how each developed within its own particular social context. Most, it would appear, only had cult buildings outside the walls of their cities. Indeed, at some sites the invasion of the urban heart by Christian buildings would come only at a very late date indeed: at Pavia, for instance, there is no church recorded within its walls until the Ostrogothic period.\textsuperscript{108} This serves to highlight that our picture of Christian expansion and its social consequences is extremely variable for the whole region. There were early concentrations in some areas, such as \textit{Venetia et Histria}, but not in others, such as along the line of the \textit{Via Aemilia}. Likewise, the individual profiles of each Christian community vary dramatically from city to city. Of all the cities in northern Italy, Aquileia provides the strongest evidence for a vigorous Christian community, the size and wealth of which must have been profoundly different from those in Ivrea, Novara and Tortona. Explaining this variety and the dynamics which brought it about is not easy, but in the rest of this chapter I will attempt to account for some features of the dissemination of the Gospel in northern Italy.

\section*{CHRISTIANITY AND THE RELIGIOUS GEOGRAPHY OF NORTHERN ITALY}

To understand more fully both the processes by which Christianity spread through northern Italy and something of the chronology of Christian missions in the region, I propose to examine the diffusion of congregations against the wider background of religious change in the area during the middle and late imperial period, roughly between the second and fourth centuries. I will begin by examining the ‘scatter’ of the new faith, which has been acknowledged as a valuable tool for the study of the process of evangelisation.\textsuperscript{109} It will be seen that there is a close correlation between the distribution of Christian communities in northern Italy and the important nodes

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{108} D. A. Bullough, ‘Urban change in early medieval Italy: the example of Pavia’, \textit{PBSR} 34 (1966), 99.
\item \textsuperscript{109} R. Lane Fox, \textit{Pagans and Christians} (1986), 272
\end{itemize}
of interaction in the north Italian human environment. This correlation is not, however, unique to Christianity, so next I will point to similarities—and divergences—between distribution patterns of fledgling churches and those of other immigrant religions, such as Judaism and the cult of Isis. This will point to some of the human mechanisms by which the church spread its tentacles into the Po valley. At all times, I will bear in mind how the situation in northern Italy compares with what is known of the evangelisation of neighbouring geographical areas: this should help us to an appreciation of the chronology of Christian mission in the region between the Appennines and the Alps.

(i) Distribution and dissemination

As a result of the investigations undertaken in this and the preceding chapter, the number of probable early Christian communities in the first half of the fourth century presents a more substantial picture than the meagre four bishoprics attested at the councils of 313 and 314. It has been seen that by about 350, it is possible to identify as many as twenty Christian communities in northern Italy, with varying degrees of certainty (see fig. 1): at Aquileia, Bergamo, Brescia, Cremona, Faenza, Ivrea, Milan, Novara, Padua, Porec, Pula, Ravenna, Rimini, Tortona, Treviso, Trieste, Vercelli, Verona, Vicenza, and Vrsar. It will be noted that most of the sites occur close to the Adriatic coast, and that all but Faenza, Ivrea, Milan, Novara, Ravenna, Rimini, Tortona, and Vercelli are in *Venetia et Histria*. For the Po valley, this suggests a gradual dissemination of the Christian message from east to west, perhaps originating from maritime centres like Aquileia, Ravenna and Rimini. It is possible that Christianity came independently to Aquileia and Ravenna, since neither city ever made a subsequent claim to ecclesiastical jurisdiction or primacy over the other.

Furthermore, other regional clusters are instructive in helping us to understand the dissemination of the new cult: apart from the group of churches in the north-east, there was one in Piedmont around the small towns in the hinterland
of Vercelli, at Ivrea, Novara and Tortona. In particular, there is a close correlation between the distribution of these Christian centres and the communications networks discussed in Chapter 2. 110 The three major ports of northern Italy—Aquileia, Ravenna and Rimini—all had early communions, as did some of the minor maritime centres, such as Trieste, Porec and Pula, as well as Padua and Vicenza, two cities linked to the Adriatic by rivers or canals. Leading inward from the coast, we see that the early Christian centres were scattered along the major roads into northern Italy. Such patterns are evident within *Venetia et Histria*, with many centres lying along the main road from Aquileia to Milan, at Treviso, Padua, Vicenza, Verona and Brescia, as well as at Bergamo close to Milan. Turning eastwards from Aquileia, we note that the Istrian churches also gather along the coastal road, at Trieste, Porec, Vrsar and Pula. Turning inland from Rimini along the Via Aemilia, it may seem disappointing to find only two early Christian centres, at Faenza and Cremona. Yet the picture as I have drawn it so far may be misleading: by 381 this road was studded with Christian communities in all its major centres (see Ch. 7). Moreover, it may be significant that the first two churches developed at centres which were important for the intersection of the Via Aemilia with other important transportation routes: Faenza was the starting point for an important road through the Appennines to Etruria, while Cremona was a hub for communications on the Po, as well as a crossroads for routes leading to Milan, Genoa, and Aquileia.

That Christian groups should appear at some centres along a major communications artery and not at others reminds us that specific local characteristics defined whether or not Christianity took root in a city or not. The primary prerequisite was that social conditions should favour the dissemination of the new religion: in short, there should be the opportunity for interpersonal contact through which ideas spread. A quick glance at the list of Christian centres suggests

110 In order to avoid unnecessary repetition, I will not cite evidence for these networks here. Full details will be found in Chapter 2 and its notes.
that this must have been an important factor in northern Italy, since many of the earliest communions developed in market centres. In *Venetia et Histria*, for example, the church appeared in centres of the wool trade at Brescia, Padua and Verona, as well as the important *emporium* of Aquileia; while Faenza on the Via Aemilia was important not just for communciations but also for the linen trade.

For some centres we can attempt a more detailed reconstruction of those social conditions, by locating north Italian Christian communities in their particular urban contexts. At Aquileia and Porec, for example, we have seen that the earliest church buildings developed out of a process of gradual adaptation of existing edifices. In both cases these buildings lay within the walls, were of substantial size, and came to be decorated with elaborate mosaics. Similarly, early Christian buildings at Faenza, Milan, Padua and Verona rose within the city walls soon after Constantine’s conversion. These factors suggest that by the time of Constantine, the Christian communities in certain cities included members with considerable personal wealth who acted as patrons of their communities, donating or paying for the plots on which the buildings were erected.

Actual physical locations also point to links between early Christian groups and the trading element in some cities. Theodore’s church at Aquileia was built near warehouses and markets; indeed, it may have been built on the foundations of a complex of *horrea*. At Ravenna too the earliest evidence for Christianity occurs within a possible trading context at Classe. Not only wealth, but the social and cultural profiles of certain Christian groups suggest that they were intimately linked with the migratory, trading populations of north Italian cities. We have seen that there is epigraphic evidence to suggest that the early Christians of Aquileia included a Hellenic element, while medieval tradition accords distant origins to many of the city’s early bishops. There is evidence elsewhere for a similar relationship between Christianity and foreign elements amongst the population. Merocles and Agathon, the Milanese bishop and cleric who attended the Council of Arles, both have Greek
names.

All these elements prompt the observation that the early Christian communities were deeply embedded in the social matrix of the north Italian towns and cities in which they developed. While trade patterns seem to have been important, they should not be emphasised to the exclusion of other networks. The early dependence of the Christian communities at Ivrea, Novara and Tortona on the bishopric of Vercelli points to other ties: between these centres there was a complex set of interrelationships involving magistracies and priesthhoods, and it is perhaps as part of this web that we should see their early ecclesiastical contacts. Similar circumstances may have helped foster early Christianity at Milan. We saw (Ch. 2) that the city had always possessed administrative importance, but that from the late third century onwards this was enhanced by its gradual metamorphosis into an imperial capital. There were thus many reasons, in addition to trade, why an outsider might come to Milan. The importance of the city as an attraction for migrants in northern Italy might have influenced the development of its Christian community. It seems that the level of sophistication in the ecclesiastical administration at Milan was more elaborate than in the cities in its immediate vicinity. By 314, when it sent both its bishop and a deacon to Arles, the organisation of the Milanese church was already more advanced than that in Bergamo or the towns of Piedmont, none of which seem to have had a bishop much before 350.

I would argue, therefore, that the development of north Italian Christianity was influenced by the human environment which it encountered in the Po valley and in Venetia et Histria. That churches developed where they did in the period before 350 seems to have been determined to a large degree by the social matrix

111 Tac., Hist. 1.70, associates the cities of Novara, Ivrea, and Vercelli with Milan. CIL 5. 6494 (a flamen civitatis Vercellensis recorded on an inscription from between Vercelli and Novara), 6771 (an inscription from between Vercelli and Ivrea recording 'T. Sextius Secun[... ] | Eporediae'), 7373 (on magistracies held at both Vercelli and Tortona).
within which the first Christian missionaries operated. Towns and cities which were important for the face-to-face interaction crucial to the dissemination of ideas provided the perfect opportunity to seek converts. These same centres would have been those that attracted a wide range of people both from their local areas and from further afield: in short, urban centres of economic and administrative importance which were well-sited on the communications network.

Similar factors can be seen determining the spread of Christianity in other regions of the western Mediterranean where the evidence for early missions is rather more detailed than it is for northern Italy. In central and southern Italy, the earliest known communities were at Puteoli, near Naples, and Rome. Both existed before Paul’s arrival (Acts 28:14-5) and their development reflects the importance of communications networks. Puteoli was one of the greatest emporia in Italy (Strabo 5.4.6);\(^\text{112}\) while the existence of a Christian group in Rome, the imperial capital, and a magnet for peoples—and their religions—from across the entire empire, should occasion no surprise.\(^\text{113}\) It would be tempting to infer the role of a trading element in early Roman Christianity from a reference in the apocryphal Acts of Paul to the use of a horreum outside the city as a Christian meeting place (Passio Pauli 1). But this second century text is the work of an author from Asia Minor; consequently he (or she) cannot be relied upon to provide accurate documentation of Roman conditions.\(^\text{114}\) Finally, it is worth noting that Paul’s route from the eastern Mediterranean via the straits of Messina to Puteoli followed that

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113 It aroused the notorious disgruntlement of Juvenal (Sat. 3. 62-5):

\[
\text{iam pridem Syrus in Tiberim defluxit Orontes,}
\text{et linguam et mores et cum tibicine chordas}
\text{obliquas nec non gentilia tympana secum}
\text{vexit et ad circum iussas prostare puellas.}
\]

taken from Alexandria by the ships bearing Rome's grain supplies.  

Outside northern Italy it is also clear that early Christian groups displayed a cultural profile which reflected their origins among migrant populations. The early community at Rome was markedly Greek in character; it was also in contact with churches in the Greek world, as the Clementine epistles to the church at Corinth demonstrate. Its earliest literature, such as the writings of Clement, Hermas and Hippolytus, was produced in Greek; and when Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna in Asia Minor, came to Rome in the 150s to face trial, he was able to preach to the Roman congregations, presumably in Greek (Eus. HE 4.15; 5.24). A shift to Latin culture only becomes apparent in the later second century. Indeed, it is possible that the first Latin translation of the Bible was produced not in Rome but in north Africa. The Hellenic character of the early Christian community at Rome is comparable to the situation at Lyon in southern Gaul. At the time of the persecution of 177, the church here seems to have been largely Greek speaking and to have had strong contacts in with Christian groups in Asia Minor. At Lyon as at Rome, we seem to be dealing with a community founded by immigrants from the east who had travelled west along the established trade routes of the empire.

From these instances it can be seen that the evidence for the earliest north-Italian churches fits a pattern visible in other areas where Christian missions were embedded in social, cultural and economic contexts. This should not obscure, however, the various peculiarities of Christian expansion in northern Italy. For example, Christianity seems to have come to north Africa via the great trading city

119 Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 273, 276.
of Carthage, a circumstance similar to the missions I have suggested for the ports at Aquileia, Ravenna and Rimini. Yet in Africa it is clear that the new faith had spread not only to the cities, but also to many small towns and their rural hinterlands: indeed, one of the best known African passiones, the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs*, describes a vigorous Christian community in a settlement so insignificant that it has never been properly identified. In northern Italy, by contrast, Christian expansion seems to have been largely confined to the cities. The remains uncovered at S. Canzian d'Isonzo near Aquileia (above p. 110) are our only testimony of a rural Christian presence before the events in the Val di Non in the 390s (see Ch. 9); and even in the fifth century, it is clear that the countryside around Turin remained largely untouched by the Gospel. There would have been differences too in terms of the mechanisms used by Christian missionaries. Throughout his missionary work, Paul utilised a network of Diaspora synagogues (see Ch. 1). When he came to Italy he operated in this same framework, using the Jewish community which had long existed in Rome as the epicentre of his missionary efforts (*Acts* 28:17-28). But Jewish communions could not be relied on everywhere, and in many places—including northern Italy (see § ii below)—it seems that Jewish and Christian missions occurred concurrently rather than consecutively. In effect, Christians and Jews would have been competing for converts. This highlights one of the major problems of extrapolating from Roman evidence to explain circumstances elsewhere. While Paul may have used Jewish centres for his mission, there seems to have been little in the way of a Jewish presence even in other parts of central and southern Italy apart from Rome and Campania, a factor which helps explain why throughout the peninsula, and not just

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in northern Italy, the pattern of Christian expansion varies from region to region.\textsuperscript{124}

(ii) Christians in a religious landscape

These parallels between the distribution of Jewish groups and the early dissemination of Christianity demonstrate how the spread of different religions was often subject to similar social constraints. In this section I will compare the distribution of early Christian groups with that of some other religions. The choice of comparable religions cannot be indiscriminate: it must involve religions which were subject to the same constraints as early Christianity. In a sense this is impossible. No other religion, until the advent of Manichaeism in the third century, suffered limitations imposed on its freedom to worship and seek new adherents as Christianity did during the sporadic persecutions up to the tetarchic period. Even so, Christianity can be compared to a number of other cults making their presence felt in northern Italy during the first centuries after Christ. In the first place, it must be distinguished from the public cult of the Roman state, which was supported by the government on both an imperial and local scale. Until the time of Constantine, Christianity could not claim endorsement and encouragement from the government; and during times of persecution quite the opposite is true. Rather we must attempt to view Christianity in the context of private cults. It has often been compared with a number of soteriological cults—the so-called ‘mystery religions’—such as the worship of Isis and Mithras.\textsuperscript{125} For my purposes, a comparison with Mithraism would be inappropriate, since that cult appealed to a different constituency from Christianity: Mithraic initiates were exclusively


\textsuperscript{125} Often for spurious reasons, such as an alleged decline in pagan religiousness during the third century: see the critique of Lane Fox, Pagans and Christians, 574-95.
The cult of Isis will suit very well: it was a private—if unpersecuted—cult under the Roman empire, and it appealed to both sexes. Also worthy of consideration is Judaism, the religion from which Christianity first emerged. Judaism came late to northern Italy, so we see the same phenomenon of religious co-existence, with some competition as seems to have characterised Jewish-Christian relationships in central and southern Italy. Here too, however, we must admit methodological difficulties: because much of our evidence for Jews in Italia Annonaria comes from Christian polemics against them, it is perhaps inevitable that there should be a close correspondence between the locations of Jewish and Christian communities. Nevertheless, there is sufficient other material, usually epigraphic, to allow a less confrontational picture to be drawn. One final feature makes the cult of Isis and Judaism appropriate comparisons with Christianity: like the faith of the Gospels, they had originated in the eastern Mediterranean. Through analysis of the correlation and difference between the patterns of distribution for Isis-worship, Judaism and Christianity, we may be able to arrive at a more complete picture of the mechanics which influenced the evangelisation of northern Italy.

Starting with the cult of Isis, we note that of the twenty sites where we have noted a Christian presence, only six have not yielded explicit evidence for Isis worship: Bergamo, Ivrea, Milan, Novara, Vercelli, and Vrsar. Of these the most surprising is Milan: it is not until the fourth or fifth century that we have evidence

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there of any Egyptian cult. The absence from Vrsar is not in itself tremendously significant, since it was never a major town, nor a significant ecclesiastical centre at a later time. Furthermore, there is plenty of evidence from other sites along the Istrian coast to show that Isis worship was quite strong in this region. That no Isiac material should come from Bergamo, Ivrea, Novara and Vercelli should not be construed as significant. Ivrea and Novara were small towns, whose Christian communities were themselves probably very underdeveloped (above p. 135), while both Bergamo and Vercelli have yielded evidence of other soteriological cults, thus demonstrating a foreign element in their religious profiles. Against these lacunae in the correlation between Isiac cult and Christianity should be set the greater preponderance overall of Isiac material in northern Italy. Moreover, comparison with the distribution of this material yields interesting parallels with Christianity. We see a similar regional variety in terms of the distribution of material along the coasts of Aemilia and Venetia et Histria, with particular concentrations in port cities such as Rimini, Ravenna, Trieste, and especially Aquileia. Moving inland, most material is concentrated in the areas nearest the Adriatic, particularly in Venetia et Histria. As with Christianity, various communications networks seem to have been crucial to the pattern taken by this distribution. Yet the Isiac material differs from the evidence for early Christianity in one crucial respect. Because of the greater openness with which devotees of Isis could worship and raise commemorative inscriptions, we know a great deal more about the ethnic and social profile of the cult, a luxury we are usually denied with Christians before Constantine. These inscriptions show us that often the propagators of the cult were foreigners, such as merchants and sailors, or Romans involved in such migratory

130 Malaise, *Conditions de pénétration*, 324.
132 Chevallier, *Romanisation*, 464 (Mithras, Magna Mater and Attis at Bergamo), 467 (Mithras at Vercelli).
133 Budischovsky, 'La diffusion des cultes égyptiens', esp. 212-21; Malaise, *Conditions de pénétration*, 335-351.
activities, either as traders themselves or as customs officials, and their slaves.\textsuperscript{134}

A similar picture emerges when we examine the evidence for a Jewish presence in northern Italy.\textsuperscript{135} Between the late third and early fifth centuries, we find Jews in many of the cities where Christianity developed. Their distribution is, however, rather more limited, perhaps because the fourth century brought increasing intolerance and pressure to convert to Christianity.\textsuperscript{136} Nevertheless, the familiar patterns seen with Christianity and the cult of Isis reappear. Jewish records occur with greatest frequency in \textit{Venetia et Histria}, and of all the cities in northern Italy it is Aquileia which seems to have had the largest Jewish population. Once more, good communications seem to have fostered the spread of Judaism, with communities in cities such as Bologna and Brescia, lying on important roads, and in Ferrara on the Po.\textsuperscript{137} Their concentration in such areas suggests that trade would have been an important activity for north Italian Jews; again, however, it is clear that their involvement in Italian society went further, as Honorius' law of 418 banning Jewish troops from the Prefecture of Italy demonstrates (\textit{CTh} 16. 8. 24).\textsuperscript{138}

Despite the parallels noted so far, it must be admitted that there are significant differences between Christian diffusion and that of Isis worship and Judaism. Bearing in mind that Christians were subject to intermittent persecution, it is unlikely to have been spread in the same way as imperial customs officials brought the cult of Isis through the mountains passes of northern Italy to the Danubian provinces.\textsuperscript{139} Likewise, there are crucial chronological differences: the

\textsuperscript{134} Chevallier, \textit{Romanisation}, 458-70; Malaise, \textit{Conditions de pénétration}, 321-332.

\textsuperscript{135} Ruggini, 'Ebrei e orientali', 187-241.


\textsuperscript{137} Ruggini, op. cit., 224-8.

\textsuperscript{138} Ruggini, op. cit., 231-41 with full references.

\textsuperscript{139} Budischovsky, 'La diffusion des cultes égyptiens', 212-21; cf. P. Selem, \textit{Les religions
development of a Jewish community at Ravenna and Classe seems not to have occurred until as late as the Ostrogothic period.\textsuperscript{140} Yet apart from these divergences, it strikes me that there are sufficient parallels between the diffusion of Christianity and Judaism and Isis-worship to postulate that the evangelisation of northern Italy fits into a context of exchange of religious ideas that was embedded in the region's social matrices. Christianity developed in similar circumstances, as a private cult, relying on direct personal contact to spread its ideas. In the bustling cosmopolitan cities and towns of northern Italy it found the ideal conditions.

\textit{(iii) Chronological questions}

One question remains to be answered: if the urban societies of northern Italy were conducive to the spread of Christianity, why does the process of evangelisation seem so retarded by comparison with central and southern Italy? In part, the question itself ignores a significant problem. It seems incontrovertible that the development of Christianity in Rome was rapid: in its first century there the group apparently attracted persecution twice, once under Nero (Tac. \textit{Ann.} 15. 44. 2-5) and again under Domitian (Eus. \textit{HE} 3.17-20). Between Pauline and Constantinian times, the church in Rome and central and southern Italy grew rapidly. One interesting statistic shows that under Pope Cornelius (249-51) there were 154 clergy at Rome, while there were more than 1500 recipients of Christian charity (Eus. \textit{HE} 6.43). Of course Rome was the imperial capital, so what happened there is unlikely to have been representative of what happened at other places.\textsuperscript{141} Nevertheless, we have detailed evidence for 27 bishoprics in central and southern Italy, Sicily and Sardinia by 314. Yet while there is considerable evidence for prominent Christian communities throughout sub-Appennine Italy, the distribution is variable, just as it

\begin{itemize}
\item orientales dans la Pannonie romaine (1980), passim, emphasising the importance of officials of the portorium publicium\textit{Illyrici for the dissemination of foreign cults throughout the region.}
\item Ruggini, 'Ebrei e orientali', 228.
\item Lane Fox, \textit{Pagans and Christians}, 268-9, warns about the dangers of extrapolating from Roman figures.
\end{itemize}
is at a later period in northern Italy. In particular there is a concentration of congregations along the western seaboard of the peninsula, especially around Rome.

This factor points to a solution to the problem. The advanced rate of evangelisation in the parts of central and southern Italy lying to the west of the Appennines is paralleled only in two other areas of the western Mediterranean: north Africa and southern Gaul, particularly in the Rhône valley. All of these regions belong to one zone, hemming the Tyrhennian basin. Northern Italy, by contrast, is separated from this area by the Appennine ridge; its wider cultural zone is that encompassing the Adriatic and the lands beyond the Julian Alps (see Ch. 2). Turning to this region we find that the progress of Christianity is similarly retarded.

First, the Adriatic coast and hinterland of central and southern Italy seem to have lagged behind the vigorous evangelisation of Latium and Campania. This feature can be seen also in the Balkan and Danubian provinces. To be sure, Christian interest is known in these regions from Apostolic times (Acts 17:1-9, 16-34; 18:1-11; Rom 15:19), but of the pre-Constantinian churches in the Balkans, only those in the cities of Greece seem to have flourished. For other areas the record is very poor indeed—and very late. Little can be said about Christianity in Dalmatia before the execution of Bishop Domnius of Salona in 304. Salona seems to have been host to the earliest Christian community in the province, but there is no evidence which leads us to suppose that it was any older than the mid-third century. A similar picture emerges along the Danube. During the Diocletianic persecution, several martyrdoms are recorded at Sirmium. This could mean either that the city was the most important centre of Christianity in the area, or simply that as the region’s administrative capital it was the place where most trials

142 Lane Fox, Pagans and Christians, 271-6.
143 Von Harnack, Expansion of Christianity, 2.372-4.
144 On early Christian contacts, see J. Zeiller, Les origines chrétiennes dans la province romaine de Dalmatie (1906), 1-5.
145 J. J. Wilkes, Dalmatia (1969), 427-30; Zeiller, Les origines...Dalmatie, 6-95.
took place.\textsuperscript{146} It is certain, however, that the greatest concentrations of Christians in the middle Danube region were in the area around Sirmium (in towns such as Cibalae) and this seems to be connected with the growing strategic importance of the city from the mid-third century.\textsuperscript{147} Further west in Noricum the evidence is much thinner. Again, Christianity first appears under Diocletian, when there were martyrdoms at Lauriacum (Lorsch) on the frontier. Further communities only appear later, after Constantine.\textsuperscript{148}

In the Balkans no area other than Greece seems to have been evangelised before the mid-third century. The growth of the church at this late stage seems to have been concentrated in areas of high human activity. Salona was the most important port on the Dalmatian coast,\textsuperscript{149} so it is possible that early Salonitan Christianity was fostered by the same conditions of cosmopolitan variety as I have postulated for northern Italy. Indeed, hagiographical material directly associates Salonitan Christians with the outside world: Domnus is said to have come from Nisibis in Mauretania; another martyr, Anastasius, is linked to Aquileia.\textsuperscript{150} Otherwise, Christianity was rare in the Balkans before the fourth century. Its growth was limited to nodal points on the major communications networks which traversed this mountainous region.\textsuperscript{151} Such factors continued to influence the post-Constantinian expansion of Balkan Christianity. In Noricum, for example, there were few communities in the mountains: most were concentrated in the valley of the river Drava, one of the most important communications arteries leading up from


\textsuperscript{147} Mócsy, \textit{Pannonia and Upper Moesia}, 259, 326-5.


\textsuperscript{151} On the influence of Balkan geography on its historical development in late antiquity and the Byzantine period, see: Obolensky, \textit{Byzantine Commonwealth}, 5-24; L. M. Whitby, \textit{The Emperor Maurice and his Historian} (1988), 59-66.
the Danube plain. Clearly the advance of Christianity in the Balkans depended as much on environmental factors, both physical and human, as it did in northern Italy.

If the growth of north Italian Christianity bears more similarities to the situation along the Adriatic litoral and in the Balkans than that in Campania and around Rome, or in Gaul and Africa, this may help us to appreciate something of the chronology of the evangelisation of the Po valley and Venetia et Histria. The churches scattered around the Adriatic and in the Balkans cannot be traced before the middle of the third century. Nor can the congregations of northern Italy. It has been seen that in the archaeological record it is almost impossible to find any Christian community much earlier than c. 300. Aquileia, Classe and Porec excepted. For once, the hagiographical record seems to be in accord with the testimony of other sources. The passiones of the various martyrs venerated in northern Italy do not—apart from some patently fictional examples of first century martyrdoms such as the spurious acta of those Ambrosian discoveries Gervasius and Protasius, or the eighth century accounts of Hadrianic martyrs at Brescia—put their narratives much earlier than the reigns of emperors from the mid-third century; most indeed are placed at the time of the tetrarchs (see Appendix I). Taken by itself, it is impossible to know how much hagiography is pure invention, and how much preserves half-remembered traditions. But in the case of northern Italy, all the evidence taken together seems to suggest that the Christians of northern Italy cannot have been very numerous prior to the middle of the third century.152

CONCLUSION

This chapter has ranged far in order to trace and interpret Christian origins in northern Italy: it will be helpful, therefore, to summarise its findings. At the outset

152 S. Tramontin, 'Origini del cristianesimo nel Veneto', in G. Folena (ed.), Storia della cultura veneta 1 (1976), 105, concludes: 'Solo con le ultime gravi persecuzioni, a cominciare da quella di Decio (250 d. C.), la Venetia et Histria è bagnata dal sangue dei primi cristiani.'
it should be stated that the archaeological record is fundamental for an appreciation of the growth of north Italian Christianity. Not only does it increase our knowledge of congregations beyond what we can possibly know from episcopal lists and conciliar acta, it also grants us tantalising glimpses of the various Christian communities set in the context of their immediate surroundings. A warning, however, is also necessary. For a statistical analysis, archaeological evidence is a capricious ally, and what we know from it depends on accidents of destruction and excavation.

By correlating all the evidence, it is clear that by the middle decades of the fourth century there were some twenty identifiable—and probably an unknowable number of unidentifiable—Christian communities scattered across the Po valley and in Venetia et Histria. This 'scatter' was not uniform: the density of Christian communities varied from region to region, with the highest concentrations closest to the Adriatic coast, especially in Venetia et Histria, where they cluster along the main communications routes emanating from Aquileia. It seems that Christian took hold first in certain towns and cities which, for a variety of reasons ranging from trade to imperial and regional administration, had regular contacts with communities outside their immediate vicinity. That Christianity should exploit such pre-existing networks is not surprising: these matrices were the framework within which, to a greater or lesser extent, all private cults spread, as comparison with the expansion of Isis worship and Judaism demonstrates. The chronology of the early evangelisation of northern Italy is difficult to determine precisely, but a number of factors point to late development. In the western Mediterranean, Christianity was distributed most widely first in those regions bordering the Tyrrenian sea: Africa, southern Gaul, Rome, Latium and Campania. Northern Italy, by contrast, seems to have shared in the slower development observable in the lands around the Adriatic coast and in the northern Balkans. There were the regions with which, after all, northern Italy had long had frequent cultural contacts. Neither archaeology nor literary and documentary evidence can demonstrate the existence of north Italian
Christian communities before the middle of the third century. Both in the manner and chronology of its dissemination, north Italian Christianity can be shown to have been deeply influenced by the human environment of the Po valley and *Venetia et Histria*. In the chapters which follow, we will trace how the north Italian churches continued to negotiate their social, political and cultural milieu in the tumultuous years of the fourth century.
PART II

North Italian Christian Communities
in the Fourth Century
(312-381)

Some names count for more, and others that count for less are due to be struck out. The revisionary effort is not aimed at producing the perfect optic flat. The mirror, if that is what history is, distorts as much after revision as it did before.

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Regional Churches and Imperial Policy
church and state in northern Italy

If the origins and early development of north Italian Christianity were influenced by the region’s human environment, so too was its further evolution in the fourth century. Chapter 2 showed how, from the late-second century, northern Italy increasingly became a scene of direct intervention by the emperors themselves, and that from the late third it had its own imperial capital at Milan, with another important centre at Aquileia. Throughout the fourth century, the region’s social dynamics were transformed periodically by visits of the emperor and his retinue. It was, moreover, a period when successive emperors took a personal interest in the regulation of ecclesiastical matters. This chapter will examine the impact of imperial intervention on north Italian Christianity between Constantine’s involvement in the Donatist schism after his victory in 312 and Gratian’s convocation of the Council of Aquileia in 381 under the influence of Ambrose of Milan.

My analysis of these events will proceed from the perspective of neither the Roman state nor the church of the Mediterranean region as a whole, but of the north Italian churches themselves. This sequence of church-state relations guided the transformation of many aspects of north Italian Christian life in terms of institutional, liturgical and social development, some of which areas will be the particular concern of later chapters. Therefore this chapter will provide the

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1 I will not be using the term ‘Imperial Church’, which is probably an anachronistic concept: Barnes, Athanasius, 168-73; cf. the important analysis of Illyrican bishops such as Valens of Mursa in E. D. Hunt, ‘Did Constantius II have “court bishops”?’, Studia Patristica 21 (1989), 86-90.
framework within which those developments will be analysed. Its primary focus, however, will be the transformation of north Italian interaction with other churches in the Mediterranean world, and how these contacts influenced the developing theological outlook of the region's bishops. First it is necessary to examine how the north Italian churches came to be involved in these wider ecclesiastical debates.²

PATTERNS OF INTERACTION FROM CONSTANTINE TO GRATIAN

Any study of north Italian church politics is fraught with difficulty because of the nature of our sources. Much of what we know about early Christianity in northern Italy depends on accounts of doctrinal or ecclesiological debates produced in a confrontational context. Authors such as Hilary of Poitiers and Athanasius of Alexandria had particular aims which influenced their selection—even manipulation—of materials for inclusion in their writings.³ They were often actual participants in the events they describe, with the result that such disputes could seem so all-encompassing to them that they might ignore developments elsewhere in the empire. Optatus of Milevus, for example, compiled an account of the Donatist schism which omits any reference to Athanasius or Constantius II, the great antagonists of the Christological dispute.⁴ Also, the focus of the sources is rarely on northern Italy. Often we must depend on incidental mentions of Italian participants in events elsewhere. For example, we have seen how the very first appearance of bishops from the region in the historical record arises from Constantine's intervention in the Donatist schism. Only when the region hosted events important

² My intention is not, however, to give an exhaustive survey of the minuta of north-Italian involvement in these doctrinal debates: that would repeat unnecessarily what has already been treated in several excellent recent studies: esp. McLynn, Ambrose, Chs 1-3, and Williams, Ambrose, Chs. 1-6; cf. Barnes, Athanasius, and R. P. C. Hanson, The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God (1988), for an examination of ecclesiastical and doctrinal affairs from a wider perspective.


⁴ K. M. Setton, Christian Attitude to the Emperor in the Fourth Century (1941), 54 and n.71.
for doctrinal development do our sources focus on northern Italy: the holding of
councils, such as that at Rimini in 359, was one such type of event. The other was
the imperial presence itself. Thus the history of the ‘political’ development of north
Italian Christianity consists of a sequence of snapshots, taken at times of imperial
activity, in the form of either passive presence or active involvement, in the region:
Constantine in 312-13; Constans in the 340s; Constantius II in the 350s; Valentinian
I, briefly, in the mid-360s; and Gratian after 379. Even from these few instances,
however, it is clear that there was a development in the nature of this relationship,
and that it did much to shape the character of north Italian Christianity, reinforcing
existing foci of activity, and introducing new ones.

(i) Imperial guidance and ecclesiastical policy

The period under discussion is one in which the relationship between church and
state throughout the empire underwent radical change. With Constantine’s
conversion and proclamation of religious toleration the Roman government ceased
to be an agent of persecution (in theory) and its apparatus adopted a friendly attitude
towards Christianity. Soon the north African clergy applied to Constantine for
arbitration on the disputed episcopal succession at Carthage; but it was not long
before they dispensed with their deferential timidity and happily pestered the
emperor at court. In northern Italy, however, the relationship seems to have
retained its tentative character rather longer, and until the death of Constantius II in
361, it was normally characterised by the region’s episcopate responding to the
demands of the emperor.

5 O. Seeck, Regesten der Kaiser und Päpste für die Jahre 311 bis 476 n. Chr. (1919), 159-61,
189-97, 199-204, 218-26, 250-62.
7 Cf. C. H. Turner, ‘Adversaria Critica: Notes on the Anti-Donatist Dossier and on Optatus,
Books i, ii’, JThS 27 (1926), 286.
The tentative nature of these initial contacts is implicit in the selection of north Italian bishops who attended Constantine's councils at Rome in 313 and Arles in 314. At Rome we find bishops Merocles of Milan, Constantius of Faenza and Stennius of Rimini, in addition to seven bishops from central and southern Italy, including Miltiades of Rome, as well as three from Gaul. While the presence of central and southern Italian clerics undoubtedly reflects the influence of Miltiades in summoning the tribunal, the northerners probably attended because of personal invitations from Constantine himself. The emperor's role in assembling the bishops is sometimes underestimated, yet it is clear that the presence of many participants at the synod was the direct result of Constantine's intervention. From Africa he had summoned bishops from both parties in the dispute (Eus. HE 10.5.19), and their dispatch was overseen by the proconsul Anullinus. Miltiades own participation was itself dependent on Constantine's wishes (ibid., 10.5.18-20). Constantine also wrote to the three Gallic bishops, Maternus of Cologne, Reticius of Autun and Marinus of Arles, ordering them to make their way to Rome (ibid., 10.5.19). Their attendance provides a model for the participation of the northern Italians. That Constantine wrote to the Gauls demanding their attendance at the forthcoming synod suggests he may have known them. All were in positions to have met the emperor before, during the ten years during which Constantine had resided in Gaul after assuming the purple, when, as Lactantius affirms, he had left Christianity

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8 They are probably to be identified with the septem eiusdem communitionis mentioned in Constantine's letter to Aelafius (Corpus Optati 3: J.-L. Maier, Le dossier du donatisme (1987), 1: 154, lines 16-25).
9 Frend, Donatist Church, 148, writes: 'Constantine informed Miltiades of his intention [to hold a council]...Miltiades, however, appears to have used the opportunity to transform the small ecclesiastical tribunal which the Emperor convoked into a council under his presidency, dominated by Italian bishops.' But Frend seems to be imputing to Miltiades anachronistic pretensions to hegemony, of the type claimed by bishops of Rome only with the pontificate of Damasus.
10 Barnes, New Empire, 169-70. There is plenty of evidence of Anullinus' role in Carthaginian church politics, not least in the form of his own correspondence: ap. Aug. Ep 88.2; cf. Eus. HE 10.5. 15-17; 6.4; 7.1-2.
unmolested (*de mort. pers. 24. 9; Div. Inst. 1. 1. 3*). It would not be surprising to find Constantine in dialogue with bishops at this time. Ossius of Cordoba had attached himself to the emperor’s entourage, while Constantine’s interpretation of his fateful vision before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge suggests that he had discussed religious matters with Christian teachers.\(^\text{13}\)

Constantine’s connections with the bishops of Milan, Faenza and Rimini can be incorporated into this context. Prior to the Roman Council, there were two periods during which the emperor was active in northern Italy and when he could have met the bishops who attended the Roman council. First, there were his operations there in spring and summer 312, immediately before he marched on Rome. He had entered Italy via the Cottian Alps, through Susa and Turin,\(^\text{14}\) whence he moved on Milan, Brescia and Verona,\(^\text{15}\) before turning south towards Modena, the Appennines and Rome.\(^\text{16}\) Such a journey might have afforded the bishops of Milan, Faenza and Rimini an opportunity to meet Constantine. To have been in contact with them would necessitate Constantine visiting their cities, and that would require him to make a journey along the Via Aemilia, on which they were situated.

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\(^{11}\) Constantine in Gaul: Barnes, *New Empire*, 68-73. Maternus’ see at Cologne was not far from Trier, where Constantine established his major residence. Reticius could have met the emperor when Constantine visited Autun during or just before his *Quinquennalia*. Marinus may have encountered Constantine during the war against Maximian in 310, in which the Rhône valley, Arles and Marseille had been the major theatre of operations (*Pan. Lat. 7*(1), 14-20; Lact., *de mort. pers. 29*, 5-8). Pietri characterised these bishops as the emperor’s spiritual confidants (*Roma Christiana* 160-1). Reticius could have fulfilled such a role; he was later famed as an exegete and polemicist against heresy (*Hier., de vir. ill.* 87).


\(^{13}\) Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 616-17; Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 43.

\(^{14}\) *Pan. Lat.* 9 (12), 6; 10 (4), 17. 3; 21. 1; 22. 2.

\(^{15}\) *Pan. Lat.* 9 (12), 7; 10 (4), 25-7.

\(^{16}\) *Pan. Lat.* 10 (4), 27.
Our knowledge of Constantine’s movements through the Appennines is defective: we hear nothing of him between his departure from Modena and his victory at the Milvian Bridge. Yet Aurelius Victor’s remarks on Maxentius’ defensive measures imply that Constantine journeyed along the Via Aemilia to Rimini and Fano, and then towards Rome along the Via Flaminia. Maxentius marched out of Rome to Saxa Rubra, nine Roman miles north of the capital (Caes. 40. 23). Since Saxa Rubra lay on the Via Flaminia, it is logical to assume that Constantine was advancing along the same road in the opposite direction. Thus Constantine’s itinerary in northern Italy during 312, which already included Milan, would have brought him through Faenza and then Rimini, affording him the opportunity to have met all three north Italian bishops who attended the Roman synod a year later. Certainly, these months had seen many cities abandon all allegiance towards Maxentius, while resistance offered to Constantine’s progress had been offered only by detachments of troops sent out from Rome.

It might be objected that the bishops might have been unwilling to side with Constantine while the war was as yet undecided, but this argument lacks force bearing in mind the wholesale defection of northern Italy to Constantine’s cause and

17 Contra J. Moreau, ‘Pont Milvius ou Saxa Rubra?’ Nouvelle Clio 4 (1952), 369-73 (followed by Barnes, Constantine and Eusebius, 305 n.144). I see no reason for rejecting Aurelius Victor’s version of events in favour of a reference from the Historia Augusta: even if Aurelius Victor has interpreted some events of Septimius Severus’ battle for Rome in 193 in the light of what happened in 312, it does not follow automatically that he transferred details in the opposite direction from 193 to 312. Further, Moreau’s faith in details provided by Lactantius’ de mort. pers. 44 seems misplaced. Lactantius’ account of the battle is couched in high-flown rhetoric — he quotes the Aenied twice in the space of only a few lines (44. 6, 9)— and presents it as a cosmic struggle with Constantine’s Christian dream (44. 5) opposed to Maxentius’ consultation of oracles (44. 1, 8). It is also chronologically confused: in the middle of the battle, Lactantius suddenly returns to events in Rome immediately beforehand (44. 6-9). Also, Lactantius is ignorant of Maxentius’ bridge of boats (see Barnes, Constantine and Eusebius, 305-6, now tacitly refuting Moreau!).


19 Barnes, Constantine and Eusebius, 41-2.
the probable presence of Ossius of Cordoba in his entourage. At any rate, in the aftermath of Constantine's Christian victory at the Milvian Bridge on 28 October 312, such reticence on the part of bishops will have disappeared. Constantine's northward progress in early-313—which probably retraced the route along the Flaminian and Aemilian roads—would have afforded another opportunity for the bishops to have greeted the new emperor. By March, Constantine was established in Milan (CTh 10.8.1), and in the light of the succeeding events it seems probable that bishop Merocles would have met him on that occasion.

Constantine's visit to Milan would have been celebrated with customary civic ceremonial, and its significance would have been heightened by the arrival there also of the eastern emperor Licinius. Coins minted at Pavia proclaimed the double imperial epiphany. Licinius married Constantia, Constantine's sister, in an ostentatious display of imperial unity (Lact., de mort. pers. 45.1). The imperial ceremonies may have been given a Christian flavour: Easter fell on 29 March, and Constantine, rejoicing in his victorious new faith, may have joined the Christians of Milan for their celebrations of the feast, much as he did later in his reign. The

20 As with the previous year, we have no precise information on Constantine's route through the Appennines. Details of imperial journeys between Rome and Milan are scarce, but they seem to point to use of the viae Flaminia and Aemilia: e.g. CTh 9.35.5 (Theodosius at Forum Flaminii in 389). This was also the route taken by Sidonius, en route to Rome from Gaul (Ep. 1.5).


22 Eus. HE 10.5.18-20 preserves a letter from Constantine to Miltiades and a certain, unidentified Marcus. It probably dates to late-April or May 313: Seeck, Regesten, 161. Barnes, New Empire, 241, inexplicably dates it to mid-June, but then adds: 'Constantine instructs the bishop of Rome to hear the Donatist appeal with three Gallic bishops, presumably as soon as he has received Anullinus' report of 15 April.' I am not sure why Barnes thinks that Anullinus' letter should have taken over six weeks to reach the emperor. Some have claimed that the 'Marcus' of Eusebius 'is a misrendering or corruption of "Merocli", and that Merocles of Milan . . . is meant': Turner, 'Adversaria critica', 285. This would make the superscription to Constantine's letter read 'to Miltiades, bishop of the Romans, and Merocles', therefore identifying Miltiades' see but not Merocles. The only reason for this
Christian hue of the western emperor's new interests was made explicit during this double imperial visit, when both Constantine and Licinius promulgated a directive on religious freedom for all their subjects, and especially the Christians. Copies were posted throughout the empire. We know of their existence at Caesarea in Palestine (Eus., HE 10.5.2-14) and at Nicomedia in Bithynia (Lact., de mort, pers. 48.2-12), and the same must have been true at Milan. The character of Constantine's régime was now explicit: it is hardly credible that Merocles would have remained unknown to him.

Direct imperial intervention is the most likely explanation for the north Italian presence in 314 at Arles too. Constantine was concerned that the Council of Arles should have a broader basis of authority to resolve the African schism: the Donatists had complained that the previous year's assembly had been drawn from too narrow a selection of bishops. In summoning bishops from a wider area, therefore, Constantine intended the pronouncements of Arles to be representative of a catholic church (Eus., HE 10.5.23). The attendance of the bishops of Milan 'ex provincia Italia' and Aquileia 'ex provincia Dalmatia', therefore, would be part of the emperor's plan. Constantine's links with Milan have been demonstrated; they can also be shown for Aquileia. It had been one of the cities which had defected to Constantine during his march on Rome (Pan. Lat. 9 (12). 11. 1). In the early years discrepancy would be that Constantine had written the letter in Milan and that such a locational device would have been superfluous. Consequently we could put Constantine in Milan until after 15 April, the date of Anullinus' report (Anullinus, Ep ap. Aug. Ep 88.2), which is mentioned in the letter quoted by Eusebius. This would (a) put Constantine in Milan until after Easter 313, and (b) demonstrate that he was in contact with Merocles. But the emendation of 'Marcus' may be unnecessary: Pietri, Roma Christiana 154; id., 'Appendice prosopographique à la Roma Christiana (311-440)', MEFRA 89 (1977), 386; Maier, Dossier 1.149 n. 4. He may have been a minor cleric who acted as legate from Miltiades to Constantine.

23 Most famously on the occasion when he delivered his Oration to the Assembly of the Saints, perhaps at Antioch in 325: Lane Fox, Pagans and Christians, 627-32.

24 The ramifications of this designation for Theodore's ecclesiastical jurisdiction are discussed in the next chapter (pp. 213-15).
of uneasy peace between Constantine and Licinius the city lay on the sensitive frontier between their respective jurisdictions; and when war did eventually flare up, the spark was ignited at Emona, just across the Julian Alps. Aquileia was, therefore, an important city in Constantine’s strategic planning during his conquest of Italy and his consolidation of his power. In this context Theodore of Aquileia may have come to Constantine’s attention, especially if, as will be argued in the next chapter, his episcopal influence extended across the mountains to Christians living under Licinius.

Constantine’s increasing concentration on eastern affairs after his war against Licinius in 316/7 marks the end of one phase in church-state relations in northern Italy. The next glimpse of the region’s bishops involved in the religious politics of the empire is during the Christological controversy. The next council after Arles which north Italian bishops attended was that at Serdica in 343. This had only met, so we are told, because Constans had threatened civil war on his brother Constantius II if no synod was called. That Constans was so insistent on convening a council was in no small part due to the energetic representations of Athanasius of Alexandria at court, in which he had been assisted by north Italian episcopal colleagues (see below pp. 172-6). Yet this does not represent new found bravado among the north Italian episcopate: any ecclesiastical politicking would have been undertaken by Athanasius, by now an adept player at court.

The most decisive example of imperial summons being issued to north Italians, however, came after Constans death, when his brother Constantius extended his mopping up operations after his victory over Magnentius to the

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26 For a sceptical discussion of the sources, cf. Hanson, Search, 307-8. Athanasius, however, was concerned to exonerate himself before Constantius of any charge that he had fomented Constans’ hostility (Apol. Const. 2 and passim).
27 Barnes, Athanasius, 47-93 passim.
ecclesiastical sphere. In 353, Constantius had called a second Council of Arles, where those who opposed his attempts to achieve theological conformity were summarily exiled and replaced with more malleable candidates. Two years later it was Italy’s turn to learn the full ferocity of direct imperial intervention in ecclesiastical affairs: the resulting council, at Milan in 355, was to prove a turning point the development of north Italian Christianity. Our sources for this council are lamentably poor, even to the extent that we do not know with full certainty beyond a few names who attended its debates (cf. pp. 76-7). Yet one aspect of the meeting is undeniable. Whereas previously north Italian Christians had been used to the rather remote exercise of imperial power to summon bishops to meetings, the arrival of Constantius II heralded an altogether more interventionist policy, the aftershocks of which continued to rumble until the time of Ambrose.

At Milan, as at Sirmium in 351 and Arles in 353, Constantius’ wishes were communicated to the council by a group of bishops from Asia Minor and Illyricum, bound by their common subscription to the emperor’s favoured credal formula—homoios, that Christ was like the Father—and by their opposition to Athanasius. Yet any semblance of ecclesiastical autonomy ended here, as it was the emperor himself who determined the composition and outcome of the synod. The surviving documents concerning the council show that Constantius’ aim was once again to achieve ecclesiastical harmony throughout his domains. Condemnation of Athanasius was certainly part of this scheme, but it is not known whether the

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28 Even before his outright victory in 353 Constantius was crafting his ecclesiastical policy for the west: Barnes, Athanasius, 105-15.
29 Barnes, Athanasius, 115-17; Hanson, Search, 329-32.
30 Barnes, Athanasius, 109-20.
32 This was clear to Eusebius of Vercelli who, writing to Constantius, acknowledged the emperor’s desire to secure ‘per orbem terrarum firma pax ecclesiastica’ (Ep. 1. 1).
33 Barnes, Athanasius, 117.
north Italian bishops at the council were required to submit to the homoian creed. Constantius’ presence lurked in the background throughout the proceedings, and when Valens of Mursa sensed that he was losing control of the meeting, the bishops transferred to the imperial palace (Hil. Pict., Coll. Ant. Par. App. II. 3). This sort of imperial intervention in a council must have been quite new to the north Italians. Worse ensued. When Dionysius of Milan (after some vacillation) and Eusebius of Vercelli refused to submit to Constantius’ wishes, they were exiled to the eastern Mediterranean. At Milan, moreover, a new bishop was installed to replace Dionysius: the non-Latin speaking Cappadocian Auxentius (Athan., Hist. Ar. 75). The remainder of Constantius’ reign saw the bishops of northern Italy content to follow the emperor’s demands. In 359, in a further effort to achieve unity throughout his realm, Constantius called a universal council, split into two assemblies. The easterners met at Seleucia in Isauria, while the westerners converged on northern Italy, at Rimini. No list of the participants survives, but we can be sure that Auxentius of Milan was there; we can hypothesise that bishops who were not stridently pro-Nicene or pro-Athanasian—such as Fortunatianus of Aquileia and Urbanus of Parma—may also have attended. At precisely this time, Fortunatianus was active on Constantius’ behalf in another way, bringing the once defiant Liberius of Rome into the homoian camp (cf. pp. 204-6).

For the remainder of our period, there is only one other example of imperial intervention in the affairs of the north Italian church, and that comes—curiously—early in the reign of Valentinian I (364-75). By the early 360s, the exiles of Constantius’ councils had returned to the west, where they sought to undo the homoian achievement. Inevitably, Auxentius of Milan was a target for their activities, and he found himself assailed by Hilary of Poitiers and Eusebius of Vercelli.34 During Valentinian’s residence at Milan in 365, Hilary, and perhaps also

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34 Williams, Ambrose, 76-83.
Eusebius, sought to topple Auxentius, by stirring up trouble against him. The plot came to the attention of Valentinian, who, for all his famed reluctance to become embroiled in religious disputes (Amm. Marc. 30. 9. 5), chose to act in a manner reminiscent of the newly converted Constantine. Unwilling to impose his own decision on the church, he nevertheless sought to expedite their decision making process. He summoned ten bishops—of unknown origin but possibly north Italians—to Milan where they met under secular scrutiny (in foro) to consider Auxentius’ case. The bishop of Milan answered charges of heresy with a clever Latin phrase, the ambiguity of which satisfied the ten bishops that he was orthodox. This was sufficient for Valentinian, and when Hilary persisted in trying to undermine Auxentius’ position, the bishop of Poitiers found himself expelled from the city by the imperial authorities (Hil. Pict., C. Aux. 9). Valentinian’s intervention over Auxentius was the last time a fourth century emperor imposed a decision on the north Italian church. It had not been primarily an issue of doctrine, so much as order. When Valentinian expelled Hilary, he was probably more worried about the threat posed by the bishop of Poitiers to civic order in Milan. This was markedly different from the domineering attitude of Constantius II, and it marks a stage in the transformation of church-state relations in northern Italy.

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35 The source for this is Hilary’s own Contra Auxentium, a very imprecise text: cf. D. H. Williams, ‘The Anti-Arian Campaigns of Hilary of Poitiers and the “Liber Contra Auxentium”’, Church History 61 (1992), 7-22, who argues—against the standard interpretation—that Eusebius did not participate in the 365 campaign.

36 Auxentius’ creed is given in Hil. Pict., C. Aux. 14. The crucial passage is where Auxentius affirms ‘credo . . . in filium eius unigenitum Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum, ante omnia saecula et ante omne principium natum ex Patre Deum verum filium ex vero Deo patre’. Hilary noted at the time that it was unclear whether Auxentius’ formula ‘Deum verum filium’ ascribed veritas to God (i.e. ‘Deum verum’) or to the Son (i.e. ‘verum filium’), and that in this way he obscured his heresy (C. Aug 8). Cf. McLynn, Ambrose, 26, for discussion.

37 The substance of Auxentius’ complaint to Valentinian was that Hilary and Eusebius had stirred up the Milanese plebs against him: ap. C. Aux. . 13; ‘aliqui ex plebe . . . nunc amplius excitati ab Hilario et Eusebio, perturbantes quosdam . . . ’
next an emperor becomes involved with north Italian bishops, it is Gratian tacitly submitting to the persuasion of the new bishop of Milan, Ambrose.

(ii) Episcopal action from Eusebius to Ambrose
While much of the north Italian involvement in wider ecclesiastical disputes was determined by the emperor himself, the period after Constantine also saw mounting self-confidence on the part of bishops who were determined to negotiate religious issues rather than submit to imperial dictate. In the dynamic characters of Eusebius of Vercelli and Ambrose of Milan, north Italian Christianity found leaders willing to champion the autonomy of the church from imperial control. The first attempt was unsuccessful. When Eusebius of Vercelli arrived at the Council of Milan in 355, he sought to take control of the proceedings by insisting on an affirmation of the creed of Nicaea. To this end, he produced a copy of the creed and gave it to Dionysius of Milan for his signature, thus provoking Valens of Mursa’s notorious outburst in which he snatched the pen from Dionysius’ hand before he could sign (Hil. Pict., Coll. Ant. Par. App. II. 3). The significance of Eusebius’ intervention is clear from the list of signatures which records a Dionysius among the subscribers to a condemnation of Athanasius. It is certain that this Dionysius is the same as the bishop of Milan, later exiled by the synod. Lucifer of Cagliari, another participant at the council, recorded that a misinformed Dionysius of Milan condemned Athanasius (de Athan. 2. 8). So Eusebius’ aim in submitting the creed of Nicaea for ratification was to overturn the previous achievements of the council. Moreover, Eusebius had been concerned to come to the council on his own terms. It was already in session for some days by the time he arrived; he had received letters

39 McLynn, Ambrose, 13-22, gives a much better reading of these events than Williams, Ambrose, 52-8. Williams’ extremely revisionist account is vitiated, however, by his failure to acknowledge that Dionysius had initially condemned Athanasius.
from Constantius, the papal legates (among them Lucifer of Cagliari) and the assembly as a whole entreat ing him to come.\textsuperscript{40} When he eventually agreed to attend, he determined to overturn the decisions the assembly had already made. To this end he produced his copy of the creed of Nicaea. It was a daring gesture; ultimately it was also a failure: Eusebius’ actions came up against the resistance of an emperor determined to achieve a predetermined outcome to the synod. As a result, Eusebius earned a sentence of exile for himself, and for Dionysius whom he had persuaded to change sides.

It was to be twenty years before another north Italian bishop stood up to an emperor as Eusebius had done. Elected to succeed Auxentius in 374, Ambrose of Milan set about expunging the last traces of Constantius’ homoian achievement from northern Italy and Illyricum. That he was able to do so depended on his gaining the compliance of the emperor Gratian, who from 379 was to be a regular visitor to Milan.\textsuperscript{41} It was to be no easy triumph, for at first he had to answer charges of heresy levelled against him by the homoian bishops of Illyricum.\textsuperscript{42} In response, Ambrose penned the first two books of his \textit{De Fide}, in which he sought to justify his position to the emperor and win imperial support for this anti-homoian campaigns. Thus the work included a heavy dose of flattery directed at the emperor. Facing the greatest crisis of his reign, a Gothic war in the Balkans with effectively himself alone as emperor, Gratian seems to have found Ambrose’s confident predictions of victory attractive. The predictions were couched, moreover, in language that made victory inseparable from acceptance of Ambrose’s brand of Christology.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{40} Ed. in \textit{CCL} 9 (1957), 119-21.
\textsuperscript{41} For the importance of Gratian’s presence, due to the Gothic war beyond the Julian Alps, see McLynn, \textit{Ambrose}, 88-106.
\textsuperscript{42} McLynn, \textit{Ambrose}, 92-8.
\textsuperscript{43} Particularly \textit{De Fide} 1. 1 (where Ambrose flatters Gratian and assures him of victory) and 2. 136-142 (where the victory over the Goths is made a reward for orthodoxy).
In the years that followed, Ambrose exploited Gratian’s frequent presence in the region to bring the emperor under his religious influence. Gratian was, it seems, now interested in resolving the Christological controversy; embarrassingly, Theodosius, his eastern appointee as emperor—and hence a junior member of the imperial college—got there first with the Council of Constantinople in May 381. Ambrose offered Gratian a solution: a western council convened immediately to investigate the orthodoxy of two Illyrican bishops, Palladius and his fellow homoian, Secundianus of Singidunum. The council met at Aquileia in September, and Ambrose dominated proceedings from the first. Protest as he may that Ambrose was perverting the instructions given for the council by Gratian (Acta. conc. Aquil. 6-8), Palladius was unable to stop the bishop of Milan savouring his triumph. With the conclusion of the council, Ambrose wrote to Gratian to inform him of its outcome (Ep. 10). To be sure, the letter observed all the conventions of respect due to an Augustus, but in Ambrose’s relationship with Gratian by 381, the wishes of the bishop had become the wishes of the emperor.

Where Eusebius found failure, Ambrose discovered success. The infuriatingly intangible contribution of character is a crucial factor in understanding why. To be sure, Eusebius was a determined advocate of Nicene orthodoxy, even to the point of defying the emperor, but in Constantius II he had an adversary determined to use the full weight of imperial force to achieve his own conception ecclesiastical and doctrinal unity. In Ambrose too we have a dynamic bishop, but Gratian was no Constantius II. A serious young man of an academic bent, Ambrose’s emperor was malleable to theological persuasion. At the outset he found himself beset by both Palladius of Ratiaria and Ambrose; in the end Ambrose proved the more persuasive, and domination of the Council of Aquileia was his reward.

McLynn, Ambrose, 124-5.
(iii) Summary

The period between the councils of 314 and 381 saw considerable development in church-state relations in northern Italy. For much of the period, the north Italian episcopate is no more than a shadowy presence, obediently following the summons of emperors to attend councils. Only later in the century, with the election of Ambrose at Milan, is greater self confidence visible. When Ambrose sought Gratian’s assistance in convening the Council of Aquileia, the resulting synod was organised along terms dictated by the bishop, not the emperor. Composed as it was of Ambrose’s theological allies, the Aquileian synod was markedly different from Constantine’s councils at Rome and Arles, where the assembled bishops from northern Italy were there because the emperor had summoned them.

The reasons for this change are bound up with the increasing involvement of north Italian ecclesiastics in the theological politics of the wider Mediterranean world, particularly the Christological controversy. With the advent of Constantius II, the character of north Italian church-state relations changed startlingly. For the first time, bishops from the region were confronted by an emperor whose ecclesiastical policy demanded adherence to a prescribed set of views. To some, this proved intolerable, and their recalcitrance was rewarded by sentences of exile. In the resistance of Eusebius of Vercelli and, at his instigation, Dionysius of Milan, appears a germ of the strong minded defence of ecclesiastical independence visible in Ambrose. Yet, for all that, the development was by no means simple and without setbacks. As is clear from Valentinian I’s role in the process initiated against Auxentius by Hilary, the emperor—even a relatively inactive one in the field of religious dispute—could still determine the course of ecclesiastical politics in northern Italy. Indeed, even Ambrose’s preparations for the Council of Aquileia fit this pattern: the initial impetus for a council had been accusations of heresy filed against Ambrose by Palladius of Ratiaria. That the council turned out to be a success for Ambrose owes much to his forceful personality, a factor that was to be
crucial in his ultimate domination of north Italian ecclesiastical affairs (see pp. 200-2).

DEFINING DEVIANCE IN NORTHERN ITALY

These contacts with the state, intermittent though they were, brought the north Italian church into debates concerning Christian communities throughout the Mediterranean. This served to change north Italian ecclesiological and theological perceptions, a phenomenon particularly evident in the Christological controversy. The manner in which the region’s episcopate came to be involved in these disputes and the nature of the loyalties they adopted are instructive, for they reveal that while north Italian bishops were now participants in wider affairs, the character of their involvement had strong regional characteristics. This is evident not only in the nature of their Christological opinions, but in the geographical horizons of their activities. Like many in the west, the bishops of northern Italy were cut off from the theological and philosophical mainstream of the Christological debate, and their knowledge of and reaction to it depended on sporadic communications with the major centres of the dispute. Thus for the 340s and early 350s their actions were defined largely by their personal contact with the exiled Athanasius of Alexandria, whereas between the councils of Milan and Aquileia, their attention was focused mainly on the Balkans, and to a lesser extent on Gaul.

(i) Personal factors: Athanasius in the west, Eusebius in the east

There was no north Italian involvement in the councils of the Christological controversy prior to the gather at Serdica in 343, and this would have been the first time that north Italians would have encountered at first hand the exponents of homoiousian and homoian theology. Their reaction was one of distaste: Lucius (or Lucillus) of Verona, Fortunatianus of Aquileia, Severus of Ravenna, Ursacius of Brescia and Protasius of Milan joined with the majority of western bishops in condemning as heretics Ursacius of Singidunum, Valens of Mursa, Narcissus of
Irenopolis, Stephen of Antioch, Acacius of Caesarea, Menofantus of Ephesus and George of Laodicea (Hil. Pict., *Coll. Ant. Par.* B. II. 2. 5; 3-4).

It is intriguing to observe how the Italian bishops and their allies arrived at their conclusion. There is little theology in the letters of this ‘western’ synod of Serdica to Julius of Rome and other western bishops. Condemnations of heresy merely rehearse standard pejorative formulae, such as that Ursacius, Valens and the others had ‘ventured against the servants of God who defend the true and Catholic faith’ (Hil. Pict., *Coll. Ant. Par.* B. II. 1. 1) and that ‘their minds are tainted with the pestiferous Arian heresy’ (ibid., B. II. 2. 2). Much more weight is given to accusations that these ‘heretics’ fomented violence within communities or constructed false accusations against their enemies. In particular, the bishops are concerned to defend the activities of Athanasius of Alexandria and his allies, such as Marcellus of Ancyra.

This defence of the Alexandrian is couched in terms of close friendship: Athanasius is ‘our dearest brother and fellow bishop’ (ibid., B. II. 1. 1. 8), whereas his enemies are accused of lying, malice and insidious assaults on a true son of the church (B. II. 1 passim). The westerners’ position is revealing, for it demonstrates that their quarrels with those whom they designated heretics were conducted primarily on personal grounds. Thus, when Marcellus is accused of unorthodoxy it is enough for him to produce evidence of his own innocence to convince the westerners at Serdica that he has been wronged (B. II. 1. 6). How the north Italian bishops reacted to such arguments is easy enough to imagine. Of the five bishops from the region who signed the defence of Athanasius and the condemnation of his enemies, four—the bishops of Verona, Brescia, Milan, and Aquileia—had met him

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during his western exile (Athan., *Apol. Const.* 3); moreover, one of them—Fortunatianus of Aquileia—was at this point a regular host of the exile on his western travels. Otherwise cut off from the Christological dispute, these north Italians, like many in the west, would have learned about it first from Athanasius during his periods in the west. It is unsurprising, therefore, that a condemnation of Athanasius seems to have been one of the first aims of Constantius’ Council of Milan in 355.

In this respect, the experience of north Italian bishops is similar to that of other western episcopates. Liberius of Rome made an outright rejection of Athanasius a central part of his accommodation with Constantius II, while loyalty to Athanasius proved dangerous for the likes of Paulinus of Trier and Ossius of Cordoba. Not only does the centrality of Athanasius’ personality make sense from an ecclesiastical perspective. In imperial terms too the bishop of Alexandria was an important concern for Constantius II, who saw Athanasius as a threat not only to Christian unity, but to the political stability of the empire. But, with Constantius’ imposition of his wishes at Milan in 355, Athanasius ceased to be as important for the dispute as he had been hitherto. With the exile of Dionysius of Milan and Eusebius of Vercelli to the east, northern Italy, like the rest of the west, gained a new view of the Christological dispute, born of direct involvement in its debates in the eastern empire.

In this process, Eusebius of Vercelli occupies a place of central importance for northern Italy. He wrote to his congregations about affairs in the east (*Ep. 2*), and after Constantius’ death he participated in a series of eastern councils by which Athanasius’ partisans sought to reassert the orthodoxy of Nicaea. At the


48 For Liberius, see below 202-6; the danger to Paulinus and Ossius was acknowledged by Athanasius himself (Apol. Const. 27).

Alexandrian synod of 362, Eusebius was given the role of spreading the message of this Nicene restoration to the west (Tomus ad Antiochenos 2). By this stage Eusebius had travelled widely in the east, from his original exile at Scythopolis in Palestine to the Thebaid in upper Egypt and to Alexandria itself. He had become a different man in the years since the Council of Milan. In 355 he had been little more than a particularly single-minded Italian bishop, with few connections outside northern Italy apart from Rome and his native Sardinia. By the time he returned to the west, however, he was a more mature, sober ecclesiastical politician. The stubbornness which had characterised his behaviour at Milan was replaced by greater circumspection, and he recognised, as his one time associate Lucifer of Cagliari would never do, that accommodation was better than confrontation.

This reflects his experiences in the east during his exile. Not only was he better placed to observe the theoretical underpinning of the Christological debate, but he was able to engage in discussion with many of the major participants. This much is clear from the Tomus ad Antiochenos, which records the proceedings of the 362 synod. Apart from Eusebius, it was attended by a large number of bishops from the near east, among them Athanasius himself (Tomus, 1, 10). The character of the debates there was, moreover, more elaborate than anything in which a north Italian bishop had been involved before. The central sections of the document deal with the complex question of the hypostases (substances) making up the Trinity (Tomus 5-6) and the nature of Christ’s humanity (Tomus 7), and at the end of the document (Tomus 10), Eusebius expressly subscribes to the findings of the synod. If Eusebius was indeed the author of a work known as the De Trinitate, then the complexity of

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50 This much is implied by Liberius' letter to Eusebius, in which he commends to the bishop of Vercelli his delegation to the Milanese council, including Lucifer of Cagliari: Liberius, Epp. ad Euseb. Verc. 2. 1: 3. 1.

its arguments would seem to confirm that he had learned much Christology during his eastern residence; regrettably, any attribution of that work to him must remain tentative.52

Little is known of Eusebius' return to the west and his activity there during the reign of Valentinian I. He travelled through the Balkans (Altercatio Heracliani p. 136) and Italy (Ruf., HE 10. 31) seeking to restore these areas to Nicene sympathies, and although his methods were usually viewed as a conciliatory, it is clear that he was willing to confront any opposition. Thus Auxentius of Milan complained bitterly of Eusebius' interference in church affairs at Milan (ap. Hil. Pict., C. Aux. 13). Not only did Eusebius exploit the knowledge and methods he had learned in the east: he also used contacts which he may have gained there. Somewhat earlier than Eusebius' homecoming, bishop Hilary of Poitiers had returned to Gaul to start a Nicene restoration. At some stage he seems to have joined forces with Eusebius, although the precise nature of their cooperation is unclear.53

(ii) Geographical factors: Gaul, Italy and Illyricum

The concerted efforts of Hilary and Eusebius point to another, geographical dimension in which the outlook of the north Italian church changed in response to theological debate, particularly after the intervention of Constantius II. It opened up new avenues of communication and reinforced existing ones. Those connections forged with the east depended largely on interpersonal contacts such as those of the emperor or of Athanasius and Eusebius. It is clear, however, that they persisted after Constantius' death. Eastern bishops were now actively interested in the affairs of their north Italian brethren, as Basil of Caesarea's correspondence with Valerian of Aquileia shows (Basil, Ep. 91). Opponents of Auxentius within the Milanese church looked to the east too for support, as the journeys made by the Milanese

52 For discussion of this difficulty, see p. 210 n. 65.
53 See above pp. 166-8.
deacon, Sabinus, to Basil and Athanasius demonstrate. Meanwhile, north Italian Christians of an ascetic bent, such as Turranius Rufinus of Concordia or the future bishop Gaudentius of Brescia, began to look towards the eastern Mediterranean as a venue for their endeavours.

Another area where contact increased was with the churches in Gaul. No connection is known prior to the joint participation of Gallic and north Italian bishops at Constantine’s councils in 313 and 314. The most important period for increased contact between Gaul and northern Italy came with efforts to remove Auxentius from Milan. The first instance of this Gallic interest in northern Italy comes in the synod influenced by Hilary of Poitiers at Paris in 360. Here the assembled bishops of Gaul, writing to their eastern brethren, announced a general condemnation of homoian bishops in the west, among them Auxentius of Milan (Hil. Pict., Coll. Ant. Par. A. I. 4). Concrete action against Auxentius was taken by Hilary and Eusebius, but it is interesting to note that the one attempt to gain Auxentius’ deposition by imperial intervention was perhaps the work of Hilary alone (above pp. 166-8). In the later 360s, a further condemnation of Auxentius was reported to Rome by a council of bishops composed of Gallic and Venetian bishops (Damasus, Ep. Confidimus quidem 348B). Ultimately, Auxentius remained in his see until his death in 374, but the Gallic-north Italian axis of anti-homoian activity remained strong, and in 381 there were six bishops from Gaul at Ambrose’s Council of Aquileia.

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54 Basil, Ep. 91, mentions the mission of Sabinus to the east; cf. Damasus, Ep. Confidimus quidem 349C: ‘Ego Sabinus diaconus Mediolanensis legatus de authentico dedi.’
56 In general, see Y.-M. Duval, ‘Les rapports de la Gaule et de la Cisalpine dans l’histoire religieuse du IV siècle’, AAAd 19 (1981), 259-77
57 Williams, Ambrose, 174.
The Aquileian council was, of course, directed against the Illyrican bishops Palladius of Ratiaria and Secundianus of Singidunum. Connections between northern Italy and the Balkans existed long before Constantine, and by the time of Theodore of Aquileia’s participation in the Council of Arles in 314 it seems that these contacts also involved Christianity (see below pp. 188-95). North Italian involvement in the Christological controversy did much to entrench these connections.\(^{58}\) Constantius’ intervention, when it came, was spear headed by the posse of Illyrican bishops comprising Valens of Mursa, Ursacius of Singidunum and Germinius of Sirmium, all three of whom were present at Milan in 355. During his episcopate, we most usually hear of Auxentius of Milan in connection with these Balkan homoians.\(^{59}\) It is easy to see why, after the death of Constantius II, the restoration of Nicene orthodoxy in northern Italy should have been inextricably bound up with the same process in the Balkans. This reflected in Basil of Caesarea’s view of Valerian of Aquileia as the bishop most likely to bring about the collapse of the homoian party in Illyricum (Basil, \textit{Ep.} 91), and it had already found concrete expression in Eusebius of Vercelli’s actions at Sirmium (\textit{Altermatio Heracliani} p.136).

The interpenetrability between Illyrican and north Italian ecclesiastical politics persisted for much of the rest of the fourth century. It was an area in which Ambrose took an early interest, intervening to secure the appointment of Anemius as successor to Germinius of Sirmium in 378 (below pp.192-3). The Gothic revolt of 376-82 gave added urgency to north Italian interests in the ecclesiastical politics of the Balkans, particularly as homoian sympathizers fleeing the war, including clerics like Julianus Valens who came to Milan, posed a potential threat to pro-Nicene interests in northern Italy (below pp. 220-1). It was with dangers such as


\(^{59}\) E.g. in the condemnation issued at the Council of Paris in 360 (Hil. Pict., \textit{Coll. Ant. Par.} A. I. 4); cf. Athan., \textit{De Syn.} 8, on Rimini.
this in mind that Ambrose sought to convene the Council of Aquileia, among whose members were non-homoian bishops from the Balkans such as Maximus of Emona, Anemius of Sirmium, Diadertinus of Zadar and Constantius of Siscia.  

(iii) Broadened horizons: the handbook of Filastrius of Brescia  
An index of the broadened cultural and theological horizons of the north Italian churches by the end of our period can be gleaned from Filastrius of Brescia’s *Diversarum hereseon liber*. Composed in the 380s, the work belongs to a tradition of anti-heretical polemic stretching back to Irenaeus of Lyon and Hippolytus of Rome. Its closest affinity, however, is to manuals produced in the Christological controversy, notably Epiphanius of Salamis’ *Panarion*. Yet Filastrius’ book is not a diluted Latin version of its Greek predecessors. Rather, it is a catalogue of heresies produced in an undeniably western context. The entry on Manichaeism, for example, refers to the presence of Manichaeans in Filastrius’ own time in Spain and southern Gaul: a clear allusion to Priscillianism. Particular elements reveal north Italian prejudices, notably the repeated references to Photinus of Sirmium (*Div. her. lib. 65; 91. 2; 93. 5*). Apart from their general interest in Balkan matters, north Italian bishops seem to have been deeply involved in the affair of Photinus, and probably made up a large part of the council convened against him at Milan in 349 (Hil. Pict., *Coll. Ant. Par. II. A. 5. 4*). Other authors mentioned Photinus, but their references to his beliefs differ markedly from those of Filastrius. To Athanasius and Hilary, Photinus was a disciple of Marcellus of Ancyra, but Filastrius argues that he derived his theology from Paul of Samosata.  

Filastrius' description of the 'Arriani' (sic) conforms to this north Italian world view. He writes:

There are Arians following Arius, a priest of Alexandria who lived under bishop Alexander [of Alexandria] of happy memory and the holy emperor Constantine of happy memory, saying that the Son of God is 'like' (similis) God; however, in saying 'like', according to the meaning of the word, and not believing the son to be to the same substance (substantia) as the Father, he fell into perilous heresy (Div. her. lib. 66.1-2).

As a description of Arius' beliefs this is woefully inaccurate, but its insistence on the heresy of a doctrine of 'likeness' which leaves out any consideration of 'substance' makes it clear what Filastrius has in mind: homoianism. While this might seem like sloppiness, it makes sense in terms of northern Italy where the experience of Christological heterodoxy had been through the homoian ascendancy imposed by Constantius II. The section on 'Arriani' makes repeated appeals to substantia (cf. Div. her. lib. 66. 3, 4), and Filastrius' interest in the subject extends to all three persons of the Trinity (esp. § 93. 3). This interest in the Holy Spirit shows that Filastrius belongs to the later stages of the Christological controversy, which had moved on from disagreements about the relationship of Father and Son to consider all three persons in the Trinity. Indeed, Filastrius demonstrates awareness of the various shades of Christological opinion in the 380s, including the followers of Eunomius (§ 68). To be sure, his descriptions often slip into 'glib caricature', but the needs of polemic surely required this strategy.

Filastrius' work is an instructive point at which to conclude this survey of north Italian participation in the Christological controversy. His views are by no means unique: Zeno of Verona, for example, had much to say on the issue of

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64 Hanson. Search, 738-90.
65 Contra Williams, Ambrose, 90.
substantia,\footnote{Cf. the instances collected in B. Löfstedt and D. W. Packard, A Concordance to the Sermons of Bishop Zeno of Verona (1975), 361-2. For Zeno's pronouncements on Christological matters, cf. V. Boccardi, 'Quantum spiritualiter intelligi datur. L'esegesi di Zenone di Verona', Augustinianum 23 (1983), 466-79; and esp. C. Truzzi, Zeno. Gaudenzio e Cromazio (1985), 128-32, on the impression of Zeno's credal formulae.} while it was left to Ambrose to achieve an apogee of theological elaboration in works such as De Fide, De Spiritu Sancto and De Incarnatione. Yet Filastrius' book provides a snapshot view of how the intellectual horizons of north Italian bishops had changed in the 380s. At the councils of Serdica and, to a lesser extent, Milan, north Italian participants had defined their activity in terms of personal allegiance to Athanasius. In the Diversarum hereseon liber, Filastrius presented an immeasurably more complicated picture of the conflict. Caricature there certainly is, but it is not about personalities so much as ideas. In Filastrius we see a bishop more at home with the theological debates of the universal church, one whose world was very different from that of Merocles of Milan or Theodore of Aquileia.

CONCLUSION

The period between Constantine and Gratian saw a radical change in the relationship between north Italian ecclesiastics and their emperors. Under Constantine and his sons, the relationship can be characterised by the north Italian episcopate reacting to, and usually acquiescing in, imperial decisions on ecclesiastical policy. In 355, however, north Italian bishops were expected to accept a more belligerently interventionist approach from Constantius II. The emperor desired ecclesiastical unity throughout his empire, and any who obstructed the achievement of this aim was exiled. Constantius' Milanese council proved to be a defining moment for north Italian Christianity. Eusebius of Vercelli had led defiance of the emperor's wishes. To be sure, he and his fellows were disastrously unsuccessful, but their actions provided a template for future north Italian participation in the ecclesiastical
politics of the empire. Resistance, and not just acquiescence, was an option. The success of this stance depended on the relative strengths of character of emperor and episcopate. With Ambrose’s accession to the bishopric of Milan in 374 and Gratian’s succession to the western imperial throne a year later, the conditions were right for the achievement of episcopal autonomy in north Italian ecclesiastical politics. With the Council of Aquileia, Ambrose demonstrated how he sought to dictate the course of church politics and bring the emperor into accord with his decisions.

As the north Italian episcopate’s political outlook changed, so too did their cultural and theological horizons. The fourth century saw the region’s bishops sucked into a wider Mediterranean arena of ecclesiastical politics and theological debate. This development is clearest in the Christological controversy. Until 355, the allegiances of north Italian bishops were dictated by personal ties, fostered during Athanasius’ western exile in the 340s. From the 360s, however, it is clear that the bishops of northern Italy were much more capable of dealing with complex theological issues. In Filastrius of Brescia’s manual on heresies we gain a glimpse of this new theological sophistication of north Italian churchmen.

This interaction of church and state in northern Italy was played out in a distinctly regional manner. In particular, the Balkan focus of much north Italian involvement in the Christological controversy reflected long standing connections between the two regions. It was a group of Balkan bishops who were instrumental in imposing Constantius II’s homoian settlement on northern Italy; and it was the Balkan episcopate that bore the full brunt of the backlash after Constantius’ death, culminating in the Council of Aquileia. Little wonder, then, that when Filastrius came to define ‘Arianism’ he described it as the homoian doctrine espoused by Balkan bishops such as Valens of Mursa, Palladius of Ratiaria, and Ursacius and Secundianus of Singidunum.
The fourth century transformed the way north Italian Christianity interacted with the outside world. But the events and processes described in this chapter had ramifications closer to home, and not just in terms of definitions of belief. Once Eusebius of Vercelli took action against Auxentius of Milan, or Ambrose seized the initiative of a council under the nominal presidency of Valerian of Aquileia, they raised questions of when and where a particular bishop’s jurisdiction had effect. Episcopal jurisdiction and the challenges to which it was subject, therefore, form the subjects of the next chapter.
The last chapter showed how the interplay of imperial power and local society in northern Italy increasingly involved the church, especially from the time of Constantius II. This reflects a wider phenomena, visible throughout the Roman world of the fourth century, whereby the church was incorporated into a wider set of social power relations, with bishops beginning to act as leaders of their communities.\(^1\) In northern Italy, this process was accelerated in the early fifth century (see Epilogue), but its genesis can be seen already in the fourth. The often bitter interaction between church and state had ramifications not only for the theological outlook of north-Italian bishops, but also for how they acted with or against each other. The purpose of this chapter in examining these developments is two-fold. First it will examine the emergence of ecclesiastical hierarchies in northern Italy as a result of contacts and conflicts within the episcopate. Then it will analyse how those developing claims of wider, regional authority were reflected at a local level, and how the church competed with other players in the game of local politics in the region’s cities.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF EPISCOPAL HIERARCHIES

Our picture of the administrative interrelationships between north-Italian bishops in the pre-Ambrosian age is often shaped by rigid and anachronistic hierarchical models. Such an image is hard to sustain on the basis of early to mid-fourth century evidence from the region. It derives in part from a tendency to generalise about administrative conditions in the church of the Roman empire, assuming that as the fourth century progressed there developed a close correlation between secular and ecclesiastical metropoleis, as laid down in the fourth canon of the Council of Nicaea, in all areas of the empire. Yet even in the eastern provinces, which had a highly developed ecclesiastical hierarchy already at the beginning of the fourth century, there was ample scope for dispute and variation. The tendency to view the north Italian church as having rigid hierarchies from the first is also influenced by the picture of Christian origins presented in medieval sources, which projected the political ideology of planned missions and metropolitan bishoprics back into Christian antiquity (see Ch.3). This section will argue that the broader provincial organisation of the Church in northern Italy was more fluid, and that the ability of certain bishoprics to take on the characteristics of leadership depended on constantly shifting circumstances. Only with the episcopate of Ambrose at Milan was some measure of administrative rigidity achieved, and even then it was reliant on

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2 For a recent example, see Williams, Ambrose, 76, describing Milan as ‘the metropolitan seat of northern Italy’ and how ‘its bishop had episcopal jurisdiction effective over the whole of the political diocese of Italian Annonaria, which included Aemilia, Liguria, Venetia, the two Rhaetias, the Cottian Alps, Flaminia and Picenum, and part of Tuscia.’ Nowhere, however, does Williams offer any justification for this claim, although his image clearly derives from the extension of Ambrose’s sphere of influence. This is a very old fashioned view indeed: G. C. Menis, ‘Le giurisdizioni metropolitiche di Aquileia e di Milano nell’antichità’, AAAd 4 (1973), 271-94, esp. 275-80. Cf pp. 2-3 on the origins and problems of this approach.

3 Above p. 41

4 Cf. above pp. 36-44 for such tensions.
Ambrose’s force of character as much as the prestige of Milan as a provincial and imperial metropolis.5

(i) Conciliar sources and their limitations

Part of the difficulty in elucidating the origins of episcopal hierarchies in northern Italy is the lack of surviving information. As has been noted before (pp. 72-3), there is no coherent narrative of the activities of northern Italian ecclesiastical history prior to the elevation of Ambrose. Any picture must rely on the minimal information given in conciliar subscriptions, on the occasional glimpses of north-Italian bishops at work given by Athanasius, Hilary and others, and on the few statements made by north-Italian ecclesiastics themselves, such as Eusebius of Vercelli.

Even then the sources leave much to be desired. A good example is the provenance of bishops as given in conciliar documents. At Arles in 314, for example, Merocles of Milan is designated ‘ex prouincia Italia.’ Superficially, this seems to present no problems, but the same document lists Theodore of Aquileia as ‘ex prouincia Dalmatia.’ This is curious indeed, since a tetrarchic inscription found at Miramare near Trieste (that is, further east than Aquileia) shows that Aquileia lay within the jurisdiction of the corrector Italiae (CIL 5. 8205). The description of Theodore in the Arelate lists shows that such designations do not correlate closely with secular administrative districts, as is sometimes assumed.6 The situation is clearer by the time of the Council of Serdica, where all the north Italian bishops are listed simply as ‘ab Italia’, whereas as those from central and southern Italy are more precisely located, ‘ab Apulia’ and so forth (Hil. Pict., Coll. Ant. Par. B. II. 4). Yet by the mid-fourth century, northern Italy had been divided up into a number of

5 I will develop the ideas advanced, but not fully exploited, by E. Cattaneo, ‘Il governo ecclesiastico dell’Italia settentrionale nel IV secolo’, AAd 22 (1982), 175-87.
6 E. g. A. Chastagnol, La Préfecture urbaine à Rome sous le Bas-Empire (1960), 26-35, using evidence from the subscriptions of Arles and Serdica to demonstrate administrative innovations.
provinces—such as Aemilia et Liguria or Venetia et Histria—under consulares. Therefore the description of bishops at Serdica as coming ‘ab Italia’ ignores the boundaries of secular administration, and most probably reflects a growing tendency to use ‘Italia’ on its own to describe northern Italy. A further layer of complexity is added because successive compilers of conciliar acts were not themselves consistent in the criteria they used when appending geographical designations to the sees represented at each council. The case of Aquileia illustrates this point: at Arles, Theodore came ‘ex provincia Dalmatia’, whereas at Serdica, Fortunatianus was numbered among the bishops ‘ab Italia’. Determining what each designation means, therefore, will assist evaluating the use of such sources for the reconstruction of early north-Italian ecclesiastical administration.

The material contained in conciliar records presents nothing but the most rudimentary picture of north-Italian ecclesiastical administration. Of the various councils involving north-Italian prelates which met in the period covered by this study, only two, Arles and Serdica, gave details of the provincial origins of their attending bishops. At Arles, we have Merocles of Milan ‘ex provincia Italia’ and Theodore of Aquileia ‘ex provincia Dalmatia’. Turning to Serdica we find the bishops of Aquileia, Brescia, Milan, Ravenna and Verona recorded as coming ‘ab Italia’. By themselves, these designations reveal very little. For example, it would be too adventurous to assert that the shift of Aquileia from ‘ex provincia Dalmatia’ to ‘ab Italia’ meant that it, and presumably all the bishoprics of northern Italy, had come under the thrall of the bishops of Milan. It is only when read in connection with other texts that conciliar documents make any sense.

(ii) Aquileia and the genesis of episcopal jurisdiction

The first narrative depiction of north-Italian bishops working together comes in Athanasius' report to Constantius II of his efforts at gaining an audience with Constans in the 340s (Apol. Const. 3). He recounts how he 'was always introduced [to Constans] in company with the bishop of the city where [he] happened to be, and others who happened to be there', among whom he mentions Fortunatianus of Aquileia (with whom Athanasius stayed for much of this time), Lucillus of Verona, Crispinus of Padua and Protasius of Milan. They, together with Vincentius of Capua, Hosius of Cordoba, Maximinus of Trier and Dionysius of Elis, were Athanasius’ sponsors before Constans (Apol. Const. 3).

Athanasius’ audiences with Constans are difficult to distinguish. His account of them to Constantius was written for an emperor who already knew their basic chronology, but from the allusive account in the Apologia ad Constantium it is clear that there were four separate meetings: at Milan in 342 (Apol. Const. 3); at Trier in mid-343 and again in late-345 (ibid. 4); and at Aquileia during 345 (ibid. 14-15).11 Athanasius’ sponsors can be divided up between these audiences. He states explicitly that Hosius of Cordoba was with him at Trier (ibid. 4), as must that city’s bishop Maximinus. Vincentius of Capua served for much of this period as papal legate,12 and could have joined Athanasius at any of the audiences he mentions, as could Dionysius of Elis, who seems to have had dealings with the imperial court over the tenure of his see in the mid-340s.13

By fitting the north-Italian bishops into this framework it is possible to reveal something of how they organised themselves when dealing with each other. For the audience at Milan we can assume that Protasius was present, as was the

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11 See Barnes, Athanasius, 63-70, for analysis of the audiences which Athanasius describes.
12 Pietri, Roma Christiana, 175, 239-42, 262-4.
magister officiorum Eugenius (ibid. 3). None of the other north-Italian bishops can be connected to this audience, which was convened at the orders of Constans himself.14 The other north-Italian bishops are more probably associated therefore with Athanasius’ audience at Aquileia in 345. That the bishops of Padua and Verona should chance to be in the company of Fortunatianus at Aquileia is intriguing, because taken with other evidence it suggests that there was some form of provincial organisation among the bishops of Venetia et Histria. This much seems to be implied by notice of a report of the bishops of Gaul and Venetia to Pope Damasus, sometime in the late-360s, of attempts by Auxentius of Milan to disturb the peace of the church.15 Here there seems to be clear evidence of a council composed of Gallic and Venetian bishops,16 and explicit confirmation of the bishops of Venetia working as a group.

Whether this means that the bishopric of Aquileia held any sort of hierarchical authority over the bishops of other cities in Venetia is harder to determine for the 340s. Certainly, once Fortunatianus disowned Athanasius, subscribed to the creed of Sirmium (351) and persuaded Liberius to do likewise (see below pp. 204-6), he may have found it hard to exercise any authority over pro-Nicene or pro-Athanasian bishops. In 362/3, Liberius wrote to the Italian episcopate asking that any bishops who had lapsed into heresy—and he specifically mentions the Council of Rimini—should be received back into the orthodox communion.17

13 For Dionysius, see Barnes, *Athanasius*, 258 n. 9.
14 Athanasius is clear on the order of events. While he was staying at Aquileia, Constans, then resident at Milan, wrote to Athanasius, summoning him to court (*Apol. Const.* 4).
Someone like Fortunatianus must have been intended in the pope’s plea, and a letter of pro-Nicene Italian bishops to their Illyrian brethren suggests that anyone who rejected Rimini would be readmitted to their company (Hil. Pict., Coll. Ant. Par. B. IV. 2). Whether Fortunatianus subscribed to such a demand, as Germinius of Sirmium seems to have done (ibid. B. V), cannot be known: nor can anything about his relationship with his fellow bishops in Venetia and Illyricum. By the later 360s, however, when Aquileia reemerges in the sources, there is a more cogent picture of its regional influence, if not leadership. It is worth examining this development in some detail as it provides a useful model for the development of ecclesiastical hierarchy in the region as a whole.

Among the major sources for this development are the writings of Jerome and Rufinus, which show that Aquileia exercised a form of influence over the Christian communities in the north-western Balkans and north-eastern Italy. Links between Venetia and Jerome’s home town of Stridon are confirmed by his account of how his sister, a wayward lass in her youth, ultimately succumbed to the spiritual life under the influence of Julian, a deacon from Aquileia (Hier., Epp. 6; 7. 4). The nature of this connection was probably informal, since Stridon had its own bishop, albeit a dissolute, inadequate one (Ep. 7. 5). Also within this sphere of influence may have been the Christians of Emona with whom Jerome corresponded in the 370s (Epp. 11-12), and whose bishop attended the Council of Aquileia in 381. The city cast a long-lasting spell: even after his self-imposed eastern exile, Jerome remained in close contact with his friends at Aquileia.18

A major reason for Aquileia’s prominence was its reputation as a centre of spiritual excellence.19 Writing his Chronicle at Constantinople in 380, Jerome

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looked back with fondness on the days he had spent at Aquileia and commented that the clergy there were considered a *chorus beatorum*, a community of the blessed (*Chron.* s. a. 374). This was a gathering of ascetics, whose activities reveal much about the prestige and influence of the see of Aquileia over neighbouring Christian congregations. Apart from the deacon Julian, there was Turranius Rufinus from Concordia, who met and befriended Jerome at Aquileia, long before the days of their acrimonious debate over Origenist theology, and who shared happy memories of life in the *chorus beatorum*.²⁰ Others included Heliodorus, who became bishop of the neighbouring town of Altino before 381; Bonosus, Jerome’s childhood friend; and the future bishop of Aquileia, Chromatius, and his brother, Eusebius. The lifestyle advocated by the *chorus beatorum* influenced neighbouring Christian communities: at Altino, Heliodorus was joined by his nephew, Nepotianus, who gave up a military career for the church, and whose death was later to cause his uncle and Jerome great distress (*Hier. Epp.* 52.4-15; 60.10). Heliodorus’ installation at Altino was mirrored closer to home when Chromatius succeeded Valerian as bishop of Aquileia, probably in 388.

Presiding over the whole community in the 370s, Valerian himself had achieved a position of great prestige: he was ‘papa Valerianus’ to Jerome, ‘Valerian of blessed memory’ to a distraught Rufinus.²¹ This prestige was matched by a loose form of authority. In Asia Minor, Basil of Caesarea rejoiced at Valerian’s piety, and wrote to him as ‘bishop of the Illyrians’ (*Oυαλεριους ἐπισκόπῳ Ἰλλυρίων: Ep.* 91), seeing in him an important agent who could lead Christians in the Balkans back to the creed of Nicaea.²² Basil had received a letter from Valerian, carried to Asia

²¹ *Hier.* Ep. 7.4; *Ruf., Apol. c. Hier.* 1.4.
²² Cf. Basil, *Ep.* 92.2 (to the bishops of Gaul and Italy) announcing a programme designed to stamp out ‘the evil of heresy which spreads from the frontiers of Illyricum to the Thebaid.’ For discussion, see P. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (1994), 299-305.
by a Milanese deacon Sabinus,\textsuperscript{23} making his designation of Valerian particularly interesting, for it is the first formal confirmation that the bishop of Aquileia envisaged for himself a role among the Christian communities beyond the Julian Alps. It helps to explain the designation of Theodore of Aquileia in 314 as ‘ex provincia Dalmatia.’ Since its very foundation, the city of Aquileia had strong connections with north-western Illyricum in terms of trade, social interaction, pagan cults (see pp. 59-60, 145-9); now those links extended to Christianity.

The nature of the bishop of Aquileia’s jurisdiction over western Illyricum is uncertain, but it is unlikely to have been at all formal in the fourth century. Certainly it did not go unchallenged. In the early 360s, Eusebius of Vercelli seems to have engaged in a mission at Sirmium,\textsuperscript{24} while in 378, Ambrose of Milan was already extending his influence into the area when he took an active part in the appointment of Sirmium’s new bishop, Anemius. Neither case, however, represents a permanent erosion of Aquileian interests in the Balkans. Eusebius’ intervention coincided with the episcopate of Fortunatianus who, by his rejection of Athanasius, might have been seen by pro-Nicenes to have abdicated his responsibilities for the region (cf. pp. 204-6). Ambrose’s activities at Sirmium, in the course of a mission to Gratian’s court, are significant primarily as an example of his heavy-handed tactics wherever he went; his hijacking of the council of 381 might be seen as a similar infringement of Valerian’s rights, but one in which the bishop of Aquileia acquiesced.\textsuperscript{25} Certainly, subsequent bishops of Milan could never claim jurisdiction

\textsuperscript{23} Rousseau, Basil, 296-7.

\textsuperscript{24} Altercatio Heracliani p. 136; for commentary, cf. Williams, Ambrose, 66-7.

\textsuperscript{25} Ambrose and Anemius: Paul. Med., V. Ambr. 11. 1. Williams, Ambrose, 122-7, dismisses the entire story on the basis, first, that Paulinus is our only source for the episcopal election, and second, that the other evidence used to support Ambrose’s presence there—Theodoret’s account of a ‘council of Illyricum’ (HE 4. 8-9)—is fictional. That Theodoret’s testimony is wholly untrustworthy is not in doubt, but this does not necessarily undermine the credibility of Paulinus testimony: see McLynn. Ambrose, 88-106, esp. 90-8, for a more convincing reading of these events, which acknowledges that
over the Balkans; instead the area was gradually absorbed into the patriarchate of Aquileia. 26

A similar degree of influence is evident in Aquileia’s role in north-eastern Italy. Heliodorus, a monk of the \textit{chorus beatorum}, was already bishop of Altino by 381, although the degree to which he was in any way a suffragan of Aquileia cannot be determined. That Turranius Rufinus should have joined the \textit{chorus beatorum} suggests that the Christian community in his home town of Concordia was also under the influence of Aquileia, especially bearing in mind that Concordia had an ascetic attraction of its own, the learned, superannuated monk Paul. 27 Such links were put on a more institutional footing when Valerian’s successor, Chromatius, dedicated a \textit{basilica apostolorum} at Concordia, sometime around 400. 28 No bishop of Concordia is known prior to the late-sixth century, so its Christian community was probably dependent on Aquileia until then. Indeed, even when a bishop of Concordia does make an appearance, it is as a suffragan of bishop Helias of Aquileia-Grado. 29 By that time, various other bishops along the Venetian coast and

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29 Cessi, \textit{Origo}, 44.
in the lagoons were also under the jurisdiction of bishop Elias, during whose episcopate the patriarchate of Aquileia was beginning to emerge.30

Moving within the territory of the municipium of Aquileia, it seems that its relationship with neighbouring Christian communities was organised along lines suggesting a parochial structure. At S. Canzian d’Isonzo, ancient Aquae Gradatae, there was a small church by the second half of the fourth century built in honour of the Aquileian martyrs buried there, staffed by deacon, lector and notarius.31 This settlement seems to have been a vicus of Aquileia, so the presence there of a non-episcopal church in honour of Aquileian martyrs suggests a parish under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Aquileia. A similar situation seems to have obtained at Grado, Aquileia’s foreport. The basilica in the Piazza della Vittoria there was built in the fourth century, but no bishop ever resided in the city until the transfer of the Aquileian bishopric to the island in the sixth century. It seems that the church at Grado, like that at S. Canzian d’Isonzo, came under the aegis of the bishops of Aquileia.32

By 381, then, the church of Aquileia lay at the centre of a network of ecclesiastical contacts straddling north-eastern Italy, the Julian Alps and the north-western Balkans. It is necessary, however, to distinguish between two types of leadership exercised by the bishops of Aquileia. One was of a formal—or quasi-formal—nature, reflected in the existence of churches at Grado and S. Canzian d’Isonzo, both within the ancient territory of Aquileia, and perhaps also at Concordia and Altino. The other was more informal, based on the spiritual prestige of the bishops of Aquileia. This seems to have been the basis for the earliest contacts between Aquileia and north-western Illyricum, where it can only be seen to

31 Lizzi, Vescovi, 155-6.
have been replaced by formal authority in the late-sixth and seventh centuries. In every case, it is noticeable that spread of Aquileian influence followed the patterns of existing social networks. Venetia, Histria and the north-western Balkans were areas with which Aquileia had long had contacts: they provided a template, therefore, for the emergence of its diocese and, later, its patriarchate.

(iii) Administration and influence at Vercelli, Trento, Brescia and Milan

Moving westwards into the Po valley, a similar variety of administrative structures and their development towards diocesan structures, can be seen at Vercelli, Brescia, Trento, and, above all, Milan. That Vercelli was the episcopal centre of a number of Christian communities in eastern Piedmont is clear from a letter written to the faithful of Novara, Ivrea and Tortona by Eusebius of Vercelli during his eastern exile (Euseb. Verc., Ep. 2). In the opening address, and at several junctures throughout the letter, Eusebius refers to subordinate clergy who must have been among the personnel who governed the churches of these cities under Eusebius’ overall direction. 33 By 381, however, Tortona had its own bishop, and Novara and Ivrea had theirs by 451 (above pp. 131-6), but, far from this representing the consolidation of Vercelli as a metropolitan see, these changes meant the erosion of Vercelli’s preeminence in eastern Piedmont under pressure from Milan. 34

In eastern Venetia, the churches of Brescia and Trento seem to have exerted some influence over neighbouring congregations. If a ninth century text can be believed, then it would seem that bishop Filastrius of Brescia was responsible for

32 Ibid., 151-9.
33 The letter is addressed ‘Dilectissimis fratribus et satis desideratissimis presbyteris sed et sanctis in fide consistentibus pleibus Vercellensibus, Nouariensibus, Eporediensibus nec non etiam Dertonensibus’; in the course of it, Eusebius refers to Syrus a deacon and Victorinus and exorcist (at § 1.2), and a priest called Tegrinus (at § 6.2). He concludes by forwarding the salutations of ‘nostri qui mecum sunt presbyteri et diacones’ (§ 11.2).
34 McLynn, Ambrose, 285-6.
ordaining a deacon at Bergamo. Such an action is impossible to verify, but it is in accord with what else is known of Filastrius’ activities. Apart from his pungent writings against heresy (above pp. 179-81), Filastrius, even before he became bishop, was active beyond his city when he attempted (and failed) to foment internal opposition against Auxentius of Milan (below pp. 218-9). Yet these activities illustrate nothing more than informal connections between the Brescian church and other Christian communities in its vicinity, and by the time of Ambrose’s episcopate, they were turned in favour of Milanese interests.

A surer picture emerges from the activities of the church of Trento in the Alto Adige at the end of the fourth century. Sometime around 397, three clerics sent out by bishop Vigilius of Trento died when violence erupted between pagans and Christians in the Val di Non, northwest of the city. It is most probable that these clerics were sent out to minister to a pre-existing Christian community, and their activities represent a formalisation of interrelationships between the bishopric of Trento and Christian congregations in surrounding valleys. It is interesting to note that the clerical structure of Vigilius’ agents in the Val di Non—one was a deacon, another a lector, the third a porter (see below p. 237)—finds an almost direct analogy at S. Canzian d’Isonzo, where there probably existed a parochial structure under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Aquileia, and in the subordinate clergy whom Eusebius of Vercelli mentions at Ivrea, Novara and Tortona. Such a similarity, taken together with the clear interest of Vigilius in the mission to the Val di Non, suggests the existence of a program which sought to bind the Christian communities of the Alto Adige together under Tridentine leadership. At the same time, however,

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35 Lanzoni, Diocesi, 573.
36 McLynn, Ambrose, 221, on the Brescian Benivolus active among Ambrose’s supporters at Milan. Cf. Lizzi, Vescovi, 97-109, on the installation of Gaudentius at Brescia, in which Ambrose played an important role.
37 For full discussion of these events and the relevant source materials, see below pp. 234-9.
the activities of Ambrose were bringing Trento under Milanese sway (Ambr., Ep. 19), and shortly after their deaths, relics of the Val di Non martyrs made their way to Milan where they were interred by Ambrose’s successor, Simplicianus (Paul. Med. V. Ambr. 52).

The extent to which Milan had developed any form of regional supremacy in the early to mid-fourth century is difficult to judge because of the distortion caused by Ambrose’s energetic efforts at building up the authority of the Milanese church from the moment he was elected. There are, however, a few indicators that, already by 374, Milan was perceived to have some sort of important role in the region’s ecclesiastical politics, by the imperial power at least. Merocles of Milan attended both of Constantine’s councils seeking to resolve the Donatist dispute, and on both occasions he seems to have been summoned at the initiative of the emperor himself (see pp. 159-64) It is probable, but unproveable, that Merocles and Constantine met at Milan when the new Christian emperor of the west and his eastern colleague, Licinius, promulgated their directive on religious toleration in the city in 313 (above pp. 163-4).

The first direct evidence for a meeting between an emperor and a bishop of Milan comes with Athanasius’ audience with Constans in 342, which was attended by bishop Protasius (see above pp. 75-6). Thirteen years later, Constantius II chose to convene a council at Milan as part of his program to engender unity in the church throughout the empire. When bishop Dionysius, albeit under the influence of Eusebius of Vercelli, proved obstinate, he was not only ousted, but replaced by the more pliable Auxentius. Constantius’ ecclesiastical policy in the west had been

39 Nevertheless, bishop Vigilius sought to maintain a certain degree of Tridentine initiative, as is clear from the letters on the subject he wrote to Simplicianus and John Chrysostom: Lizzi, Vescovi, 81-6.
marked by a concern to ensure that homoiousian bishops were installed in, and their opponents removed from, important sees: thus Maximinus of Trier was exiled and his role devolved on the shoulders of Saturninus of Arles; similarly, Liberius of Rome was forced from his throne and replaced with the deacon Felix and a watchful guard was installed nearby with Epictetus at Civitavecchia. 40

The interest shown by both Constantine and Constantius II in the church of Milan surely attests what they saw as its importance. Protasius’ presence at Athanasius’ meeting with Constans helps to explain why this was so: the bishop of Milan, living at a city regularly occupied by the court, proved to be a useful intermediary between the emperor and other ecclesiastics, thus giving him a certain prestige outside his city. Yet there are limitations to this sort of influence. It was only of interest to those actually seeking an imperial audience, many of whom would have come, as Athanasius did, from beyond northern Italy. Therefore it might not reflect actual prestige or importance within northern Italy itself—certainly, Eusebius of Vercelli’s ripping of the pen from Dionysius’ hand at the council of 355 does not suggest that the bishop of Milan engendered any special respect. Within the city, moreover, the presence of the emperor, as will be shown, could be as disruptive as it was advantageous to a bishop’s authority (see pp. 221-2).

Details about Milan’s relationship with other north-Italian sees before Ambrose’s election is almost entirely concerned with efforts to remove Auxentius by those who saw him as a heretical interloper (above pp. 176-7). Only one throwaway line in Ambrose indicates that Milan had any sort of hierarchical position before 374. Discussing the inventio of Gervasius and Protasius in summer 386, Ambrose describes Milan as sterile of martyrs of its own, and had hitherto

40 Constantius’ attitude towards bishops was dominated by a concern to have likeminded bishops occupying the churches of provincial metropoleis: see Ch. Pietri, ‘La politique de Constance II: un premier “césaropapisme” ou l’imitatio Constantini?’, EAC 34 (1989), 134–7, 153-65.
imported relics from other centres. These sacred imports included apostolic relics from Rome, but also the bones of Nabor and Felix, in whose shrine the bodies of Gervasius and Protasius were unearthed.\footnote{For full discussion of these events and their sources, see Appendix 1. s. v. Milan.} By the end of the fifth century, Milanese tradition held that Nabor and Felix had been brought from nearby Lodi by Maternus, bishop of Milan between Merocles and Protasius. It is impossible to test the reliability of this account. The use of other cities' relics as a way of extending Milanese ecclesiastical influence is known from the end of the century, as when Ambrose used the relics of Agricola and Vitalis, which he had discovered at Bologna, to extend his influence.\footnote{McLynn, \textit{Ambrose}, 347-50.} For something similar to have happened under Maternus would be a precocious development indeed, since Ambrose's manipulation of the cult of martyrs to bolster his own supremacy seems to have been in conscious imitation of the policies of Pope Damasus of Rome (366-84).\footnote{P. Brown, \textit{The Cult of the Saints} (1981), 36-7.} Certainly, Lodi was under Milanese jurisdiction later in the century: its first known bishop, Bassianus, was one of Ambrose's henchmen at Aquileia in 381, and proved to be a devoted disciple of the Milanese bishop to the end (Paul. Med., V. Ambr. 47).

That the tradition of the \textit{inventio} of Nabor and Felix was embroidered later to justify Milanese jurisdiction over its neighbour cannot be ruled out, but this does not necessarily mean that they were not unearthed at Lodi. Indeed, a close connection between the churches of Milan and Lodi prior to Bassianus' election cannot be disqualified: Lodi lay on the main road south from Milan towards Rome, and links between them are evident in the social networks of the early empire (see pp. 63-4 above). Bearing in mind how such networks have been shown to have influenced interrelationships between the churches of Aquileia and Vercelli and their neighbours, it provides a likely circumstance, if not proof, for a similar interaction between the congregations of Milan and Lodi in the early and mid-fourth century.
The crucial period in the aggrandisement of Milan was the episcopate of Ambrose. Any achievements of his predecessor Auxentius have been largely consigned to oblivion, although his cooperation with homoiousian and homoian bishops in the Balkans, such as Ursacius and Valens, provided Ambrose with a target for his pro-Nicene policies in the early years of his episcopate. Twice in that period—the investiture of Anemius of Sirmium in 378 and the Council of Aquileia in 381—Ambrose actively intervened in the affairs of Illyrian churches. Ambrose’s connection with Illyricum predated his episcopal election. For some years he had served on the staff of the praetorian prefect at Sirmium (Paul. Med., V. Ambr. 5). This is significant, because it indicates one source of the skills Ambrose used to create a community of bishops in northern Italy. His deftness as an administrator was enhanced by his holding of the governorship of Aemilia and Liguria in the years leading up to his election (ibid.). Ambrose’s preeminence among the bishops of northern Italy was in part achieved by negotiation, just as his consular jurisdiction over his province had depended on negotiation with local communities and their leaders.

His skills as an administrator were intimately connected with his cultural outlook. Brought up on the fringes of the Roman élite, Ambrose used the genteel arts of aristocratic amicitia to cultivate friendship and loyalty among his fellow bishops in northern Italy.\(^{44}\) Added to these abilities was that quality at once intangible and central to his success: his dazzling personality.\(^{45}\) By investing his fellow bishops, advising them on matters practical and spiritual, and presenting them with gifts (often relics), Ambrose constructed a friendship network which welded the disparate Christian communities of northern Italy into a cohesive unit.\(^{46}\) This group made its first impressive appearance at the Council of Aquileia in 381.

\(^{44}\) Lizzi, Vescovi, 28-36.
\(^{45}\) The classic description is Aug., Conf. 5. 13. 23-14. 24; cf. McLynn, Ambrose, 239-40.
\(^{46}\) For full details see Appendix 3.
where bishops from various sees in Venetia and the Po valley reiterated Ambrose's condemnation of Palladius of Ratiaria and Secundianus of Singidunum. Ambrose's expansion of Milanese influence often entailed the erosion of other bishops' spheres of influence. Thus the Christian community of Tortona, which had been under the episcopal jurisdiction of Eusebius of Vercelli in the 350s, appears not only as a bishopric for the first time in 381, but its bishop remained a loyal ally of Ambrosian Milan, such as in the anti-Jovinianist synod at Milan in 392/3 (see Appendix 3).

Yet Ambrose could never assume that his leadership would remain unchallenged. The tentative tone he adopted in the long letter (Ep. 63) he wrote to persuade the Christians of Vercelli to elect his preferred candidate as bishop demonstrates that Ambrose could not assume his recommendation would be accepted without complaint.  

47 Outspoken criticism of Ambrose's methods is not heard from northern Italy, but Palladius of Ratiaria was in no doubt as to the illegality of many of the bishop of Milan's actions.  

48 What is clear from northern Italy is that Ambrose's influence was by no means consistent. A comparison of the compositions of the councils of Aquileia in 381 and Milan in 392/3 is instructive: at Aquileia there had been a strong contingent from Venetian sees, but some ten years later, the bulk of the bishops at the Milanese synod came from centres in Aemilia and Liguria (see Appendix 3). This suggests that Ambrose's influence was strongest over bishoprics in the hinterland of Milan. Even here, as the case of the disputed election at Vercelli shows, Ambrose's position depended less on any formal conception of Milanese jurisdiction than on the acceptance of his judgements by bishops captivated by the allure of his episcopal demeanour. From the very beginning of his episcopate, Ambrose had achieved his prominence in northern Italy by blending the skills he had acquired as a member of the Roman élite, as an official in the imperial administration and as someone well placed to observe the activities

of that most dynamic of fourth century popes, Damasus I. This last point raises an important issue: the extent to which the churches of northern Italy were influenced by the ascending power of the bishops of Rome.

(iv) The shadow of St Peter

The Roman church has been glimpsed several times in our narrative, convening councils which north Italian bishops attended and providing templates for the activities of men like Ambrose. Yet because there is no evidence that the bishops of northern Italy submitted themselves to Roman ecclesiastical jurisdiction, it will be worth pausing to consider the nature of their relationship with the successors of St Peter. Contacts between them were largely limited to the participation of north-Italians in councils convened at Rome, but it is also clear that some of the personnel of north-Italian churches had close links with Rome, and after Constantius II’s intervention in western ecclesiastical affairs, the religious politics of Rome and northern Italy became increasingly intertwined.

Assemblies of bishops at Rome had, since the mid-third century, demonstrated the influence, though not necessarily the authority, of the papacy over bishoprics in central and southern Italy, Sardinia, Sicily and north Africa (cf. Eus., HE 6. 43. 3). Such gatherings reflected common interests and the ability of popes to summon other bishops; and in the fourth century, Rome proved to be a magnet for Christians from around the Tyrrhenian sea. Together these factors must have influenced Constantine’s decision that the first of his councils aimed at resolving the schism in the African church should be convened under Miltiades of Rome, and which was attended by the bishops of Rimini, Faenza and Milan. Their presence there does not indicate that their sees lay within the bishop of Rome’s jurisdiction:

49 Africa and Italy: Pietri, Roma Christiana, 729-48, 773-6, 888-909. Note also the composition of the Roman clergy: both Lucifer of Cagliari and Eusebius of Vercelli, who began their careers at Rome, were originally from Sardinia: Ch. Pietri, ‘Appendice prosopographique à Roma Christiana (311-440)’, MEFRA 89 (1977), 393.
rather, their attendance probably depended on the initiative of Constantine himself (above pp. 159-66). Once established, however, this connection proved to be a lasting one, and thereafter the bishops of northern Italy were regular players in papal dramas, occasionally taking centre stage.

In large measure, the continuation of the connections established under Constantine was fostered by the regular presence of the imperial court in northern Italy, especially in the 340s and 350s. Not only did this prove an attraction for easterners like Athanasius, but also for the papacy, which dispatched a regular stream of legates to the region in these years, particularly at times of tension over doctrinal affairs, in which the bishops of Rome saw themselves—frequently despite all evidence to the contrary—as key players. Hence, for example, a certain Eusebius came north, at some indeterminate time in the 340s: he never returned to Rome, ending up instead as the celebrated bishop of Vercelli; and Vincentius of Capua, one of the most active papal agents in these years, seems to have been a frequent visitor to northern Italy.

As in so much else, the western expedition of Constantius II, and particularly his alliance with Valens of Mursa and Ursacius of Singidunum, transformed the relationship. As part of his effort to get the important western regional sees to adhere to his doctrinal definition, he came into conflict with Pope Liberius. Having attempted unsuccessfully a number of times to get Liberius to sign the decrees of the Council of Sirmium of 351, Constantius resorted to force, arrested the Pope and interviewed him at Milan in late 355. When Liberius' obstinace persisted, Constantius exiled him to Thrace and replaced him with a Roman deacon, Felix.

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51 Pietri, 'Appendice', 393.
52 Pietri, 'Appendice', 373-4.
After nearly two years exile, Liberius capitulated; that he did so was entirely due to Fortunianus of Aquileia.

Fortunianus’ dealings with or on behalf of Liberius are of particular interest for the developing relationship between Rome and the bishops of northern Italy. By 355, Fortunianus had been bishop of Aquileia for more than a decade, and in that time had proved to be a key player in the Christological controversy insofar as it impinged on northern Italy, primarily as host to the fugitive Athanasius. At Aquileia, the cross-currents of Christological politics converged in part because of the city’s geographical position. That Constantius found support for his policies among bishops from the Balkans can only have increased Fortunianus’ interest in the dispute, bearing in mind Aquileian ecclesiastical connections with the regions beyond the Julian Alps. In 347, for example, Ursacius and Valens, returning home after a council at Rome, encountered Athanasius’ envoy Moses at Aquileia, while he was en route between Trier and Alexandria (Hil. Pict., Coll. Ant. Par. B. H. 8). During the usurpation of Magnentius, it seems that Valens and Ursacius were responsible for fomenting violent dissension in Fortunianus’ congregation (ibid. B. II. 2. 4). After the Council of Sirmium in 351, Liberius and the Italian episcopate had requested a council to be held at Aquileia (ibid. B. VII. 2. 6). At the same time, Liberius was in close contact with Fortunianus, of whom he plainly held a high opinion (Liberius, Ep. ad Euseb. Verc. 3. 2).

For reasons that can never be known, but which equally were not without parallel (Athan., Apol. Const. 27), Fortunianus gave up his allegiance to Athanasius around the time of the Council of Milan in 355, and, unlike Eusebius of Vercelli and Dionysius of Milan, retained his see. Little is known of his doctrinal beliefs, although it is most probable that Fortunianus submitted to the Christology
defined at Sirmium in 351. It was at this time that he proved to be of greatest use to Liberius. With his exile to Thrace, Liberius was in special need of a trustworthy intermediary with the emperor. Before 355, he had used Eusebius of Vercelli and Lucifer of Cagliari, but after the Council of Milan, neither of these was available, so Liberius fell back on Fortunatianus. It was Fortunatianus who brought a letter to the eastern bishops in which Liberius repudiated Athanasius from communion with Rome (Hil. Pict., Coll. Ant. Par. B. III. 1-2), and according to Jerome, it was through the influence of the bishop of Aquileia that the pope succumbed to Constantius' demands (Hier., de vir. ill. 97).

Fortunatianus never appears as anything more than a shadowy figure in the sources concerning Liberius' capitulation, but his role can be compared with that of Vincentius of Capua and with Ursacius and Valens in the Balkans, to whom Liberius wrote, petitioning them to intercede personally on his behalf with the emperor (ibid., B. VII. 10-11). Vincentius, Ursacius and Valens were, like Fortunatianus, prominent western bishops who had rejected Athanasius and accepted the decisions at Sirmium. To be sure, Vincentius had been a suffragan of Liberius, but the same was certainly not true of Ursacius or Valens, as indeed it was no longer true of Vincentius when Liberius wrote to him from exile. Fortunatianus was never addressed as a suffragan: even before the Council of Milan and its sequel, Liberius called him 'frater' and 'coepiscopus noster' (Ep. ad. Euseb. Verc. 3.2.1).

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53 This much is implied in Fortunatianus' willingness to carry to Constantius a letter in which Liberius asserted his acceptance of the creed of Sirmium (Hil. Pict. Coll. Ant. Par. B. VII. 8). Cf. Hier., Ep. 7.6, claiming that, under Valerian, and through the efforts of clergy like Chromatius, Jovinus and Eusebius, 'ab urbe vestra Armani quondam dogmatis virus exclusum est.' This implies that Fortunatianus had accepted the Sirmian creed. For Jerome's equivocal attitude to Fortunatianus, see V. C. De Clerq, 'Fortunatien d'Aquileá', DHGE 17 (1971), 1184. Athanasius, Apol. Const. 27, asserts, however, that Fortunatianus was forced into this position.

54 For these events, see above all: L. Duchesne, 'Libère et Fortunatien', MEFRA 28 (1908), 31-78.
Throughout his dealings with Liberius, Fortunatianus never appears as anything less than an equal; above all he appears as a friend. In 357, it was he who brought Liberius’ first letter to the eastern bishops and when that failed to convince, brought a more strident one to Constantius. In the intervening period, the two bishops must have discussed what Liberius must do to regain favour with the emperor. The second letter, with its acceptance of the creed of 351, was the result. This conclusion fits well with Jerome’s later condemnation of Fortunatianus as the man responsible for Liberius’ surrender to heresy.55

The decision to which Fortunatianus directed Liberius was to have long standing consequences. It yielded a schism at Rome, where another pope, Felix, had been installed by Constantius and accepted by many of the clergy. In 366, when Liberius died, the election of a successor provoked bloody violence in Rome itself (Amm. Marc. 27. 3. 12-13). From a north-Italian point of view, it seems that Fortunatianus’ actions pushed him to the sidelines of ecclesiastical affairs. We hear nothing further about him, or his see, and it is not until his successor Valerian that Aquileia once more appears as an important regional bishopric (above pp. 191-2). The events of 355-7, however, meant that the affairs of the papacy and the churches of northern Italy had become intertwined, and they were not to be unravelled during the episcopate of Liberius’ successor Damasus. In particular, Damasus was concerned with Auxentius’ continued tenure of the see of Milan, despite all efforts to remove him (see below pp. 218-9). In collusion with a number of north-Italian bishops, among them Valerian of Aquileia, Damasus convened a council at Rome sometime between 369 and 372, at which Auxentius was condemned.56 Yet his removal now, as when Hilary of Poitiers and Eusebius had tried some years earlier.

55 Hier., de. Vir. Ill. 97: ‘Fortunatianus . . . in hoc habetur detestabilis, quod Libenum, Romanae urbis episcopum, pro fide ad exilium pergentem primus sollicitavit et fregit et ad subscriptionem haereseos compulit.’

56 For this council see: Pietri, Roma Christiana, 733-6; Williams, Ambrose, 80-3.
would have required the intervention of Valentinian I, an emperor not given to an active role in theological politics. So Auxentius remained in place until his death in 374. Only with the advent of Gratian, his gradual subscription to the theology advocated by Ambrose at Milan, and his willingness to use imperial means to secure unity in the Church, was the decision of the bishop of Rome capable of being imposed on northern Italy, as the case of Urbanus of Parma in 378 would show. But if to some Urbanus’ deposition marks Damasus’ final achievement of jurisdiction over Italian churches, including those of the north, it also marks its high point. For the rest of the century, the bishops of Rome would have to contend with the rising power of Ambrose, a bishop created in Damasus’ own image.

This must have seemed a curious development to the bishops of Rome, for Ambrose was a willing servant of Damasus’ ambitions for the papacy. In the early years of his episcopate, Ambrose built an enormous cruciform church, inspired by the Apostoleion at Constantinople, outside the Porta Romana of Milan. In it he interred the relics of the apostles, among whom were SS. Peter and Paul. Damasus had fostered their cult as part of his expansionist plan, so their installation in a Milanese church, especially one on the road to Rome, symbolised the connections between the two cities and their bishoprics. But if Ambrose could be seen from a Roman perspective as ‘our Ambrose’ (Hier., Ep. 22. 22), the image proved largely irrelevant to his fellow bishops in northern Italy. With his consolidation of Milanese preeminence in northern Italy, Ambrose had created a communion of bishops which looked to him, not Rome, for leadership. Even after

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57 Thus Pietri, *Roma Christiana*, 741-5.
58 Pietri, *Roma Christiana*, 748-54, 782-6, 897-901.
Ambrose's death, the bishops of Rome remained on the periphery of the world view of the north-Italian episcopate. When Vigilius of Trento sought to promote the cult of the martyrs of the Val di Non, he wrote to Simplicianus of Milan and John Chrysostom at Constantinople, but not to the bishop of Rome. 62

(v) Summary

The period between the Councils of Rome in 313 and Aquileia in 381 had seen a gradual transformation of the overall administrative structures in the north-Italian Church. At the beginning of the period, it is impossible to see anything more elaborate than a loose regional affiliation between various congregations, with or without bishops, because of geographical proximity. By the third quarter of the century, a more formal kind of authority was being exerted by bishops over Christian communities in their cities' hinterlands, as is clearest at Vercelli and Aquileia. Neither these local spheres of authority nor the broader areas of influence were inviolable. By the end of the century, the jurisdiction of Vercelli over neighbouring churches had eroded, while Aquileian influence over the Balkans had been challenged by the activities there of Eusebius and Ambrose.

Much of this serves to emphasise the importance of a bishop's force of character. Eusebius and Ambrose had this aplenty, and exploited it as a way of extending their theological influence, or, in Ambrose's case, their episcopal authority. The importance of a bishop's background is particularly apparent in the case of Ambrose. Without the expertise gained as an imperial administrator or the dazzling model of Damasus to follow, it is hard to imagine the new bishop of Milan acquiring the leadership he had so obviously attained by 381. Determination and imagination were also important, as is clear from Ambrose's fearlessness even when dealing with the imperial court. Perhaps the greatest testimony to the role of

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61 McLynn, Ambrose, 276-81.
62 Lizzi, Vescovi, 93-4.
which the city’s ecclesiastical jurisdiction waned after the great bishop’s death in 397. Ambrose’s influence had stretched as far as Florence and Sirmium; that of his and Simplicianus’ successors went little further than the central plains of the Po valley (see Epilogue).

If the background of the bishops was important, so too were the long standing social networks of the cities in which they preached. It is undeniable that the growth of regional spheres of influence followed the template laid down by centuries of Roman administrative and economic networks. This Aquileia emerged as the leading centre of Christian communities in eastern Venetia and the northwestern Balkans, while Vercelli’s church had early links with other congregations in the cities of eastern Piedmont. This is a timely reminder of the importance of local contexts for the development of the north-Italian church as a whole in this period. Each local conglomeration of Christianity emerged with its own distinct traditions, which would often defy the efforts of those interested in homogenising them. Thus some of the most fundamental aspects of Christian life differed from city to city. To take one example, the baptismal liturgies of Aquileia and Milan were as different from each other, in terms of the order of rituals, as they were from the ceremonies of the Roman church.63 The picture that emerges, therefore, is one which withstands any attempt at simplistic categorisation. Administrative jurisdictions in northern Italy were still fluid and would remain so well into the fifth and later centuries.

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The mutability of regional episcopal hierarchies was mirrored at a more local level in terms of how bishops functioned as leaders in their own communities. Again this was a development which was transformed utterly in the uncertain times of the fifth century, but the fourth century shows bishops negotiating their status with the other power brokers in the cities of northern Italy. That Christian congregations formed a distinct community within north-Italian urban society is clear, but this did not simplify the definition of a bishop’s power. Rather, they found themselves engaged in competition with other claimants, both secular and clerical, for authority over their congregations.

(i) **Notions and expressions of episcopal power**

The most obvious manifestation of episcopal power is evident in the literary corpus—albeit meagre—of the bishops of northern Italy. Zeno of Verona’s *Tractatus*; Fortunatianus of Aquileia’s *Gospel Commentaries*; Filastrius of Brescia’s book on heresy; Eusebius of Vercelli’s *de Trinitate* (if indeed it is by him); the various letters they penned: all of them, whether aimed primarily at their congregations or not, were directed to the explanation of Christian truth. Until the beginning of Jerome’s and Rufinus’ literary and exegetical activities, it was the

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64 Note, for example, Zeno of Verona’s designation of his flock as the *aethertiae gentes* (*Tract.* 1. 38. 1); this suggests he is distinguishing them from less salubrious *gentes*. For discussion of who they were, see below pp. 273-82

65 It was long assumed that of its twelve books, only the first seven were actually by Eusebius. Doubt was cast on his authorship of even these by Manlio Simonetti in ‘Qualche osservazione sul De Trinitate attribuito a Eusebio di Vercelli’, *Rivista di Cultura Classica e Medieval* 5 (1963), 386-93 (which includes, at pp. 386-7, a summary of the complex textual transmission of the work). Recently, however, Williams, *Ambrose*, 239-42, has put the case anew for Eusebian authorship. It is of little importance for my argument here whether or not it is a genuinely Eusebian work: the surviving letters of Eusebius, and the accounts of his action, are enough to show that he saw himself as an arbiter of doctrine.
bishops of northern Italy who were the arbiters of orthodox doctrine. Sermons, such as those by Zeno, and like the ones upon which Fortunatianus’ *Gospel Commentaries* probably drew, were performed by the bishops in their crucial role as interpreters of Holy Scripture.

Such an activity is mentioned by Zeno, whose spare references to the bishop’s role in the Church are the most complete articulation of how the north-Italian episcopate envisaged its role before Ambrose’s voluminous writings on the topic. He clearly distinguishes between the bishop and the lesser clergy just as he does between the catechumens and the baptised:

The day of salvation is here, generous with every kind of gift (*munera*) to all who participate in the sacred offices of the Lord. For it grants reward to holy priests, advancement of promotion to the lower orders of the ministry (*Tract.* 1.6).

In Zeno’s concept of episcopal office it is exegetical and liturgical functions which demonstrate the position of the bishop among the congregation. His writings make frequent reference to explanations of the biblical readings which the congregation

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66 The first discussion of the texts, which offer commentaries on Matt. 21: 1-11 and 23: 34-9, was by A. Wilmart, ‘Deux expositions d’un évêque Fortunat sur l’Évangile’, *RB* 32 (1920), 160-74. De Clerq, ‘Fortunatien’, 1184-5, notes the place of their Gospel texts in the Aquileian liturgical year. As they survive, they quote a line of biblical text, followed by a short explanation. Thus they seem like notes, either derived from, or preparatory to, the delivery of exegesis while preaching. That Matthew was a popular text in the Aquileian liturgy is confirmed by the survival of seventeen *Tractatus in Evangelium Matthaei* by Fortunatianus’ second successor, Chromatius (*CCL* 9 [1957], 389-442) which follows an identical structure, although it does not discuss the same passages.


has just heard; the bishop is the *predicator*, the *doctor legis* who interprets the two Testaments (*Tract. 1. 37. 9-10*). For Zeno, this exegetical activity was a regular duty, as part of daily services during which the eucharist was received and sermons preached. At certain points in the year, the position of the bishop was particularly prominent, such as when he led the catechumens through the rites of baptism. The bishop was the intercessor between the human and the divine, as ordained by God:

> by his own will he planted . . . the Mother Church, and tending it with the priestly office, and making it fruitful with holy waterings (*pia potatione*), he trained it to bear an abundant harvest hanging from the fertile branches (*Tract. 1. 10B. 2*).

It was these liturgical functions that made the bishop’s role most obvious. In everything specifically Christian which Zeno’s congregation did, their bishop was there to preside over them, and to explain how the events of the biblical drama were mirrored in the courses of their lives, especially at moments of crisis and resolution, such as baptism, death or exorcism.

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70. Zeno’s ideas are expressed as profoundly allegorical readings of the Gospel. Commenting on the Parables of the Kingdom, he equated the role of the *praedicator* with that of ‘the scribe who has been taught for the Kingdom of Heaven [who] is like the head of the household [pater familias] offering what is new and old from his treasure’ (*Tract. 1. 37. 9* on Mt. 13: 52). Then, moving on to the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the bishop is like the innkeeper who accepts two denarii to care for the injured man, for the coins are the two Testaments which guarantee good health and salvation (1. 37. 10 on Lk. 10: 29-37).

71. *Tract. 1. 37. 10*: ‘in ecclesia, quo pecora divina succedunt, venerabili sacramento susceptum cotidianis praedicationum medicaminibus curat’; cf. 2. 6. 11: ‘Haec sunt, dilectissimi fratres, charismata uestra, lae uirtutes, quibus Hierusalem spiritualis instruitur, quibus sacrae orationis iste locus nouus et populus cotidie Christi dei et domini nostri prouidentia comparatur.’


This exegetical and liturgical prominence accorded the bishop was reflected in ritual. That this was an early development is clear from the longitudinal halls of Theodore’s double church at Aquileia. Here, the visual articulation of the building’s internal spaces did much to emphasize the prominence of the clergy in the church, and the supremacy of Theodore among them. The area where Theodore and his clergy would have presided over the liturgy, at the eastern end of both halls, was separated by transenae. As is clear from the mosaic pavement, which was designed to take these marble screens and their supporting jambs (see figs. 7-8), this delineation of the floor space was part of the original plan of the church, showing that already by the time of Constantine, the bishops of Aquileia had established their preeminence within their communities. Here too there may have been an altar on which Theodore would have prepared and blessed the offerings for the eucharist.

With Fortunatianus’ rebuilding of the complex, the ceremonial significance of the bishop was given increased emphasis: in the middle of the nave, a division of the mosaic pavement set aside a central, longitudinal strip of floor leading from the door of the church to the raised dais of the altar and sanctuary. Further renovation of the building enhanced this architectural feature. In the early fifth century, some two-thirds of this central strip was raised as a solea: now the preeminence of the bishop was emphasised on his entry by his elevated physical position in the procession.

Theodore’s identity and prominence within the Aquileian communion was indelibly stamped on the building by this articulation of its internal space, and the visual message of its mosaics served to emphasise his position. Within the

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partitioned area of the southern hall, the mosaic decoration proclaimed the central role of the bishop in salvation: an enormous seascape, depicting the story of Jonah, symbolised the resurrection and its earthly counterpart, redemption through baptism.\textsuperscript{77} It was Theodore, moreover, who was identified above all as the builder of the church. There were two mosaic acclamations of his activity.\textsuperscript{78} That in the northern hall announced that his reconstruction of the building represented an extension of the complex as a whole (see below p. 249-50). More impressively, the \textit{clipeus} in the Jonah seascape in the southern hall not only acclaims Theodore in a standard formula,\textsuperscript{79} but accords him alone the honour of having constructed the church.\textsuperscript{80} Theodore knew well how to appropriate the visual language of power to emphasises his position in society. In the \textit{clipeus}, his name was crowned by the Chi-Rho symbol, an association which can be paralleled in a number of fourth and fifth century contexts.\textsuperscript{81} These dedicatory acclamations set Theodore in the tradition of secular patronage and munificence, where the position of a patron’s name on a


\textsuperscript{80} Although the assistance of God and the flock are mentioned, both verbs are singular and emphasise the bishop’s preeminent role in building the church: ‘Theodore felix adiuuante Deo omnipotente et poenmio caelitus tibi traditum omnia baeate fecisti et glorise dedicasti.’

\textsuperscript{81} See esp. P. Brown, \textit{Authority and the Sacred} (1995), 13-14., for its use on the Hunting Plate of the Seuso Treasure. It is also used on imperial monuments and artefacts: the column of Arcadius in Constantinople; the diptych of Probus showing Honorius; the Geneva missorium depicting Valentinian I or II where, significantly, the Chi-Rho fills the nimbus around the emperor’s head (compare the Hinton St Mary mosaic from Dorset, now in the British Museum). On these, cf. S. G. MacCormack, \textit{Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity} (1981), 57-9, 204-5, 221.
building served to identify him (or her) as a prominent citizen. Together with the Chi-Rho, a symbol of Christian power, they identified Theodore as the leader of his congregation. A similar phenomenon can be seen at Milan, early in Ambrose's episcopate. The basilica outside the western walls in which he interred the relics of Gervasius and Protasius had become known as the basilica Ambrosiana already by the early 380s. This name was not imposed by the bishop, but was a popular designation attesting the preeminence of Ambrose among Milanese Christians.

(ii) Popular acclaim and local competition

Yet neither Theodore nor Ambrose were without their local rivals, whether clerical or secular. As the position of bishop became invested with ever more power and prestige, so it was absorbed into the traditional rivalries and contingencies of local society. Theodore's acclamations and statements of his role as patron were themselves embedded in the etiquette of civic politics, and it would not be unsurprising to find him challenged. Other inscriptions in the mosaics of his church show that there were already other powers within the Aquileian church. Towards the eastern end of the north hall there is another acclamation: 'Cyriace vibas' (fig. 11). This form of acclamation can be paralleled elsewhere in northern Italy. at Padua. The floor of the Christian building excavated near the ancient civic centre (see pp. 121-2) was covered by a mosaic in which there was an inscription (fig. 10):

IN HAC
EVTHER
I DEVS TE C
VM TVIS
SERVET


83 Ambr., Ep. 22. 2: ‘in basilicam quam appellant Ambrosiana.’
There are two different acclamations here, and they are distinguished by size and the use of different colours of tesseræ. The main body of the inscription comprises lines 2-5 which are in black tesseræ, reading ‘Eutheri Deus te cum tuis servet’. The first and last lines of the inscription are in smaller letters and are made from red tesseræ, reading ‘in hac vivas’. In both its appearance and form, the inscription is comparable to those in the Theodorean halls at Aquileia. Indeed, the formulae ‘vivæ’ or ‘vivæ in Deo’ were common throughout the Latin west on items such as Christian sarcophagi and metalwork. Thus the examples from Aquileia and Padua show that Theodore, Cyriacus and Eutherius were manipulating a Christian language of power to establish their prominence in their communities. What Cyriacus’ inscription—and probably also that of Eutherius—shows is that other members of the community were willing to use these forms to put themselves in positions of eminence, potentially challenging the bishop’s monopoly on authority within the Christian congregation.

Close to the acclamation of Cyriacus in the Theodorean north hall there is another inscription, this time proclaiming the donation of money to pay for part of the mosaic pavement: ‘IANVARI[VS ... |I DE DEI DONO V[OVIT] |P • DCCCLXX|... |’

84 This description of the mosaic based on personal inspection in the Museo agli Eremitani in Padua. For further analysis of this mosaic, with full bibliography, see Porta, ‘Mosaici paleocristiani’, 233-5, with figs. 2-3 illustrating the mosaic (in black and white); and J.-P. Caillet, L’évergetisme monumental chrétien en Italie et à ses marges (1993), 101-


86 It is impossible to know who Eutherus was, but the formula adapted in the mosaic (te cum suis) is similar to those used in other north Italian churches, where patrons use the formula cum suis to indicate that their donation is made on behalf of their family also. This might imply that Eutherus was a private individual rather than a member of the Paduan clergy.
Ianuarius' identity cannot be established with certainty, other than that he was a private individual in the Aquileian congregation.\textsuperscript{87} This donation was extremely generous, one of the largest known.\textsuperscript{88} The style of Ianuarius' donation was not unique to northern Italy, but became particularly widespread there. During the fourth and fifth centuries, clerical and secular patrons of north Italian churches were using such payments for mosaic floors as a means of displaying their position in Christian society at Concordia, Emona (the baptistery and portico), Grado (Piazza della Vittoria), Trieste (via Madonna del Mare), Verona (beneath the Duomo), Vicenza (SS. Felice e Fortunato).\textsuperscript{89} At Aquileia itself it was used not only in the Theodorean church, but also at the Basilica di Monastero, while it has been suggested that the various portrait panels incorporated in the pavement of the southern Theodorean hall represent patrons of the local community.\textsuperscript{90}

Inscriptions recording such donations point to one way in which the Church was being absorbed into north Italian local society. Another was the rising importance of urban crowds in the region's ecclesiastical affairs.\textsuperscript{91} Again, there are only tantalising glimpses of this activity prior to Ambrose's episcopate, and what little there is focuses on Milan under Auxentius. The first instance comes at the Council of Milan in 355, where word of the rough treatment of bishop Dionysius provoked such popular indignation that the conclusion of the synod had to take

\textsuperscript{87} S. Stucchi, 'Le basiliche paleocristiane di Aquileia', \textit{RAC} 33-34 (1947-8), 175-82, esp. 182 n. 1, proposed that this Ianuarius was the same as the fifth century Aquileian bishop of that name. This is impossible, since the post-Theodorean north hall was constructed under Fortunatianus in the mid-fourth century; cf. Caillet, \textit{L'évergetisme monumental}, 131-2.
\textsuperscript{88} Caillet, \textit{L'évergetisme monumental}, 131.
\textsuperscript{90} For a review of the various arguments: G. Brusin, 'Il mosaico pavimentale della basilica di Aquileia e i suoi ritratti', \textit{RAL} 22 (1967), 174-93.
\textsuperscript{91} For the phenomenon in a Mediterranean context: Brown, \textit{Power and Persuasion}, 84-9.
place in the security of the imperial palace. 92 The next incident shows that Auxentius too had won the commitment of the Milanese. When Filastrius, the future bishop of Brescia, tried to whip up resistance against Auxentius, he found himself being whipped out of town by a crowd incensed at his treatment of their bishop (Gaud. Brix., Tract. 21. 6-7). 93

Yet the Milanese congregation was by no means a united body. After Auxentius’ death in 374, the election of Ambrose was preceded by a period when Milanese Christianity was wracked ‘by grave dissension and perilous sedition’ (Ruf., HE 11. 11). Paulinus’ account of Ambrose’s election (V. Ambr. 6-9) makes much of the supposed unanimity of the group that selected him, but his insistence on a semi-mystical element in achieving this concord it seems clear that he is concealing real divisions among Milanese Christians. 94 As will be seen, Ambrose’s rivals continued to find support in Milan (below pp. 220-2), suggesting that a small anti-Nicene faction endured; whether the pro-Nicene group during Auxentius’ episcopate was any larger cannot be ascertained, but the most likely situation was that at Milan—as elsewhere—most Christians remained neutral, with only minorities taking up extreme theological positions. In their allegiance to three successive bishops holding different Christological views, it is most probable that the loyalty of ordinary Christians was to their bishop as pastor, rather than as theologian. Certainly, some of Ambrose’s rivals accused him of bribing crowds to secure their loyalty (Ambr., C. Aux. 33). This is a cynical manipulation by Ambrose’s enemies of his practice of almsgiving. Other north Italian bishops also distributed money to the poor, a helpful reminder that, in the eyes of the faithful,


93 Williams, Ambrose, 77-8.

94 Cl. McLynn, Ambrose, 1-7, for commentary.
pastoral duties were as important as doctrinal ones.\textsuperscript{95} Even those deemed by later tradition as heretics were active in this area. When Auxentius was appointed bishop of Milan in 355, he did not know any Latin. By the time he died, however, he had not only picked up the language, but had acquired sufficient skill in it to use a grammatical ambiguity to trump no less a theologian than Hilary of Poitiers (Hil. Pict., C. Aux. 8, 13). It would be absurd to assume that Auxentius learned his Latin with a view to such theological tight spots; most probably he learned it, in part, to fulfil his pastoral role in the Milanese church.

This does not mean that bishops were never challenged by doctrinal opponents within their cities. When Jerome congratulated his friends at Aquileia for leading the city back to orthodoxy in the early years of Valerian’s episcopate (Ep. 7. 6), we must wonder to what extent they had been loyal to the previous bishop, Fortunatianus. Again, Milan provides the clearest evidence of clerical dissidence within a city. Auxentius did not have complete control over his city’s clergy. The deacon Sabinus who brought Valerian of Aquileia’s letter to Basil of Caesarea and Damasus’ letter \textit{Confidimus quidem} to the pro-Nicene bishops of the east was from Milan. His activity on behalf of the pro-Nicene during cause Auxentius’ episcopate shows that he must have been a renegade, refusing to associate with his bishop.

Nor was Ambrose, in his early years as bishop, unrivalled in Milan. From the late-370s it is clear that there was some sort of opposition movement within the city. Some time after the Roman defeat at Hadrianople had left the Balkans at the mercy of the Goths, Julianus Valens, the bishop of Poetovio (modern Ptuj), had fled his city for the relative safety of northern Italy, and had ended up at Milan where he was making common cause with another ecclesiastical renegade, Ursinus, the rival

\textsuperscript{95} Cf. Lizzi, \textit{Vescovi}, 36-57, using Ambrose as an example.
claimant on the bishopric of Rome to Ambrose’s friend Damasus. More seriously, Valens had set himself up as a homoian rival to Ambrose, ordaining his own clergy (Ambr., Ep. 10. 9-10). While Ambrose accused Valens of sowing the seeds of a homoian community, it is more likely that he appealed first to a kernel of homoian opinion lingering in the city since Auxentius’ episcopate. At any rate, Ambrose seems curiously impotent to deal with him: after the Council of Aquileia, he wrote to Gratian requesting that Valens be sent back to the Balkans (id., Ep. 10. 10-11).

The case of Julianus Valens was not unique. His presence in Milan was mirrored in the presence there of the imperial court of Valentinian II and Justina which, like Valens, had left the Balkans for the security of Italy. In some respects, imperial presences could be beneficial for a bishop’s prestige: by giving him access to the emperor, it could enhance the bishop’s ability to act as an ecclesiastical politician of considerable importance, rather like those bishops in whose cities Athanasius met Constans in the 340s. As Ambrose would discover in late-388 when Theodosius arrived in Milan, however, the imperial court could also be disruptive to a bishop’s position in his city, providing an alternative focus of patronage and authority. Under Justina’s influence, Valentinian II proved to be a rival to Ambrose within Milan, notably during the conflict over the basilicas in 385-6 (see

96 Ambr., Ep. 11. 3. For commentary see McLynn, Ambrose, 58-9, a more sensitive appraisal of the situation than Williams, Ambrose, 137-8, who takes Ambrose at his word by surmising that Ursinus and Valens made a common anti-Nicene cause. McLynn rightly recognises this as ‘a smear’.

97 Ep. 10. 10: ‘nunc . . . et seminarium quaerit suae impietatis atque perfidiae per quosque perditos derelinquere’.

98 McLynn, Ambrose, 185, talks of ‘the homoian seedbed left at Milan by Iulianus Valens’, but it strikes me that Valens’ initial success probably depended on finding homoians in the city already. Paulinus’ account of Ambrose’s election admits division among the population (V. Ambr. 6: ‘et Ariani sibi et Catholici sibi episcopum cupiebant’). Paulinus surely exaggerates the unanimity of the Milanese in selecting Ambrose as their bishop: McLynn, Ambrose, 44-5.

Appendix 2). Yet this threat to Ambrose’s preeminence in his city had first manifested its potential in 378-9, as soon as Valentinian and Justina arrived from the Balkans, when the senior Augustus, Gratian, had sequestered a basilica for the use of the newly established court (de Spiritu Sancto 1. 1. 21). It was only when Ambrose interceded with Gratian directly that the church was restored to the bishop’s control. Another instance of the court acting as a rival attraction to the bishop seems to have occurred in 345, when Athanasius spent Easter with Fortunatianus at Aquileia, while the city also played host to Constans and his entourage. This was when Fortunatianus’ new cathedral was still under construction, and even though it was still unconsecrated, it had to be used for the Easter liturgy because of the unexpected size of the congregation (Athan., Apol. Const. 15).

CONCLUSION

In sum, the fourth century saw considerable fluidity both in the administrative interrelationships of north Italian bishops, and in their capacity to wield authority over their congregations. Both forms of episcopal administration were contingent on a range of circumstances ranging from the proximity or absence of the imperial court, to the particular character of individual bishops. For all that, certain trends can be observed. Regional spheres of interest, and later metropolitan hierarchies, often evolved within a set of pre-existing social matrices which bound certain centres together. Thus the early influence of the church of Vercelli followed closely the pattern of administrative connections observable in secular Roman administration before the fourth century, while the Aquileian bishops’ sphere of influence was practically coextensive with the trading networks which had long

emanated from the city into north-eastern Italy and the western Balkans. Nevertheless, bishops were far from content to submit their authority to these constraints, and several sought actively to extend their jurisdiction beyond them. The example *par excellence* is of course Ambrose, but his example was soon followed by contemporaries, such as in Vigilius of Trento’s direction of missions into the Alto Adige. Wedded to these pre-existing structures, bishops also extended their influence by exploiting very Christian principles and methods. Spiritual prestige is the most obvious example, and the rise of Aquileia in the days of bishop Valerian and his *chorus beatorum* shows how prestige could benefit a church’s local importance. At the same time, the appearance of members of the *chorus beatorum* as bishops of neighbouring sees—such as Heliodorus at Altino—shows how specifically Christian institutions could be used to build up a regional sphere of influence.

If regional hierarchies were in a state of flux, so too were the means by which a bishop exerted his power at the level of civic society. Apart from the acknowledgement that bishops had certain functions which established their superiority within their congregation—such as preaching—it is clear that they had to borrow methods from the secular sphere to bolster their position. The careful articulation of space within church buildings and the use by bishops of visual symbols of power reflect this trend. But by setting themselves up in positions of authority, bishops also placed themselves within a wider network of power relations that permeated the life of the cities of northern Italy. Receiving the acclamations of the plebs was also something that civic grandees would expect. So just as Theodore was acclaimed by his flock at Aquileia, so too the Christians of Padua hailed their benefactor Eutherius and his family.

By the second half of the fourth century, the north Italian episcopate was fully enmeshed in the politics of the region’s cities. They can be seen manipulating crowds to get rid of rivals, and the erection of large church buildings gave them an
opportunity to present themselves as patrons. In both cases, however, the bishops could face competition. Civic notables soon learned that they could display their powers as patrons in church, as Ianuarius did at Aquileia before 345. Dedications of mosaic pavements can hardly have been made in contravention of the wishes of a bishop, so their presence hardly amounts to a significant challenge to episcopal authority. Nevertheless, the activities of such patrons added extra channels of power to the life of Christian congregations. At times, north Italian bishops could find themselves being opposed within their communities, for example, when certain groups refused to acknowledge their orthodoxy. The arrival of powerful outsiders, notably the emperor and his court, could also pose a threat by introducing a system of power relations over which the bishop had no control. Of course, these were experiences shared by bishops throughout the empire, but the way they were experienced in northern Italy was unique. The strategic importance of the region meant that its episcopate had to deal with the challenges offered by the imperial presence with alarming frequency. Similarly, the disruption of a bishop’s local authority by local opposition seems to have been a problem for the north Italian episcopate only from the 350s onwards, as a direct consequence of the region’s involvement in the Christological controversy. This same controversy also provided the environment within which various north Italian bishops sought to formalise their regional jurisdiction. Ambrose’s efforts at achieving regional hegemony were directed towards the eradication of homoianism throughout northern Italy and its neighbouring territories. His actions were designed to set at nought the achievements of Constantius II in 355.
By the early years of the episcopate of Ambrose at Milan, north-Italian Christianity had developed considerably from the small, secretive movement it had been at the outset of the fourth century. Its organisation had become more elaborate, with bishops in certain cities—notably Aquileia, Milan and Vercelli—wielding a loose form of authority not only in their own communities, but over Christian congregations in other centres. Church buildings were rising in many of the cities of northern Italy, attesting the wealth and self-confidence of the Christians who built them. In social terms, it encompassed a broad constituency: from the archaeological remains of churches and hints in written sources, it can be seen that many wealthy inhabitants of the cities had joined their Christian communities. Local notables like Januarius at Aquileia saw Christianity as an outlet for their patronage, just as some bishops, such as Auxentius at Milan, were able to mobilise large throngs of the urban population. But to what extent had the church of the early 380s expanded since the early decades of the century? More importantly, did this expansion lead to the transformation of the religious geography of northern Italy, creating there a Christian landscape?

This chapter will be devoted to elucidating the evidence for Christian growth. In common with the analysis of the earlier phase of expansion in the late-third and early-fourth centuries, it will be shown that generalisations are impossible, and that instead variation from locality to locality within northern Italy is the key factor determining Christian diffusion. Similarly, it is impossible to know with certainty who precisely brought the faith to new areas within the region.
Nevertheless, by looking again at the scatter of new Christian communities against
the backdrop of the north-Italian human environment, it is possible to identify the
social dynamics conducive to the dissemination of the gospel. The scope of the
chapter will be territorial, in that it will determine which new areas of northern Italy
were brought within the evangelical horizons of the church. The source material
will be primarily literary: letters and the proceedings of a church council. Once
again, however, archaeological data will be marshalled to add substance to the
picture, providing detail about Christian communities listed in written sources and,
ocasionally, demonstrating the existence of congregations which have somehow
failed to leave their mark on the documentary evidence. Having achieved a
framework of Christian diffusion by these means, the following chapter will set
these religious changes in the social context of the region’s cities.

THE GROWTH OF THE EPISCOPATE FROM RIMINI TO AQUILEIA

The period covered by this study ends on 3 September 381 with the opening of the
Council of Aquileia. Under the nominal presidency of bishop Valerian of Aquileia,
a number of bishops, mainly from northern Italy, but with delegates from southern
Gaul, the western Balkans and north Africa, met to decide the fate of two Illyrian
bishops, Palladius of Ratiaria and Secundianus of Singidunum, both of whom stood
charged with heresy.¹ This was by no means the first synod to have met in northern
Italy since the dissolution of the Council of Rimini in 359: sometime in the late
360s, for example, bishops from Gaul and Venetia met to condemn Auxentius of
Milan.² But it is only from Aquileia that we have a detailed list of participants that

¹ On the composition of the council, see M. Zelzer, CSEL 82/3 (1982), clii-clv; Gryson, Scolies
ariennes sur le Concile d’Aquilée (1980), 130-3.
² Williams, Ambrose, 81-2; cf. chapters 5 and 6 above.
can compare with the attendance records of councils convened by Constantine the Great, Constans and Constantius II.³

By 359, as has been seen, Christian communities with bishops were in place at Aquileia, Brescia, Faenza, Milan, Padua, Parma, Ravenna, Vercelli and Verona, and it is likely that non-episcopal groups existed at several other centres (chapters 3 and 4). At Aquileia in 381, however, the number of bishoprics had increased markedly. From within the confines of the Alps, the Appennines and the Adriatic coast came bishops from several newly attested sees: Heliodorus of Altino, Eusebius of Bologna, Bassianus of Lodi, Eventius of Pavia, Sabinus of Piacenza, and Abundantius of Trento. Tortona, which was under the jurisdiction of Eusebius of Vercelli in the late-350s, now had its own bishop, Exsuperantius.⁴ In addition, there were three bishops from the Alpine fringes of northern Italy: Diogenes of Geneva, Theodore of Octodurum (Martigny) and Maximus of Emona. The possibility that other north Italian churches were represented cannot be ruled out, since several participants at the council are given no provenance in the manuscripts of the acta; but to attempt any identification of these mysterious bishops with Italian sees would be unwarranted speculation.⁵

As with any council, this list of participants cannot be taken as a definitive picture of the extent of the north-Italian church in 381. There are, indeed, some notable omissions, such as Verona and Padua, two of the sees which had supported Athanasius in his efforts to gain an audience with Constans (see pp. 172-3). More pointedly, the delegates assembled at Aquileia were a partisan bunch, a factor not

³ Indeed, the acta for Aquileia are among the most complete to have survived from the fourth century: there were stenographers (exceptores) from the Milanese church on hand to record every detail: Acta con. Aquil. 34, 43, 46-7, 51.

⁴ This is a further reminder that the appearance of a bishopric in most cases represents the end of a process of Christian growth: V. Lanzani, ‘Ticinum: le origini della città cristiana’, Storia di Pavia 1 (1984), 356.

⁵ Details of the origins of bishops are given in the acts of the council itself: Acta conc. Aquil. 1, 54-64.
lost on Palladius of Ratiaria, who questioned the very legality of the assembly. At
the council itself he accused Ambrose of Milan, in tones of mounting desperation, of
trading the orders given by Gratian when convening the council:

Palladius said: 'Your bias (studio) has made it so that this is not a general
and full council; in the absence of our colleagues, we [i.e. Palladius and
Secundianus] cannot make a statement of our faith.'
Bishop Ambrose said: 'Who are your colleagues?'
Palladius said: 'The eastern bishops... Our emperor Gratian ordered the
easterners to come. Do you deny that he ordered this? The emperor himself
told us that he had ordered the easterners to come' (Acta conc. Aquil. 6, 8).

Writing an Apologia some time later to justify himself and his co-defendant,
Palladius called the assembled bishops a conspiratio (Pall., Apol. 122), and
expressly condemned Eusebius of Bologna as Ambrose's stooge (ibid. 117). In
sum, the council was a pro-Nicene convention under the de facto, if not—as
Palladius noted (ibid. 89)—de iure, control of Ambrose himself. Any picture of the
expansion of north-Italian Christianity based on the list of 381, then, must
acknowledge the limitations of the text. Even so, it is possible to make some
positive remarks about the picture it yields.

In the first place, it is noticeable that many of the new bishoprics arose along
important roads: Bologna and Piacenza lay on the Via Aemilia, the latter on the
important crossing of the Po, while Trento and Emona were on major transalpine
routes. In addition, it is clear that Christianity did not spread evenly through the
region. Just as for the period before 359, the growth of Christianity in the second
half of the fourth century was patchy, with the new bishoprics arising in regional
clusters. Pavia, Piacenza, Lodi and Tortona, for example, fall in the area around the
established Christian centres of Vercelli and Milan, while Altino is close to
Aquileia. Such local concentrations may reflect the influence of episcopal initiative
in these established sees on the further development of those new sees, as is

6 McLynn, Ambrose, 134-6.
particularly clear in the cases of Milan and Aquileia in the later-fourth century (see chapter 6). In the 350s, after all, Tortona had been dependent on Vercelli, while Heliodorus of Altino was a product of the *chorus sanctorum* of the Aquileian church, where he had lived for several years as an ascetic.\(^7\) At the same time, there is an important difference between the distribution patterns of new bishoprics in the periods before and after 359. In the earlier period, the expansion of the church had shown greatest success in the regions nearest the Adriatic coast, particularly *Venetia et Histria* (see chapter 4). By the second half of the century, the diffusion of the faith was proving successful in the central areas of the Po valley. Thus local variability and the importance of communications networks which had been so important to the spread of Christianity in the region in the third and early fourth centuries continued to play an important role in its further expansion in the decades after the Council of Rimini. In addition, direct episcopal initiative was becoming an important factor in directing Christian missionary activity.

**THE MOUNTAINS AND THE COUNTRYSIDE: FRONTIERS OF EVANGELISATION**

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Christian expansion in the second half of the fourth century was its move into areas which seem remote from the traditional—predominantly urban—centres of evangelisation, to the countryside and the mountains.\(^8\) This raises some important methodological questions in terms of

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\(^8\) For emphasis on the urban character of early north-Italian Christianity: Lizzi, *Vescovi*, 59-81, 193-202. For cities as centres of civilization: L. Mumford, *The City in History* (1961), 70: ‘By the time the city comes plainly into view it is already old: the new institutions of civilization have firmly shaped it.’ The dichotomy is neatly expressed in the various works of Fernand Braudel, esp. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (1972), 34-8, on mountains. The inherent dynamism of urban centres in contrast to the more gentle pace of life in the countryside is implied in his remark that ‘towns are ... electric transformers. They increase tension, accelerate the rhythm of exchange and constantly recharge human life’ (*Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century*).
interpreting literary sources for such expansion. The modern opposition between an urban ‘centre’ and a rural or mountainous ‘periphery’ is derived from a division common in ancient perceptions. In terms of evangelisation, the concept is neatly encapsulated in Sulpicius Severus’ assertion that Christianity came late to the Alps (Chron. 2. 32). His view was echoed in the bleak picture of Christian expansion in Piedmont painted by bishop Maximus of Turin early in the fifth century. Maximus’ descriptions of pagan rites locate them in rural areas (‘ad campum’: Sermo 63. 2) beyond the city (‘extra ciuitatem’: Sermo 98. 3). But such sweeping generalisations ought not to be accepted at face value: as will be shown, Christianity was already seeping into rural and mountainous areas before the end of the fourth century. Another point at issue here is the distance between what a bishop like Maximus thought an acceptable level of piety and that shared by ordinary Christians in his congregation. Maximus’ tirades against rural paganism occur, after all, in a sequence of sermons aimed at persuading Piedmontese landowners to crush pagan worship on their rural estates. These local notables plainly did not see how their own devotion to Christ might be impugned by the pagan worship of their tenants, despite Maximus’ protestations that they risked spiritual contamination (Sermones

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In this they were not alone. At around the same time that Maximus was haranguing them about their duties as Christians, both Augustine of Hippo and Peter Chrysologus were seething at the presence of pagan elements in civic festivals at Carthage and Ravenna. Others among the laity were more in tune with their bishops’ expectations: Augustine’s parishioner Publicola wrote a letter asking advice on the risks accruing from coming into contact—or even just the presence—of pagan cult objects. This represents nothing short of a gap between what bishops and the laity—even to the level of the emperor—perceived of as an acceptable demonstration of Christian devotion. This touches on the issue of what precisely is meant by a term such as ‘Christianisation’: undoubtedly no single definition is possible, since views of what was or was not acceptable varied from time to time, place to place, and person to person. Maximus was a hard-liner; so too was Sulpicius Severus, as is clear from his approval of Martin of Tours’ destruction of pagan shrines. Plainly their views of the limits of Christianisation must be subjected to careful scrutiny, not least because at Aquileia, four bishops came from mountain sees: Geneva, Octodurum, Trento and Emona.

(i) The western Alps

Of the four bishops from Alpine sees at Aquileia in 381, Diogenes of Geneva and Theodore of Octodurum (Martigny) really belong to the Gallic contingent, rather than the north-Italian: their names occur with those of the bishops of Grenoble and

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11 Aug., Sermo 62. 6. 10 (the genius of Carthage, and images of Mars and Mercury); Pet. Chrys., Sermo 155 bis. 1 (the procession included effigies of Saturn, Jupiter, Hercules, Diana and Vulcan).
13 The emperor Arcadius was reluctant to grant the request of bishop Porphyry of Gaza that the temples in that city should be destroyed as he did not want to aggravate the people of a loyal city: Mark the Deacon, Vita Porphyrii 41; on this episode cf. F. R. Trombley, Hellenistic Religions and Christianization, c. 370-529 (1993) 1: 237-9.
15 C. Stancliffe, St Martin and his Hagiographer (1983), 328-40, collects the evidence.
Marseille in the list of signatories, and when they came forward to condemn Palladius for blasphemy, they did so in the company of the Gallic bishops (Acta conc. Aquil. 62-3). Nevertheless, the development of sees in these centres is instructive, since they show the extent to which Christianity was able to penetrate apparently peripheral areas. The strength of these Christian communities is often hard to judge, but rich archaeological evidence paints a picture of considerable vitality for Geneva. Excavations in the cathedral of Saint Pierre have revealed extensive remains of a Christian complex developed out of a domestic building, which, by the mid-fourth century, had been enlarged to include at least one church, residential quarters for the clergy and, possibly, a free standing baptistery. Neither Geneva nor Martigny was really remote, however. Both lay along the important road from Italy through the Great St Bernard pass to the Rhône, from where it descended into Gallia Narbonensis; in late antiquity this was a crucial strategic route which saw considerable renovation under the tetrarchy and Constantine. Once again, good communications seem to have been an important determinant in the distribution of Christian communities. Nothing, however, can be known of the Christians who first preached the gospel in these valleys. The bishops of Geneva and Martigny had Greek names, Diogenes and Theodore, but by the end of the fourth century these cannot be taken—however tempting it might be—to indicate an immigrant element in the Christian populations of these cities.

16 CSEL 82/3 (1982), 325.
17 C. Bonnet, 'Les origines du groupe épiscopal de Genève', CRAI (1981), 414-33; id., 'Développement urbain et topographie chrétienne de Genève', CRAI (1985), 323-38. There are numerous articles, with excellent illustrations, in Archäologie der Schweiz 14/2 (1991) on early Christian remains from Geneva and its hinterland showing that by the early-fifth century Christianity was flourishing in several centres in this part of the Alps.
19 After all, Jerome and his father Eusebius had Greek names, but theirs was a thoroughly Dalmatian family by the early fourth century. Indeed, Rufinus alleges that Jerome’s acquisition of
Crossing the Alps into *Italia Annonaria* proper, we find a similar correspondence between communications networks and the appearance of Christian communities in mountainous regions. Just over the Alpine ridge from Martigny and Geneva there was a fledgling community in Aosta. This city was not represented at the Council of Aquileia and there is no documentary record of a bishopric there until the appearance of a certain Gratus, a priest representing his bishop Eustasius, at the Council of Milan in 451.\(^\text{20}\) By that stage, however, there were already several churches and shrines at Aosta, including a substantial church building on the west side of the forum close to the ancient capitolium: thanks to a coin hoard found in a channel leading to the baptistery, its construction can be dated with confidence to shortly before 400.\(^\text{21}\) Moreover, this early church arose on the site of a large *domus* constructed in the late-third century, and reused many of its walls as foundation courses,\(^\text{22}\) the construction of this church in the late-fourth century could represent a renovation of a building already used for liturgical purposes. In any case, the erection of a large church building within the town walls, and so close to the traditional centre of civic and religious power, suggests a growing Christian presence in the city during the second half of the fourth century. The origins of the community are uncertain. A foundation at the initiative of Ambrose of Milan or even Eusebius of Vercelli has been suggested,\(^\text{23}\) but no surviving evidence makes this connection.\(^\text{24}\) Perhaps, then, the origins of Christianity at Aosta are to be sought, not in any formal mission, but in the position of the city as an important

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\(^{22}\) Ibid., 480-2, 487-8.

\(^{23}\) Lanzoni, *Diocesi*, 560.

\(^{24}\) There is no conclusive evidence for a strong connection with Milan. For example, the church of Aosta did not boast any chapels dedicated to Milanese saints: the only saint they share, the apostle Laurence, was popularly associated with episcopal necropoleis throughout northern Italy: Picard.
staging point on the road across the Alps to Gaul, just as may have been the case across the mountains at Geneva and Martigny. Certainly, when we first hear of the local activities of a bishop of Aosta it is connection with his colleagues at Geneva and Martigny.25

(ii) The Alpine fringes of Venetia et Histria

At the opposite end of the region, Emona was represented for the first time at a church council by bishop Maximus in 381. Emona was a prosperous city by virtue of its position as an important node on the road linking Italy to the Balkans.26 It seems reasonable that this was an important factor which contributed to the appearance of Christianity in the city, as for the presence of other foreign, private cults.27 The nature of bishop Maximus’ community is hard to assess, not least because the destruction of the city by Attila’s Huns in 452 seems to have caused very real disruption in terms of settlement on the site.28 What partial evidence survives, however, suggests a vibrant Christian community there by the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries. Prior to his departure for the east sometime around 372, Jerome had written to Christians at Emona who had fallen out with him. These members of the faithful were predominantly of ascetic bent: a monk called Antony

Souvenir, 300-1. The fifth century funerary church of S. Lorenzo at Aosta, which was used for the inhumation of the city’s bishops, is of cruciform plan, which has led some to hypothesise an influence from Ambrose’s basilica Apostolorum at Milan (Bonnet and Perinetti, ‘Les premiers édifices chrétiens’, 493), but no such link can be proven.


(Ep. 12) and a community of female virgins (Ep. 11).\textsuperscript{29} In the late-fourth or early-fifth century, a liturgical complex was constructed in an insula within the city walls.\textsuperscript{30} It comprised a portico, with an elaborate baptistery, where the font was covered by a baldachino supported by eight columns, and the floors were covered in sumptuous polychrome mosaics. These include various dedications including that of an archdeacon Antiocus who paid for the renovation of the building for ritual use. Any precise relationship between this edifice and a larger church building is impossible to ascertain in the absence of further excavation, so it cannot be known if the church of Emona could boast a fine cathedral like those at other Alpine centres, such as Aosta and Geneva. Nevertheless the presence of the various dedications in the baptistery mosaics and the reference to an archdeacon, taken together with Jerome’s evidence for the presence of an ascetic community in the city, suggests that the flock over which Maximus presided was a flourishing one.

Another Christian community in the Julian Alps, but one not attested in any official church document was that at Jerome’s home town of Stridon.\textsuperscript{31} This community existed already in the first half of the fourth century, since Jerome’s family was Christian.\textsuperscript{32} The nature of the community is hard to judge, however. Jerome himself, by the time he returned there from Trier in the early 370s, was deeply unimpressed by it. It was a conglomeration of boorish rustics where piety was judged on wealth, and its leader, Lupicinus, who may have had episcopal rank,\textsuperscript{33} was a depressingly inadequate figure: ‘a crippled steersman . . . the blind leading the blind,’ moaned Jerome (Ep. 7.5).

\textsuperscript{29} On Jerome’s relationship with his sometime friends at Emona, see Kelly, Jerome, 30-5.
\textsuperscript{30} Description in L. Plesnicar-Gec, ‘La città di Emona nel tardoantico e suoi ruderi paleocristiani’, Arh. Vest. 23 (1972), 367-75.
\textsuperscript{31} For the location of Stridon: Kelly, Jerome, 2-5.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{33} Jerome describes him as ‘Lupicinus sacerdos’ which ought to mean he was no more than a priest; but the Budé editor believes that sacerdos could be used interchangeably with episcopus: J. Labourt, Saint Jérôme. Lettres 1 (1949), 24 n. 2; endorsed by Kelly, Jerome, 31.
Probably the most interesting and instructive example of Christian expansion into the Alps is that in the Alto Adige, in the city of Trento and in the Val di Non. Communications feature once more as an important factor in explaining the dissemination of the gospel message in this region, and again it is striking how less remote these high mountain valleys were than might be assumed. Since prehistoric times, the Adige valley was the most important transalpine route from Italy to Rhaetia and the upper Danube (see pp. 49-51 above), and as a consequence the region enjoyed considerable social and cultural diversity. In the Antonine period, officers associated with the publicum portorium Illyrici had brought the cult of Isis into these high mountain valleys; Mithraism too had made its mark on the region. Among the other religions which came this way was Christianity. The bishop of Trento who attended the Council of Aquileia, Abundantius, is the first known to have occupied that see. Even if he had no episcopal predecessor, it is possible that Christianity was established at Trento for some time prior to his election, just as Tortona had a Christian community before Exsuperantius became its bishop.

There is evidence from the end of the century that Christianity in the Alto Adige was spreading to the countryside too. Sometime around 397, three Christians—Sisinnius, Alexander and Martyrius—were killed in a violent confrontation with pagans in the Val di Non (ancient Anaunia), north-west of Trento (Vigilius, Epp. 1. 3; 2. 2). In the accounts of their deaths which he sent to Simplicianus of Milan and John Chrysostom at Constantinople, bishop Vigilius of

34 Lizzi, Vescovi, 70-6.
35 M. Malaise, Les conditions de pénétration et de diffusion des cultes égyptiens en Italie (1972), 343-4.
36 Lizzi, Vescovi, 75-6 and nn. 67-8.
37 Picard, Souvenir, 502-4, on the extreme unreliability of the episcopal catalogue for Trento which lists Abundantius second after an otherwise unknown lovinus.
Trento sought to portray them as martyrs who gave up their lives in missionary endeavour. The Val di Non is described as a thoroughly wild and uncivilized place, an area which in terms of ethos as well as distance is ‘a place divided from the city’ (Ep. 2. 2: ‘locus . . . a ciuitate diuisus’). But this sits at odds with the tangible evidence for the social and cultural profile of these valleys which demonstrates that for centuries they had been in regular contact with the lower reaches of the Adige and the north-Italian plain. In the late-fourth century, moreover, these contacts may well have increased as the area witnessed an increased military presence after the collapse of the Rhaetian limes in 383. In effect, Vigilius’ description of the Val di Non is a literary construct: a dismissive statement of the barbarity of areas outside the cities in the same vein as Sulpicius Severus’ claim that the Alps in his day had hardly been touched by the spread of Christianity. In reality, it seems more likely that there was already a Christian presence in the Val di Non before Sisinnius, Martyrius and Alexander arrived. The three Christians were clerics—Sisinnius was a deacon (Ep. 2. 5), Martyrius a lector (1. 2), and Alexander a porter (ostiarius: 1. 3). Vigilius also recounts that they set about building a church (Ep. 2. 3). Such elaborate organisation seems excessive if, as Vigilius would have us believe, the area was utterly pagan. Sending out clergy with designated roles suggests, rather, that there was already a Christian presence in the valley and that the three men were dispatched as part of a programme to bring the rural territory around Trento under episcopal control.

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39 For example, in the letter to Simplicianus, Vigilius describes how Sisinnius ‘nouam Christiani nominis pacem intulit barbarae nationi’ (Ep. 1. 1); cf. 1. 2: ‘Nam fumosa gentilitas contra uaporem fidei, zelo diaboli flamma furoris incaluit’; 2. 2: ‘truculenta gentilitas.’ Lizzi, Vescovi, 63 n. 9, assembles the various derogatory adjectives used by Vigilius.

40 It is worth noting how Vigilius’ description of the region includes the clause ‘castellis undique positis in coronam’ (Ep. 2. 2).

41 Cf. Lizzi, Vescovi, 76-8, on Vigilius, Ep. 2, as a disingenuous literary ekphrasis. I suspect that the description in Ep. 2. 2 of the Val di Non as being remote from the ciuitas probably carries the implication that it is also distant from ciuilitas.

42 Lizzi, Vescovi, 79-80.
If this is the case, then it has profound ramifications for the traditional picture of Christian expansion in peripheral zones such as the Alps and the countryside. Although the activities of Sisinnius and his colleagues date no earlier than the mid-390s, they were probably preceded by an informal process of evangelisation which occurred as a natural consequence of the traffic passing through the valleys of the Alto Adige. Certainly by the mid-fifth century there had been a veritable explosion of church building in the region, with basilicas erected at Dos Trento, Bolzano, Altenburg and even higher at Säben.\textsuperscript{43} Indeed, the late-fourth and fifth centuries are the period of greatest consolidation by the church throughout the north-eastern Alps, with concentrations of new communities along the major communications routes in the valleys of the Adige, Tagliamento and Drava.\textsuperscript{44}

Descending into the plain of Venetia we find further evidence of the diffusion of Christianity beyond the confines of urban centres. Two suburban settlements of Aquileia had Christian communities by the end of the fourth century. At Grado, the city's fore port, there was a small rectangular church hall decorated with mosaic pavements incorporating dedications by the local faithful.\textsuperscript{45} Inland, on the road to Trieste, there was a church built at Aquae Gradatae (modern S. Canzian d'Isonzo), where it was associated with the cults of SS. Chrysogonus, Protus, Cantius, Cantianus and Cantianella.\textsuperscript{46} It is impossible to know how extensive was any Christian community actually residing at Aquae Gradatae. The site seems to have been a necropolis associated with Aquileia, and the building of the church was

\textsuperscript{43} G. C. Menis, 'La basilica paleocristiana nelle regioni delle Alpi orientali', \textit{AAAd} 9 (1976), 380. 385-6.

\textsuperscript{44} See esp. G. Cuscito, 'La diffusione del cristianesimo nelle regioni alpine orientali', \textit{AAAd} 9 (1976), 299-345. The fourth century dates given for church buildings, such as that at Zuglio, by Menis, 'La basilica paleocristiana nelle regioni delle Alpi orientali', 377-92, are probably too early: cf. M. Mirabella Roberti, 'Iulium Carnicum centro romano alpino', \textit{AAAd} 9 (1976), 100.

\textsuperscript{45} Lizzi, \textit{Vescovi}, 157.

linked to the execution and burial there of the various martyrs.\textsuperscript{47} Mosaic inscriptions from the church record a clerical hierarchy, with a deacon, a lector and a notary,\textsuperscript{48} but they could have been serving a flourishing martyr shrine rather than a significant rural Christian community.\textsuperscript{49} In any case, the presence of the church is instructive. Together with the appearance of an episcopal see at Altino in the subscriptions to the council of 381 and the construction of churches at Concordia and Trieste by the early fifth century (see pp. 126, 193) it suggests that the coastal area around Aquileia also saw increasing diffusion of Christianity in the closing decades of the fourth century. In all cases it seems that the guiding hand in the consolidation, if not the expansion, of the church may have been the bishop of Aquileia: Heliodorus had been a member of the \textit{chorus sanctorum} at Aquileia before becoming bishop of Altino: Concordia had its new church dedicated by Chromatius of Aquileia; a \textit{defensor sanctae ecclesiae Aquileiensis} was to be among the patrons of the basilica in the Via Madonna del Mare at Trieste;\textsuperscript{50} S. Canzian d'Isonzo was a \textit{vicus} dependent on Aquileia as well as the resting place of some of the city's martyrs; and various churches across the Julian Alps in northern Dalmatia were clearly within the sphere of influence of the church of Aquileia already in the second half of the fourth century (see chapter 6).

\textbf{CONCLUSION}

Once again it has been shown that traditional forms of evidence—in this case the conciliar documents of 381—provide only a partial picture of the growth of

\textsuperscript{47} Necropolis: Cuscito, 'Testimonianze archeologico-monumentale', 642; execution and entombment of Aquileian martyrs: A. Calderini, \textit{Aquileia romana} (1930), lxxvi-lxxxvii.

\textsuperscript{48} Lizzi, \textit{Vescovi}, 156.

\textsuperscript{49} Maximus of Turin attests to the popularity of the cult in the fifth century (\textit{Sermo} 15).

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{AE} 1973: 251: 'Eufemia l cum filio l suo Crysogono def(ensore) l s(an)ct(tae) eccl(esiae) l Aquil(ciensis) l(f)ec(it) l p(e)d(es) C.'
Christianity in northern Italy during the third quarter of the fourth century. Not only is it demonstrable that some Christian communities, including those with bishops, are missing from such documents, but there is no hint in them of the processes by which Christianity spread through the region. Taking this evidence in conjunction with archaeological material, however, a more extensive—if still incomplete—picture emerges.

It is clear that many of the characteristics of the spread of Christianity in northern Italy in the third and early-fourth centuries are repeated in the years between Rimini and Aquileia. Once more, the diffusion of Christianity is uneven, varying from region to region. There were some local concentrations: Bologna, Pavia, Piacenza, Lodì and Tortona in the middle of the Po valley; Altino, S. Canzian d’Isonzo and Emona near Aquileia. There is also evidence of Christian penetration of the countryside and the mountains, although again there is considerable regional variety: communitates in the Alto Adige, along the route from Italy to Gaul through the Great St Bernard pass, and at Emona in the Julian Alps.

The engines driving the dissemination of the faith also have much in common with the earlier period, particularly the tendency of the new communities to cluster along important communications routes, whether those emanating from significant urban centres such as Aquileia and Milan, or those leading out of northern Italy towards neighbouring provinces across the Alps. Again, the constant movement of people along these avenues of communication provided the ideal social conditions for the propagation of the faith. Even if we can never know the identities of those Christians who first brought their religion to these new areas of northern Italy, we can identify the social context within which they operated.

None of this means that Christian expansion was haphazard, entirely dependent on informal means of propagation. By the early 380s the ecclesiastical hierarchy was taking an interest in the distribution of new Christian communities. Ambrose’s effort, made obvious at the Council of Aquileia, to construct a
community of like-minded bishops is one manifestation of this phenomenon. Throughout his career, the bishop of Milan took an active role in the investiture of bishops in other sees, some of them in neighbouring cities such as Piacenza, Como and Vercelli, or as far afield as Aquileia and Sirmium. Ambrose’s activities were soon mimicked by his contemporaries, notably Chromatius of Aquileia. Similarly, the confrontation between pagans and Christians in the Val di Non seems to have arisen because of efforts by Vigilius of Trento, another practitioner of Ambrose’s methods, to bring areas of the Alto Adige under his episcopal jurisdiction. Yet to see this more deliberate programme of evangelisation entirely as a consequence of Ambrose’s innovations is an oversimplification. A self-conscious effort to increase the influence of a particular north-Italian church is clear at Aquileia already in the third-quarter of the fourth century (see pp. 188-95 above).

In sum, the years between 359 and 381 were ones in which Christianity, on the face of it, extended its reach deeper into northern Italy. To be sure, the real explosion of missionary effort seems to have come in the wake of Ambrose’s episcopate, but the achievements of the third quarter of the fourth century ought not to be underestimated. Christian communities, whether episcopal sees or not, were now more numerous, and the presence of the church was beginning to be felt outside the cities in rural and mountainous. In addition, many of these congregations could boast fine church buildings with lavish decoration. Yet it is

53 For Ambrose’s influence on Vigilius, particularly in his manipulation of the violent deaths of Sisinnius, Alexander and Martyrius to foster a martyr cult, see Lizzi, *Vescovi*, 86-96.
54 It is implicit, if not explicit, in Rita Lizzi’s analysis (in *Vescovi* and ‘Ambrose’s Contemporaries’), which takes Ambrose’s episcopate as a starting point.
55 Lizzi, ‘Ambrose’s Contemporaries’, *passim*. 
unclear from the evidence presented so far if northern Italy was to any extent a Christian space, as opposed to a pagan one. The scatter of Christian communities across the region does not of itself indicate a triumph over religious rivals. Christianity had, after all, been widespread in Asia Minor and north Africa by the second half of the third century, but that did not mean it was the dominant religion there: the violence with which it was suppressed during the tetrarchic persecutions demonstrates that well enough. So how can the rise of the church be judged to have had any impact on the religious life of the region? To what extent was northern Italy really a 'Christian space' by Ambrose's time? Part of the essential transformation from a pagan to a Christian society will have been the redefinition of sacred space in, around and between cities: a mere catalogue of new congregations tells us little about the success of the church in making these cities its own. Moreover, did the expansion of the church always meet with unmitigated success? It seems unlikely that local non-Christians, whether pagan or Jewish, gave up their old beliefs without a struggle: the pagans of the Val di Non, as has been seen, did not. Again, merely cataloguing Christian communities largely fails to give any indication of how the church did, or did not, win over the people of northern Italy. To answer these questions it is necessary to examine the life of the Christian communities within the framework of society, particularly urban society, in late antique northern Italy. This complex issue will be the theme of the next, and final, chapter.

Markus, *End of Ancient Christianity*, 139-55.
Views of Christian expansion in northern Italy during the fourth century risk being overtaken by a certain expectation of inevitability. The evidence presented in the last chapter for the greater number of bishoprics might lull us into seeing the period as one in which the new religion inexorably spread its influence over the entire region. Looking back from a vantage point in the episcopate of Ambrose of Milan, when vast crowds of Christians could be mobilised by their bishop, it is easy to view such expansion as a fait accompli. Yet when Ambrose died, as his biographer Paulinus freely admits, there were Jews and pagans among the crowds at his funeral (Paul. Med., Vita Ambr. 48). This requires us to qualify any picture we may have of an inevitable Christian triumph in northern Italy as a consequence of Constantine’s conversion. Religious diversity persisted in the region throughout the fourth century and beyond. In this chapter it will be shown that for much of this period the Christians may have represented nothing more than a vociferous religious minority, competing for prominence in their communities with pagans and Jews. As bishop Zeno of Verona wrote, the Christian way of life was a ‘negotiosus cursus’, a ‘troublesome path’ weaving between ever present temptations, including other faiths (Zeno, Tract. 1. 6). It will be shown that Christianity was engaged in competition and conflict with other religions, and just as bishops hoped for converts from Judaism and paganism, so lapses in the opposite direction were seen as a real danger. Before looking in detail at these consequences of religious pluralism,

2 Lizzi, Vescovi, 193-202, for continued paganism in rural Piedmont in the fifth century; cf. C. Ginzburg, I benandanti (1966), 61-88, for the early modern period in Friuli.
however, it is worth considering the most tangible evidence for a positive picture of Christian growth in the cities of northern Italy: the archaeological remains of church buildings. A close examination of these buildings can reveal much about the interaction between Christian congregations and the communities within which they developed. Such material, therefore, provides an essential backdrop to the literary evidence for religious pluralism in fourth century northern Italy.

CHURCHES AND URBAN SPACE

The appearance of church buildings at various north-Italian centres raises difficulties of interpretation. How precisely are their remains supposed to yield any information about the social status of Christians? Most studies of religious change in late antiquity tend to cluster around areas of enquiry where physical remains can be interpreted in ‘controlled’ circumstances thanks to the survival of detailed literary sources. For northern Italy, the case study *par excellence* is Milan during the episcopate of Ambrose where a wealth of literary and archaeological material can be read side by side to yield a coherent picture of the city’s transformation from a pagan, imperial capital to a Christian, episcopal metropolis.3 While the value of such literary evidence ought not to be denied, remaining too reliant on it limits the field of enquiry to certain traditional topics. It fails, moreover, to explain a wealth of archaeological evidence attesting the erection of Christian buildings in cities other than Milan.4 Consequently, it is necessary to develop a methodology for


4 A most curious recent example is the study of late-antique Ravenna in A. J. Wharton, *Refiguring the Post Classical City* (1995), 105-47, where, despite the survival of an extensive corpus of sermons by the city’s fifth century bishop Peter Chrysologus, the analysis is guided primarily by a
interpreting those remains. The first part of this section will outline the strategy which I will use to understand the material evidence; then it will look at the Christian presence in various centres, beginning with the rich seam of archaeological data at Aquileia.

(i) Reading the architectural script

The most appropriate methodology has been suggested to me by a literary study of Christian expansion. In her Sather Classical Lectures, Christianity and the rhetoric of empire, Averil Cameron traced Christianity's 'progress from marginal cult to world religion' from the perspective 'that societies have characteristic discourses or "plots" [and] that the development and control of a discourse may provide a key to social power.'\(^5\) While she limited her coverage to oral or written modes of discourse, she acknowledged that such modes 'may pertain to the visual or any other means of communication.'\(^6\) Architecture as much as art, is part of the visual discourse, a means by which one individual or group in society might communicate a power relationship with another, such as in the elaboration of a temple or commemorative monument.\(^7\) Meanwhile, work on specific urban environments has demonstrated that the opening up of some architectural spaces to scrutiny along visual axes reflects a conscious division of houses and other buildings into public and private zones for the purposes of social and political rituals.\(^8\) Thus the

\(^5\) A. Cameron, Christianity and the rhetoric of empire, (1991), 1.

\(^6\) Ibid., 13.

\(^7\) As Paul Zanker has shown for the Augustan period: The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus (1988). For late antiquity, see now Wharton, Refiguring the Post Classical City.

alignment and visibility of public and private architecture in an urban environment was manipulated in such a way as to convey social and political messages. In religious terms, the spatial discourse of the early empire was controlled by the needs of a pagan society, where temples were often the most monumental buildings in a town, and were erected typically in prominent places, such as by the forum.

This fits well with recent trends in the interpretation of early Christianity, which have emphasised the original embeddedness of Christian discourse in its Jewish and Graeco-Roman environments: only later did Christian modes of expression develop their own distinct flavour. Such modes of expression included architecture. The earliest patterns of Christian building are similar to those of comparable religious groups, such as Jews and Mithraists, where the development of cult buildings operates within a private context, depending on private donations, and where architectural innovations are often circumscribed by the pre-existing fabric of buildings adapted for cult use. Only later, after Constantine’s conversion transformed the legal and institutional standing of Christianity, could the Church call on public, state-sponsored patronage for its building programs in a way in which

The Houses of Roman Italy, 100 BC-AD 250 (1991), 1-29; cf. J. Elsner, Art and the Roman Viewer (1995), 49-87;


E.g. Laurence, Roman Pompeii, 20-25.

Cf. Chapter 1 above.

Cameron, Christianity and the rhetoric of empire, 15-46 and passim.
it could transform its physical environment.\textsuperscript{14} There is a significant echo of this analysis in the only extant narrative of urban change form late antiquity, Gregory of Tours' account of the tale of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus. These were Christians walled up in a cave outside the city during the persecution of Decius (249-51), and who were awoken two centuries later in the reign of Theodosius II (408-50). As one of them returns to Ephesus he is astonished by its transformation:

Approaching the gate of the city, he saw the sign of the cross above the gate and in astonishment, he marvelled [at it] . . . Entering the city he heard men swear oaths in Christ's name and saw a church, a priest who was rushing around the city, and new walls; and being greatly astonished he said to himself, 'Do you think that you have entered another city?' \textsuperscript{15}

Yet, while allowing for such general trends, we must be careful not to assume a simple, linear picture of evolution.\textsuperscript{16} Even after Constantinian patronage introduced the basilican form of church building, a wide diversity of types—according to criteria such as size, plan and location—continued to exist.\textsuperscript{17} As will be seen, there was no inevitable linear development towards the use of apsidal basilicas by the Christians of northern Italy.

\textsuperscript{13} L. M. White, \textit{Building God's House in the Roman World} (1990), passim.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 147-8.
\textsuperscript{16} Much art historical analysis of the development of ecclesiastical architecture has sought to achieve greater respectability (and hence rebut accusations that its values are utterly subjective) by infusing its narratives with scientific metaphors, derived primarily from biological evolution (see Wharton, \textit{Refiguring the Post Classical City}, 1-14, esp. 3-7, for a review of some important examples of this trend). What such analyses reveal by their insistence on an inexorable progression from one form to another, however, is a complete misunderstanding (albeit a popular one) of the processes of biological evolution. Their linear model is based on what Stephen Jay Gould eloquently describes as 'the conflict between "bushes" and "ladders" as metaphors for evolutionary change' (\textit{Ever Since Darwin. Reflections in Natural History} [1978], 56-62).
(ii) Theodore, Fortunatianus and the cathedral of Aquileia

The easiest way to appreciate these changes is to examine some church buildings in their urban context. Nowhere is the evidence better suited to this than at Aquileia, where the cathedral complex was rebuilt twice in the course of the fourth century. The earliest form of the Christian building on this site is irrevocably lost to us, buried beneath the remains of later structures. In the early fourth century, most probably shortly after Constantine’s conversion in 312, the whole complex was rebuilt under the direction of bishop Theodore. 18 This first custom-built church comprised two parallel halls connected by a transverse hall, in which lay a baptistery (see fig. 13). It reused foundation courses from earlier buildings on the site and this was crucial to determining the shape and orientation of Theodore’s building. 19 Nevertheless, within the constraints imposed by the extent of the plot of land given over to the construction of the church, Theodore’s architects were able to make adaptations suited to the needs of Christian liturgy. Entrance to the building was from a road flanking the eastern wall of the complex; from there movement through the church was directed first to the northern hall, and then through the transverse hall to the southern hall. Such an unusual arrangement probably reflects some liturgical peculiarity, whereby the northern hall, with its simpler decorative scheme, may have functioned as a catachumeneum. Candidates for baptism would have been led through the transverse hall, with a detour for baptismal immersion, and thence into the elaborately decorated southern hall, where the mosaics, with their

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18 Jäggi, 173-175
motifs of Eucharistic Victory and the story of Jonah advertised the benefits of eternal salvation offered by Christianity to fully fledged converts.20

This initial stage of architectural elaboration reveals much about the developing profile of Christianity at Aquileia. In the first place, the cult seems to have harboured a lingering desire for secrecy. From the outside, it was impossible to see into the central liturgical spaces of the building, indicating that the rituals performed there were physically separate from the rest of civic life in Aquileia. Such separation is reiterated in the elaborate nature of the liturgy, particularly that associated with baptism. Being a Christian involved moving from the street into the church and hence away from public scrutiny. Undergoing baptism required further separation as the initiate moved through the transverse hall into the southern hall. Thus, fulfilling the ritual requirements of Christian life involved a real, physical dislocation between the Christian congregation and the wider urban community. The liturgical space of Theodore’s cathedral was not yet in the public domain. Such secrecy is hardly surprising in the religious climate after the Diocletianic persecution. To be sure, Constantine had joined the side of the Church, but there was no guarantee that his successors would do likewise: a Christian triumph was not guaranteed.

Yet for all its clandestine character, this architectural metamorphosis reveals a self-conscious change in the status of the Christian congregation in Aquileian society. In the mosaic pavements of both halls are inscriptions acclaiming Theodore’s construction of the church, but that in the northern hall gives the clearest indication of the interrelationship between the Theodorean building and its immediate predecessor. It reads *Theodore felix hic creuisti hic felix*, ‘Happy

Theodore, this you have happily increased.\textsuperscript{21} Taken together with investment necessary to pay for the elaborate mosaic decoration of the building, this inscription demonstrates that the Christian community of Aquileia was aware that Theodore’s reconstruction of their liturgical building represented a new, monumental phase.

The northern hall of Theodore’s church was subsequently rebuilt, probably in the mid-340s during the episcopate of Fortunatianus.\textsuperscript{22} This new edifice (fig. 14), while not quite a true basilica (it lacks an apse), shared many of the features of the basilican churches built in the period since Constantine’s conversion. The main features of the building were arranged along a central axis. Its entrance was now to the west, preceded by a porticoed court. The door of the church was on the same axis as the nave, which was flanked by colonnades and aisles, and which culminated at the eastern end with a sanctuary and altar. In terms of ritual character, this church was more suited to the performance of grand processional—and ostentatiously public—liturgies, such as those celebrated in Rome, Jerusalem and Constantinople,\textsuperscript{23} and elsewhere in northern Italy at Milan (Paul. Med., \textit{Vita Ambr.} 52).\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{21} Chevallier, \textit{Aquilée}, 106.

\textsuperscript{22} It seems to be the basilica under construction mentioned in Athanasius’ account of his visit to Aquileia in 345 (\textit{Apol. ad Const.} 15). Athanasius is describing regular congregations in undedicated buildings: in this context, the identification of the church in question as the cathedral at Aquileia seems inescapable: L. Bertacchi, ‘La basilica postteodoriana di Aquileia’, \textit{AqN} 43 (1972), 77-84; Jäggi, 174-77; M. Mirabella Roberti, ‘Osservazioni sulla basilica postteodoriana settentrionale di Aquileia’, in \textit{Studi in onore di Aristide Calderini e Roberto Paribeni} 3 (1956), 863-75. The arguments of D. dalla Barba Brusin, ‘Cronologia e dedicazione della basilica postteodoriana settentrionale di Aquileia’, \textit{Arte Veneta} (1975), 2-3 in favour of a later date, between 387 and c. 407, are unconvincing.

\textsuperscript{23} J. F. Baldovin, \textit{The Urban Character of Christian Worship} (1987).

\textsuperscript{24} This quality was enhanced later by the insertion of a solea, a raised platform running down the middle of the nave, along which the bishop and clergy would have processed at the beginning and end of services: Bertacchi, ‘La basilica postteodoriana’, 62-71 and tavola II; cf. T. F. Mathews, ‘An early Roman chancel arrangement and its liturgical functions’, \textit{RAC} 38 (1962), 73-95.
This rebuilding of the northern hall marked a substantial increase in its dimensions, from 17.25 x 37.4 m of the Theodorean hall to 30.95 x 73.40 m. Moreover, the building seems to have been more imposing as a whole: the architectural embellishments were more elaborate, with finely worked columns and a stone porch, while the overall platform of the church was raised by approximately 1 metre, which probably made it a more imposing structure than its predecessor. Fortunatianus' basilica, like its Theodorean predecessor, marks a further stage in the increasing monumentality of the cathedral site. And just as the building itself was becoming a more visible feature in the urban landscape of Aquileia, so too the liturgy celebrated within was no longer shielded from the prying eyes of the urban community as a whole. With this new church, Aquileian Christianity became more integrated into the public life of the city; the clandestine mentality underlying the Theodorean building had evaporated to be replaced by greater self-confidence in the episcopate of Fortunatianus.

Indeed, in the course of the fourth century, Christianity came to occupy a more dominant position in the topography of Aquileia. At the beginning of the century, its presence may have been limited to nothing more than the pre-Theodorean building adopted, but not necessarily adapted, for liturgical use. By the end of the century, the site had been rebuilt twice with increasing monumentality. Some indication of the greater prominence of Christianity in Aquileian topography and hence society can be gleaned from the ground plan of Fortunatianus' new basilica. At some 73.40 m in length, it was approximately twice the length of its Theodorean predecessor. This extension of the building required the appropriation of property to the east of the original site, and it is here that the rising power of the Church is most obvious. Whereas the eastern limit of Theodore's church had been determined by the line of a road, Fortunatianus' basilica was built over this road (see

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26 Mirabella Roberti, 'Osservazioni sulla basilica postteodoriana', 869.
fig. 14). This is significant. Everything suggests that the street grids of northern Italy were assiduously protected by municipal councils throughout late antiquity and the early middle ages. For Fortunatianus' new basilica to break free from the constraints of the urban strait-jacket suggests, then, that Aquileian Christians enjoyed considerable social prominence and power.

The cathedral was not the only monumental Christian presence in the city, however: by the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century a considerable area of the southern part of the city was given over to Christian oratories, all decorated with sumptuous mosaics. This coincides with increased construction undertaken in the episcopate of Chromatius (388-407/8), whose energetic programme led his friend Rufinus to designate him the Bezalel of his day, after the skilled craftsman who had fashioned the tabernacle for Moses (Exodus 35). Areas beyond the city walls were being colonised by the new faith, as the cemeteries saw the erection of various martyr shrines. Again, as is shown by the extensive remains of the cruciform church, measuring some 65 m in length, unearthed on the 'fondo Tullio' at the southern suburb of Beligna, the Aquileian congregation could afford to build on a magnificent scale. The city also saw patronage by outsiders: in the early fifth century, eastern immigrants in the city built their own church, known today as the basilica di Monastero and housed in the Museo Paleocristiano; while sometime around 400 the consular governor of

27 The evidence is collected in Ward-Perkins, CAMA, 179-86.
28 Chevallier, Aquilée, 104.
30 Jäggi, 179-84; Chevallier, Aquilée, 108-9.
31 L. Ruggini, 'Ebrei e orientali nell'Italia settentrionale fra il IV e il VI secolo d. C.', SDHI 25 (1959), 192-6, accepting the designation by the excavator, G. Brusin, that the building was originally a synagogue; but cf. L. Bertacchi, 'Le basiliche suburbane di Aquileia', Arh. Vest. 23 (1972), 224-33, esp. 225-7. The use of the apparently Judaizing formula of the dedication d(omi)n(o) Sab(aoth), a crucial element in its identification as a synagogue, may be more ambiguous: it could well have
Venetia et Histria, Parecorius Apollinaris, dedicated a basilica apostolorum in the city (CIL 5. 1582).

As the cathedral became ever more grandiose, so its prominence in the topography of Aquileia increased. The area in which Theodore’s and Fortunatianus’ cathedrals rose was one which had only been enclosed by the walls of Aquileia during the expansion of the city in the late-third century, when, for strategic reasons, the mercantile quarter of the city was enlarged. That Christianity should have developed its first monumental building in an area outside the real political heart of the city occasions no surprise in a cult still groping for respectability. The intramural location of the complex, however, together with its elaborate and expensive decoration, suggests that by Theodore’s time Christianity in Aquileia was attracting adherents of considerable social prominence. The increased monumentality of Fortunatianus’ reconstruction of the northern hall, as well as its overcoming the constrictions of the street grid in this part of the city, suggests that the site was becoming ever more conspicuous in the Aquileian topography. During the fifth, sixth and later centuries, the prominence of the site increased as the whole settlement pattern of Aquileia changed. With its harbour drying up and its location making it easy prey to barbarian raiders gushing out of the passes of the Julian Alps, the city went into remarkable decline. It was sacked by the Huns in 452, and though the site continued to be inhabited, the settlement was on a much smaller scale than in the great days of the fourth century, when Ausonius had ranked

entered Christian usage by the late-fourth century, especially as most of the Christians who worshipped there were Syrians, and thus from an area where Jewish and Christian interpenetration was an everyday reality (cf. H. Drijvers, ‘Syrian Christianity and Judaism’, in J. Lieu et al. (eds.), The Jews among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire [1992], 124-46).

32 Jäggi, 162-3.

Aquileia ninth in his *Ordo urbiun nobilium* (64-72). Finally, the cathedral area usurped the ancient forum as the political heart of Aquileia. When a new wall was built, probably in the Ostrogothic period, the old civic centre was left outside the northern perimeter, whereas the cathedral was now firmly inside. In the medieval period, this new topographical arrangement was accentuated, and the cathedral complex became ever more important as the central focus of what was plainly becoming a mere village.

This survey of the architectural development of the cathedral and subsidiary churches at Aquileia provides an ideal example of how the new religion could come to occupy a dominant position in the life of a city. As the cathedral complex became larger, more lavish and more central in the topography of the city, it is safe to assume that this mirrors increments in the social standing of the Christian community. If Aquileia, like Ephesus, had its Seven Sleepers who returned after two hundred years, then they too would have marvelled at the utter transformation of the city they had left: between the mid-third and early-fifth centuries, Aquileia, like the Ephesus of legend, had acquired a thoroughly Christian aspect. How, though, does the situation obtaining at Aquileia compare with that in other centres in northern Italy?

(iii) *Milan: emperors, bishops and churches in an imperial capital*

Milan is a popular subject for the study of the transformation of urban life in the late empire. Such analyses have tended to concentrate on the impact on the city of the episcopate of Ambrose, during which many new churches, primarily built to house the relics of martyrs and apostles, rose in the cemeteries outside Milan’s walls. Here, however, I want to describe the sort of city Ambrose inherited from Auxentius

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34 Jäggi, 163 and n. 17
35 As can be seen in a seventeenth century topographical painting now in Udine: Jäggi, Tafel 1 c.
36 See n. 5 above. Such a tendency is apparent as early as Ambrose’s contemporaries: A. Calderini, ‘La tradizione letteraria più antica sulle basiliche milanesi’, *RAL* 75 (1941-42), 78-82.
in 374, and determine to what extent Christianity had changed Milan's appearance in the period since Constantine and Licinius proclaimed religious toleration in the city in 313. Any attempt to reconstruct the Christian topography of Milan during the fourth century is bound to be difficult in a city where even the imperial palace has not yet been found by archaeologists.

Our image of Milan's ecclesiastical topography at the time of Ambrose's election is lamentable. Literary sources give only occasional hints as to the presence of church buildings. Ambrose's discovery of the relics of Gervasius and Protasius occurred in the basilica housing the relics of SS. Felix and Nabor.\textsuperscript{37} The existence of several churches, some of them quite large, before Ambrose's building program is also commonly accepted. In 355, the council of Milan met in a church which was perhaps the cathedral, although it is impossible to be certain on this point.\textsuperscript{38}

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  \item Hilary of Poitiers is terribly imprecise, stating merely that the bishops met 'ad ecclesiam' (\textit{Coll. ant. Par.} Appendix II. 3). McLynn, \textit{Ambrose}, 29 and n. 101, rightly queries the assertion of Krautheimer, \textit{Capitals}, 77, that 'the size of the synod of 355, attended by more than three hundred bishops, not counting their clerics, the emperor, his suite, and the congregation, suggests that it met in the large new cathedral', that is the church of S. Tecla, under the Piazza del Duomo. This is based on the otherwise uncorroborated report of Socrates, \textit{HE} 2. 36. But the only surviving list of bishops at the council suggests that it was a more select gathering: cf. pp. 76-8 above. Some support for the council assembling in the cathedral might be sought from Ambrose who, in a letter to the people of Vercelli recalling the activities of their illustrious bishop Eusebius, remarks that Eusebius and Dionysius of Milan 'raperent de ecclesia maiore' (\textit{Ep.} 63. 68: text in \textit{PL} 16: 1208). Yet Michaela Zelzer, in her new edition of the letter (\textit{CSEL} 82/3 [1982]: 271 app. crit.), suggests convincingly that the word \textit{maiore} is a later interpolation. On the other hand, bearing in mind the
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Ambrose himself refers to several churches, such as the 'old basilica' or 'small basilica of the church' which is probably identical with the 'basilica of the baptistery' (see Appendix 2), the 'large new basilica within the walls', and most controversially, the 'Portian basilica which is without the walls'.

Milan, like Rome, had its tituli, churches which originated in private properties owned by members of the pre-Constantinian Christian community. Ambrose mentions a basilica Faustae near the shrine of SS. Nabor and Felix (Ep. 22.2); the Portian basilica (basilica Portiana) probably originated in this way too.

No less than Ammianus Marcellinus attests the existence of a shrine ad Innocentes from the reign of Valentinian I (364-75). Apart from their meagre existence as names in the literary tradition, some—but by no means all (see Appendix 2)—of these early churches can be located in the archaeological record. The area outside the western walls, a suburban park known as the Hortus Philippi, saw the construction of many martyr shrines, some of which, including the basilica of Fausta and SS. Nabor and Felix, existed prior to Ambrose's election, and whose existence has been confirmed by excavation.
Moving within the walls of Milan it is possible to posit a firm identification for the church described by Ambrose as the *basilica nova*. Emergency excavations conducted in the Piazza del Duomo in 1943 (for the construction of air-raid shelters), and pursued further in 1960-2, revealed extensive remains of a colossal church, later known as S. Tecla, which can be safely identified as the *basilica nova* (see further Appendix 2). It was of perfect basilican form, including an apse, and measured some 80 x 45 m, divided into a broad central nave flanked on either side by two colonnaded aisles (see. fig. 16). This was a truly enormous building by fourth century standards. In Italy it was matched only by Constantine’s Lateran basilica at Rome, while Fortunatianus’ new northern hall at Aquileia was almost 1500 m² smaller. Despite the conscious efforts of the architects to construct a basilican church, the whole edifice is slightly trapezoidal in plan: this was perhaps determined by the street plan in this part of Milan or by the buildings underlying the church. Next to this lay the church which Ambrose described as the ‘basilica of the baptistery’: that baptistery is probably the small building excavated in the northern transept of the current Duomo, which was known in the middle ages as S. Stefano alle Fonti, while the *baptisterii basilica* itself is probably the church known in the middle ages as Sta Maria Maggiore, and which was demolished to make way for the new Duomo (see Appendix 2). In effect, then, Milan had acquired a double cathedral by the time of Ambrose’s election in 374.

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43 See now, above all: M. Sannazaro, ‘Considerazioni sulla topografia e le origini del cimitero milanese *Ad Martyres*’, *Aevum* 70 (1996), 81-111.


A number of features of this complex are worth noting, because they reveal much about the social standing of the Milanese Christian community. First, the immense size of the *basilica nova* and its location, taken together, are instructive. It rose within the walls and its construction probably demanded the destruction of a considerable number of buildings already standing on the site.\(^\text{48}\) Secondly, the materials used to build it were sumptuous and expensive: fine white marble plinths for columns hewn from African breccia marble.\(^\text{49}\) The scale, richness and location of this basilica suggest that the Milanese church would have been prominent. They also point to a possible context for the construction of the building. The lavish decoration of the *basilica nova* evokes Hilary of Poitier's complaint that the adherents of Auxentius of Milan should be satisfied that they can worship God in fine buildings, when these are the surely the haunts of Antichrist: possibly Hilary is referring to the *basilica nova*.\(^\text{50}\) The scale of the site puts the *basilica nova* in the same class as the imperial foundations at Rome, Trier and Constantinople. As Milan was also an imperial capital, it is possible that it may have been built with imperial patronage itself. The basilican plan of the church, evocative of Constantine's foundations in Rome and Palestine, and a precocious feature among the churches of northern Italy, supports this contention. Beyond this, any assertion about the origins of S. Tecla can only be conjectural, but the suggestion that the church was built with the patronage of the emperor Constans during the 340s remains attractive.\(^\text{51}\)

The splendour of the basilica was complemented, insofar as it can be deduced, by the episcopal house or palace. No archaeological remains of this


\(^{48}\) Krautheimer, *Capitalis*, 76.

\(^{49}\) Calderini, *Milano archeologica*, 596.

\(^{50}\) Hil. Pict., *Contra Aux*. 12; the connection was drawn by McLynn, *Ambrose*, 27-8.

building have ever been identified, but hints in Paulinus' account of it indicate that it may have been similar to the urban dwellings of aristocrats. Paulinus mentions various rooms: there was the bishop's bedroom (*cubiculum*), a portico and an upper storey.\(^5\) This is enough to suggest an imposing building with different rooms for distinct purposes, and it accords well with what is known about the use of domestic space by late antique aristocrats to advertise their social power.\(^5\) It represents the appropriation of the traditional symbols of social power by the Christian hierarchy in Milan, a phenomenon observable right across the empire.\(^5\) This adoption was evident in the very form of the cathedral: its basilican plan was derived from secular audience chambers and it was characteristic of churches built with imperial patronage. Such symbolic form was not lost on Ambrose, who, on assuming the episcopate, embarked on a building campaign where the architectural form of his churches served to stamp his prestige and power on his city.\(^5\) But Ambrose was not so much an innovator as the continuator of a development stretching back into the mid-fourth century. With its expansive cathedral complex, to which the episcopal house seems to have been closely connected,\(^5\) the church of Milan was already an ostentatious presence in the city.

At Milan, as at Aquileia, the church of the fourth century had come to occupy a significant position in the topography of the city. Just as the area around Theodore's double cathedral took on the character of a Christian quarter, so too the

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\(^5\) See Appendix 2.
basilica nova, basilica vetus, baptistery and episcopal dwelling meant that the eastern sector of Milan was dominated by its ecclesiastical buildings. They made that area of the city an architectural focus of the Christian presence in the same way as the circus, Herculean baths and imperial palace demonstrated the presence of the court in the western part of the city. Milan was similar to Aquileia also in the way that the city developed after the fourth century. After Honorius withdrew the court to Ravenna at the beginning of the fifth century, the architectural accoutrements of the imperial presence in Milan became redundant: the demolition of the amphitheatre to serve as the foundations for S. Lorenzo is symbolic of this change. As at Aquileia—albeit for different reasons—the topographic focus of the city changed with the gradual collapse of meaningful secular authority. When Milan became a city dominated by its bishops, so, in physical terms, it became a city dominated by its cathedral: the centre of power moved eastwards, from the imperial residence and the forum to the modern heart of Milanese civic life, the Piazza del Duomo. Yet in one significant way, the architectural development of Milanese Christianity differs from that at Aquileia. Whereas the emperor’s presence at Aquileia was both intermittent and transient, Milan was the permanent or semi-permanent home of several imperial courts between Maximian and Honorius. Thus the dialogue between the institutions of church and state were more concentrated in Milan than at Aquileia. The Milanese church, as the disputes between the empress Justina and Ambrose show, was not just a focus for ecclesiatical ceremonial, but for that of the emperors also. This demanded a fitting venue, one which was provided for deliberately in the construction of the basilica nova.

(iv) The creation of Christian environments in northern Italy

The study of specific examples like Aquileia and Milan is instructive in that it demonstrates how particularly rich sites can yield pictures of the way the monumental presence of the church evolved during the fourth century. While they provide paradigms for the architectural development of Christianity in north Italian cities, it must be recognised that they cannot be taken as typical of the region as a whole. Both (and especially Milan) were major imperial cities, an importance which can be gauged from the fact that they are the only cities of the region to make it into Ausonius’ *Ordo urbiwm nobilium*. This political importance was a significant factor in their overall development during late antiquity (see Ch. 2) and undoubtedly contributed to the monumental growth of their churches, particularly in terms of the wealth these Christian communities demonstrated in their cult buildings. Even so, each city shows individual peculiarities, primarily the importance of imperial patronage for Milan. While they developed analogous structures, these could arise in starkly distinct circumstances. Thus, although both cities had double cathedrals by the end of the 370s, that at Milan had come into existence through a process of gradual architectural embellishment (the addition of the *basilica nova* to the *vetus*), whereas the one at Aquileia was the conscious creation of Theodore in the years after Constantine’s conversion. And just as we ought not to generalise about Milan from Aquileia (or vice versa), so we ought not to assume that developments in either centre were typical of the region’s cities as a whole. In every case it is necessary to consider the particular circumstances obtaining at individual cities. Nevertheless, it is possible to see certain common features in the architectural evolution of Christianity across the region which have much in common with developments at Aquileia and Milan.

59 Full details in Appendix 2 below.
An important factor in determining the social prominence of Christian communities is the location of their church buildings. The religious space of a pagan city was, as has been noted, dominated by its temples. Any picture of a 'Christian triumph' would assume the erection of large churches within cities, signifying a transformation of their religious topography. The typical analysis of this change in northern Italy has been rather negative, yet at Milan and Aquileia churches had risen within the walls by the middle of the fourth century. Even allowing for the undeniable power of the Christian communities in those cities, it is clear that intramural ecclesiastical (if not always episcopal) complexes were a broader phenomenon. That at Aosta was built right on the side of the forum, close to the capitolium itself. So too at Padua, the Christian building (perhaps not a church) which yielded the mosaic of Eutherius was close to the forum. By the early fifth century a large and sumptuous church, on the site of the medieval cathedral of S. Giusto, had been built within the walls of Trieste, that of S. Giusto on the citadel only metres away from the forum. Intramural churches were also present at Verona (under the present Duomo), Grado (in the Piazza della Vittoria) and Porec (the primitive church beneath the Euphrasian basilica), while

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60 D. A. Bullough, 'Urban change in early medieval Italy: the example of Pavia', *PBSR* 34 (1966), writing of the church of SS. Gervasius and Protasius at Pavia, states: 'Its extra-mural site is, in my view, fairly typical of early episcopal churches in north and central Italy' (p. 90 n. 28).


62 Cf. pp. 121-3 above.

63 Personal observation on site. A column of the capitolium is visible behind a grille in the facade of the campanile of S. Giusto.

64 P. L. Zovatto, 'Arte paleocristiana a Verona', in *Verona* 1, 562-74.


66 For full documentation, see pp. 125-31 above.
the early fifth century baptistery at Emona also represents a monumental Christian presence inside a city's walls.67

Despite these examples of intramural Christian buildings, particularly in the cities of Venetia et Histria (only Milan and Aosta lie outside the region), it is clear that there was considerable variation from place to place. Even where intramural churches did exist, there could be considerable variety as to where precisely they were located. The early cathedrals of Trieste and Aosta, and the Christian building of Eutherius at Padua, were close to the traditional centres of secular and religious power, the forum and its temples; but not even the episcopal complexes of Milan and Aquileia enjoyed such prominence. The rather more peripheral nature of the Milanese and Aquileian cathedrals is mirrored at Verona in the early buildings erected on the northern periphery of the city, on the site of the modern Duomo. The Veronese case is instructive in other ways too. The centres of some towns (Milan, Aquileia, Brescia) literally shifted from the traditional focus of power (whether palace or forum) to the area around the cathedral, while at Trieste and Aosta the cathedrals rose beside the fora themselves: in both sets of examples the cathedral ultimately assumed a central position in urban topography. But at Verona the cathedral remains a peripheral building, the forum remained throughout the medieval period the centre of town (as it is today), and no church has ever been built near it.68 There was thus a considerable variety in the locations where churches were built, and only local contexts can explain them. At Milan, the traditional political centre fell into disuse after the court withdrew to Ravenna; at Aquileia, the various disasters which befell the city in the fifth and sixth centuries granted the bishops considerable prominence and ensured a central location for the cathedral in the post-antique town; and at Verona, where the street plan was jealously preserved,

67 See pp. 233-4 above.

the capacity of the church to encroach upon the old urban centre was considerably restricted.

A second significant factor was the inter-relationship between Christian edifices and previous buildings on the same spot. There was a variety of responses. At Milan, the development of the basilica nova required the destruction of existing buildings from the outset, and their replacement by a radically different structure. This, however, seems an anomalous development, and even at Milan, it must be remembered, the trapezoidal alignment of the walls of the basilica probably reveals some influence on the shape of the Christian buildings by earlier structures. A more typical model seems to be one of gradual adaptation of existing buildings. This was clearly the case in the Theodorean complex at Aquileia and the pre-Euphrasian churches at Porec, and a similar pattern exerted itself at Aosta, where the cathedral developed organically within confines imposed by a third and early fourth century domus. Such developments are particularly clear in smaller Christian buildings: the oratories in Aquileia and Eutherius’ building at Padua are good examples. So too is the early fifth century baptistery and portico at Emona: not only did this develop within the strict confines of the existing insula, but it also exploited the presence of a bath building on the site as a ready made source of water for the baptismal ablutions.

Of course, such adaptations did not always slavishly follow the ground-plans of existing buildings. Walls were knocked down and rooms enlarged to suit liturgical needs, and the laying of mosaic pavements—or opus sectile ones at Milan and Aosta—in many of these Christian buildings required considerable investment which surely reflects the increasing social profile of Christianity. Later, as some

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church buildings were renovated, the investing of new wealth in more sumptuous buildings was accompanied by an increase in their size which led to the edifice breaking free of the confines of the urban street grid. This is most obvious in Fortunatianus' new northern hall at Aquileia, but by the early fifth century the development had been paralleled at Verona, where the erection of a new basilica, twice the size of its predecessor, also led to the blocking off of a Roman street (see fig. 3). And as church buildings rode roughshod over the street grids, so they plundered existing buildings for their materials. Nowhere is this clearer than at Milan where, probably in the early fifth century, the church of S. Lorenzo was built on a platform of blocks taken from the amphitheatre, while it was fronted by a portico built of columns likewise robbed from some other, older building (see Appendix 2).

Undoubtedly the area where the growing monumentality of church buildings most altered the appearance of the cities of northern Italy was in their suburbs. Although at Milan much of this development belongs to the age of Ambrose, some of it precedes him: the basilica of SS. Felix and Nabor, the basilica of Fausta, and the shrine ad Innocentes, whatever form it may have taken. Similar extramural developments are visible in the fourth century at Aquileia, Brescia, and Vicenza. By the early-fifth century, most cities in the region had several extramural churches. These suburban transformations were the most profound in terms of the changing image of north-Italian cities. The first indicator a visitor received of the wealth and character of a city in antiquity came from its suburbs. In the late-third century, the image projected by Milan was dominated by its walls and the

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74 S. L. Dyson, *Community and Society in Roman Italy* (1992), 140-53.
colonnaded street with its triumphal arch erected by Maximian: everything emphasised that the city was an imperial capital. At Aquileia, the city’s prosperity was manifested in the richness of its citizens’ tombs. By the later fourth century, however, the images of these and most other cities in northern Italy had changed. Churches were springing up outside their walls, and anyone who could have returned to northern Italy two centuries after the persecutions, like the Seven Sleepers had done at Ephesus, would have been impressed by the outwardly Christian aspect of the region’s cities.

For all that, it is impossible to draw a single, all encompassing blueprint for the transformation of the cities of northern Italy. Types of church building varied enormously, from the enormous imperial basilica nova at Milan, to Theodore’s double church at Aquileia, to small buildings such as that paid for by Eutherius at Padua, or the baptistery and portico at Emona. Nor could every city boast intramural churches. Some cities did not see an intramural Christian presence until very late indeed: at Pavia, for example, there was no church built inside the walls until the Ostrogothic period; the first church underlying the Lombard cathedral at Brescia seems no earlier than the sixth century; and at Ravenna the appearance of an intramural church, the Basilica of Ursus, most probably follows the establishment of the imperial court there by Honorius in the early fifth century. It is difficult to determine the criteria which dictated the presence of intramural churches, but it is worth noting that two of the earliest and largest—Theodore’s at Aquileia and the basilica vetus at Milan—were built in cities which had long had influential Christian

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75 Bullough, ‘Urban change’, 91.
76 G. Cuscito, Il primo cristianesimo, 42.
77 Pace Wharton, Refiguring the Post Classical City, 108-9, who dates it to the late-fourth. Such a dating is based, however, on a misinterpretation of Agnellus of Ravenna’s notice of bishop Ursus’
communities (see Chs. 3-4). Elsewhere, intramural Christian buildings might be at first only small chapels, as at Padua.

It is probably safest to assume that the variations from place to place reflect local differences in terms of the social prominence and influence of the Christian community. The church was a powerful organisation in Milan and Aquileia; it must also have exercised a certain amount of clout in Aosta if the erection of a church building by the forum at the end of the fourth century is any guide. Likewise, the absence of intramural churches in many centres until a relatively late period suggests that Christianity was not yet the dominant force in local society. But the similar behaviour of Christian communities in different places does not mean that their churches were equally prominent in northern Italy as a whole. The divergent fortunes of the churches of Milan, Aquileia, Padua and Aosta demonstrate this nicely. By the end of the fourth century, each one had Christian buildings within its walls, but the wider importance of each city's Christian community varied enormously. Milan and Aquileia were becoming important episcopal centres, exercising influence over other congregations in their regions (see Ch. 6), while the significance of the bishops of Aosta and Padua remained quite localised. Equally, while both Aosta and Padua had intramural Christian buildings, there was a considerable difference between them. Padua, a participant in the Christological disputes of the fourth century, boasted nothing more monumental than Eutherius' small oratory; by contrast, Aosta, a peripheral Christian community until much later, had developed a large church inside its walls rather earlier.

So the monumental development of Christianity was a variable phenomenon, with each city seeing its own individual development. Nevertheless, this apparent haphazardness went together with a more general increase in the social

dean: cf. Picard, *Souvenir*, 488. The very form of the basilica, a five aisled, apsidal basilica measuring 60 x 35 m, suggests a conscious imitation of the basilica nova at Milan.
respectability of the church. Eutherius’ chapel at Padua may have been small, but it was still a place where he could advertise his patronage of his local Christian community. The pervading image of Christian development in the fourth century is one of growing social diversity. By the end of our period, Zeno of Verona could boast that his congregation encompassed people of every age, sex, race and social standing (Tract. 1. 55; 2. 29. 2). Such data, when viewed on its own, contributes to the traditional picture of Christian expansion in the cities of northern Italy which was gradually approaching a point of triumph. But there is other material which must be set beside the picture presented thus far, which shows that the more ostentatious Christian presence in the region occurred against a background of considerable religious diversity, and that not every soul in northern Italy had been seduced into accepting baptism.

DIFFERENT PATHS: CHRISTIANS BETWEEN PAGANS AND JEWS

Christian expansion had not taken place in a religious vacuum: the new religion grew into a space already occupied by other faiths. The gradual emergence of Christianity as the faith of the imperial élite transformed the interrelationships between the various religions of northern Italy. As Christian toleration of other beliefs declined in the course of the fourth century, so the religious dynamic of the region was transformed. The church, intermittently supported by the state, directed its wrath against any rival group. In many cases, these opponents would have been of a decidedly Christian hue themselves, such as heretics, variously defined, whose legacy of internal conflict still haunted the north-Italian churches in the time of Ambrose (see Ch. 5 passim), and probably Manichaeans too. These were rivals

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78 Augustine’s decision at Milan to ‘leave the Manichaeans’ because he could ‘not remain in that sect’ (Conf. 5. 14. 25) suggests that he may have been in contact with a group there. Cf. S. N. C. Lieu, Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China (1985), 137, for the importance
IFS from within; in addition, Christian monopolisation of the sacred forced new identities on other groups. The various pagan cults, never before a coherent system, were now lumped together and demonised. Together with the Jews, they constituted the more threatening external ‘others’ in the religious landscape of northern Italy.

\(i\) Capitolium and church: Christianity and paganism

In the course of the fourth century church buildings came to dominate many, though by no means all, the urban landscapes of northern Italy. They occupied a prominence previously reserved for the temples of the pagan gods. Yet it would be rash to imagine that this transformation was swift: there is no unambiguous evidence of sudden abandonment of the old centres of religious practice. A more likely scenario is that of a period when churches and temples would have stood side-by-side in the cityscape, and when both would have received worshippers. Our evidence for the continued vibrancy of paganism, however, is scanty: an inscription here, a sermon there. In some cases our ignorance is startling: at Aquileia, for example, the extensive excavations have still not yielded the location of the capitolium. But there is just enough to show that even by the end of the century, northern Italy was still home to many pagans. In the last chapter, for example, we encountered vivid evidence of religious conflict between pagans and Christians in the Val di Non at the end of the fourth century. The narratives of these events show that in the Alto Adige temples still stood and pagan rituals and processions were still

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performed. Such material might lull us into accepting the traditional image of a paganism relegated to the countryside, but this is a thoroughly mistaken picture.\textsuperscript{81} It is clear, rather, that the worship of the old gods continued to take place within the walls of many north-Italian cities for much of the fourth century.

The last period for which there is evidence of temple building on a large scale in the region is under the tetrarchy. The architectural embellishment of Milan, after its adoption as an imperial residence by Maximian, may have included sacred buildings. Ausonius’ description of Milan (\textit{Ord. urb. nob.} 35-45) tells us of a number of buildings with sacred connotations. There were \textit{templia} (\textit{Ord. urb. nob.} 40), a reference which might mean Christian churches but which could equally indicate pagan temples.\textsuperscript{82} Ausonius also mentions Herculean baths in the city (\textit{Ord. urb. nob.} 41), and these must surely be part of a tetrarchic building programme: as part of Diocletian’s sacralisation of the imperial office, Maximian took on the nature of Herculius, semi-divine lieutenant to the senior Augustus.\textsuperscript{83} Apart from this, however, little is known of the pagan religious life of late Roman Milan.\textsuperscript{84}

There is little explicit evidence for the renovation or construction of temples in other north-Italian centres, but in one case the role of direct imperial intervention is recorded. At Como, north of Milan, a temple of Sol was erected by Axilio Junior, a \textit{curator} of T. Flavius Postumius Titianus, \textit{corrector Italiae}, by direct order of

\textsuperscript{81} For redress, see M. Roblin, "Paganisme et rusticité. Un gros problème, une étude des mots", \textit{Annales, ESC} 8 (1953), 173-83.

\textsuperscript{82} Thus R. P. H. Green, \textit{The Works of Ausonius} (1991), 574.

\textsuperscript{83} This is, however, conjecture, based on the location of the baths in the western part of the city which was redeveloped at the time of the tetrarchy: Arslan, "Urbanistica di Milano romana", 196-8.

\textsuperscript{84} Cf. Calderini, "Milano archeologica", 563-9, demonstrates the inadequacy of our knowledge.
Diocletian and Maximian themselves. Apart from this our picture is sketchy. Statues of the tetrarchs, replete with inscriptions recording their dedicants’ devotion to the imperial numen, were set up at Susa, Milan, Padua, and Miramare near Trieste. These evoke comparison with the erection of similar images outside the Temple of Hadrian at Ephesus at around the same time, but the northern Italian instances lack such a precise context.

Another city where paganism can be seen to have retained its vitality was Verona. Bishop Zeno’s preaching gives the impression that his Christian community did not yet dominate the city’s population. He was scandalised about the knowledge of Christian mysteries among pagans (Tract. 2. 3. 10). Worse than that, he was horrified by the potential for sacrilege when Christians were actually married to one another. Advising widows not to remarry, he paints a lurid picture of what might happen if a Christian widow were to marry a new, pagan husband. The feast days of the two religions might overlap and the pagan sacrificial food become confused with that being offered as part of the Christian sacrament. Apart from blasphemy this could lead to marital strife, even violence, resulting in the woman being confined to the house by her husband’s orders and so be unable to come to church (Tract. 2. 7. 14-15). There is probably a deal of exaggeration here, but there is an interesting aside in the course of Zeno’s histrionics. Establishing as his

religiones castissime curatae, ac mirum in modum adhuc nouis cultisque pulchre moenibus Romana culmina et ceterae urbes ornatae, maxime Carthago, Mediolanum, Nicomedia.’


86  Susa: CIL 5. 7248-9; Milan: CIL 5. 5807/8; Padua: CIL 5. 2187-19 (erected by different people); Miramare: CIL 5. 8205. Ward-Perkins, CAMA, 26, suggests that CIL 5. 4327-8, recording the erection of unspecified items by a governor called Gaudentius at Brescia, may also indicate imperial statues, although the date of Gaudentius’ tenure of office is unknown: cf. PLRE 1. 386 ‘Gaudentius 8.’
premise the coincidence of pagan and Christian festivals, he remarks that this often happens (*Tract.* 2. 7. 14: ‘ut saepe contingit’). He uses the present tense, with the clear implication that when Veronese Christians went to worship, they would have met their pagan neighbours, en route to the temple, in the street.

To Zeno, then, paganism was a real threat to the integrity of the souls under his care. Yet his picture is strangely at odds with what else is known of Veronese paganism in the fourth century. The only independent evidence suggests that, by the early 380s, the traditional focus of pagan worship, the capitolium, was in a state of decay. At some time between 379 and 383, Valerius Palladius, consular governor of Venetia et Histria, ordered the erection in the forum at Verona of a statue that had previously been in the capitolium.\(^8\) This was hardly looting: Palladius’ dedicatory inscription announced that the statue had long lain (‘diu iacentem’) in the capitolium, toppled from its perch at some point. A capitolium strewn with fallen statues does not sound like a vibrant centre of pagan ritual.\(^9\) Whatever ceremonies Zeno’s pagan rivals were attending they are unlikely to have been in the capitolium: perhaps they were the rituals of privately funded cults, which continued to flourish thanks to the support of wealthy pagans even after the government had withdrawn the financial props of state cults.\(^\)\(^0\) For all that, however, it is clear that some areas of the city remained unmolested by the monumental presence of Christianity. The forum, for instance, remained free from Christian encroachment: even today, there are no churches on the Piazza delle Erbe (as the forum is now known), and the only Christian presence is nothing more than a Roman statue dressed up in the later middle ages as the Madonna of Verona.

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(ii) Verus Israel: Judaism and Christianity in northern Italy

Rather more evidence survives to show the uneasy relationship between Christians and Jews in the fourth century. Despite efforts by the state to retain a certain studied neutrality in Jewish-Christian relations, confrontations at a local level could be both verbally and physically aggressive, as Christian mobs took matters into their own hands. This coincided with a general hardening of attitudes in the Theodosian Code reflected at the highest level in increased anti-Jewish legislation. But Jews had long been demonised by Christian authors: the continuance of Judaism after Christ's ministry meant that Christians were faced with awkward counter-claimants to their Scriptural heritage, a factor not lost on pagan polemicists against Christianity. Unsurprisingly, and despite all evidence to the contrary, the 'end' of Judaism had long been a rhetorical commonplace in Christian views of history. North-Italian Christians ventured into these debates. Just as Eusebius of Caesarea had argued for the priority of Christianity over paganism and Judaism by insisting that the Hebrew patriarchs were 'Christians in fact if not in name' (HE 1.4.6), so Zeno of Verona absolved Abraham of any taint of sin (Tract. 1.3.43): to be sure, Abraham had been circumcised—the typical mutilation of a Jew (Tract. 1.3 passim)—but this had been a historical necessity, and it ought not to impugn the fundamental Christianity of his beliefs (Tract. 1.3.6-7). Thus Zeno was participating in the debate as to which particular claimants—the Jews or the Christians—on the heritage of Scripture constituted the verus Israel, the chosen

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91 As Theodosius had tried to do at first over the burning of a synagogue at Callinicum on the Euphrates frontier in c. 389: McLynn, Ambrose, 298-315.


people of God. For Zeno there could be no doubt: commenting on the crossing of
the Red Sea (Exodus 14) he announced:

Egypt is his world; Pharaoh and his people the Devil and every iniquitous
spirit. Israel is the Christian people, which is ordered to set forth and strive
for what is to come (Tract. 2. 26. 2).97

This passage of Exodus was but one *locus classicus* of the Jewish-Christian debate
on which north-Italians made their own contribution. Isaiah inspired exegesis by
Ambrose and Jerome,98 but north-Italian interest in this crucial prophetic text, which
foretold, for Christians, the obduracy of the Jews, began earlier. It was, as will be
seen, central to Zeno’s anti-Semitic polemic. The prophet also featured in the
heresiological catalogue of Filastrius of Brescia, again with reference to Judaism
(e.g. *Div. heres. lib.* 155 on Isaiah 6:2). Indeed, Filastrius begins his work with an
extensive list of Jewish ‘heresies’ (*Div. heres. lib.* 1-28), marking the use in north-
Italian circles of what became a familiar trope in anti-heretical works: the
association of Jews and heretics as a common enemy (cf. Ambr., *De fide* 2. 15. 130).

95 It is stated explicitly in Eusebius’ historical agenda: *HE* 1. 1. 2.

96 Cf. L. V. Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome* (1995), 219-33, esp. 220-1 and 223, on the
place of Zeno’s use of the Pentateuch in the exegetical tradition.

97 Zeno was capable of reading Exodus 13-14 in different ways depending on his needs.
Throughout *Tract.* 2. 26 his interpretation proceeds by typological (e.g. ‘Maria [i. e. Miriam in
Exodus 15:20] ... typus ecclesiae fuit’). Elsewhere, however, his interpretation rejects such empty
allegorizing: the Red Sea passage is seen as an inferior *imago* of the *veritas* offered by Christian
baptism: G. P. Jeanes, *The Day Has Come!* (1995), 231-5. This is given added force by Zeno’s
assertion that the Jews were never immersed in water, contrary to the condition of Christians at
Indeed, in *Tract.* 2. 16, he provides a unique interpretation of the parting of the waters: rather than
represent God’s favour it meant that the Jews had in fact been rejected (cf. *Tract.* 1. 18. 1), while the
waters had reared up on either side to avoid contact with iniquitous Jewish feet.

(1996), 54-61, 147 (and 100-25 *passim* for context).
While much north-Italian anti-Semitism in the fourth century belongs to this broader context, some plainly proceeds from actual conditions of religious rivalry between the region’s Jews and Christians. We saw (Ch. 4) that Jewish expansion in northern Italy, although of a different character, occurred at approximately the same time as that of Christianity. During the fourth century, and later, the region was home to several flourishing Jewish communities, some of which have left traces in the material record. Brescia, for example, had a synagogue, as is clear from an inscription recording a certain Coelia Paterna, mater synagogae Brixianorum; and at the end of the fourth century, the city’s Jews were derided in several pungent sermons by bishop Gaudentius.

While such Jewish communities were the target of many antisemitic sermons, evidence for actual violence against north-Italian Jews is lacking. A tenth century Vita narrates that St. Innocentius of Tortona saw the conversion to Christianity of ‘omnes Gentiles seu Judaei’(sic) as a primary aim of his episcopate. Further, any Jews who did not submit to baptism were expelled from the city, while the synagogue was destroyed and a church built in its place (Vita S. Innocenti 4-5). This account has been accepted as reliable, but such confidence seems misplaced. The text is riddled with anachronisms. It narrates the fiction of Constantine’s leprosy, conversion and curative baptism at the hands of Sylvester of

100 CIL 5. 4411; cf. IG 14. 2304, a fragment bearing the word archisynagogos.
102 Lizzi, Vescovi, 164-5 (Chromatius of Aquileia), 193 and n. 116 (Maximus of Tunn).
Rome (Vita S. Innocenti 4);\textsuperscript{105} while the general tenor of the Vita is to present Innocentius as a model of episcopal sanctity.\textsuperscript{106} It is also striking that in Ambrose’s letters on the burning of the synagogue at Callinicum, not a single reference is made to Jewish-Christian tension in northern Italy during the reign of Julian: all the examples he cites are from the Levant or Egypt (Ep. 40. 15), while the only Italian evidence he produces of Christian attacks on synagogues comes from Rome in the late-380s (Ep. 40. 23).\textsuperscript{107} Yet there was certainly religious rivalry between Christians and Jews. Our late-fourth and fifth century sermon collections by north Italian bishops are riddled with distasteful outbursts of anti-Semitism. At Grado this rivalry took concrete form: probably in the early fifth century, a former Jew named Peter was buried in the church which now lies underneath the Byzantine basilica of S. Eufemia and set in its mosaic pavement an epitaph boasting of his new religious status.\textsuperscript{108} A particularly virulent germ of north-Italian anti-Semitism, rooted in the everyday reality of Jewish-Christian contact, is already apparent, however, in the middle decades of the fourth century.

It has been shown already that Zeno of Verona feared the consequences of his congregation mixing with pagans. He had fears about them fraternising with Jews too, but here the violence of his language suggests that he perceived them as a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{104} Pace Hunt, ‘St. Stephen in Minorca’, 116.
\item \textsuperscript{106} Picard, ‘Le modèle épiscopal’, 371, 374-8, 383-4.
\item \textsuperscript{107} On Ambrose’s letter, cf. Millar, ‘Jews of the Graeco-Roman Diaspora’, 104-5. The view sometimes taken of Ambrose’s claim to have burnt a synagogue himself (Ep. 40. 8) should not be taken as evidence of violence between Jews and Christians in northern Italy. Rather, it is part of the bishop’s rhetorical strategy whereby he made the affair at Callinicum part of a personal struggle with Theodosius I: McLynn, Ambrose, 298-309.
\item \textsuperscript{108} G. Brusin, ‘L’epigrafe musiva di Petrus’, NSc (1947), 18-20. This is, perhaps, a manifestation of the zeal commonly associated with converts: cf. Sawyer, Fifth Gospel, 100-101, 115-18, for energetic Christian proselytising by former Jews.
\end{itemize}
greater threat to the integrity of his flock. As has been seen, much of Zeno’s anti-Jewish polemic slots into a broader Mediterranean context of Christian anti-Semitism. Many of the issues he raised were familiar tropes in the rhetoric of Jewish-Christian conflict: the Jews were obdurate and their decline, as a result of failing to acknowledge Jesus as Messiah, was historically inevitable, indeed predetermined. Particularly pungent examples of his anti-Semitism come in his sermons on Isaiah, none more so than his exegesis of Isaiah 1:2. ‘Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken: “Sons have I begotten and exalted, but they have rebelled against me.”’ Zeno comments:

This is the voice of the Lord by which he was already reproaching the incredulous Jews through the prophets and warning them of what would be in the future before it happened. For it is characteristic of God to comprehend what has happened and to know what is to happen. He says: ‘Sons have I begotten and exalted.’ The Jews, by their measureless infidelity, have merited the hatred of our Lord: just as the grace of God’s love is great, so will be the future punishment of their offences. For it is certain that that son, who has abandoned his father, will be punished severely . . . Thus the Jews, who have spurned God their father, by whom they were reared, who have forgotten their great honour and are ignorant of their great privilege, are wretched and miserable . . . Israel was exalted, when for three days shadows and gloom enveloped all of Egypt; Israel was exalted, when alone it feared or felt nothing of the many great torments of the Egyptians . . . ‘But they have rebelled against me’: for they led him to the cross (Tract. 1. 61. 5-8).

For Zeno, the Jews were a terrifying example to his congregation of the dangers of turning away from God:

God is angry with the Jewish people and, lest they repent, shames them with public reproofs . . . They are an example for us, my brothers: with all your

109 Obduracy: Tract. 1. 29. 2: 1. 47. Inevitable reduction of the Jews: Tract. 1. 9; 1. 18; 1. 30; 1. 46 A. 1; 1. 47; 1. 61. 2, 5; 2. 11; 2. 16; 2. 21.
strength avoid doing likewise, and rejoice through the Lord Jesus Christ that by the misfortune of others you learn the discipline of God (Tract. 1.30).¹¹⁰

For Zeno these dangers were real. Despite his insistence that full membership of God’s Church granted the ability to live happily (‘beate vivere’: Tract. 1.42.1), he nevertheless told his freshly baptised neophytes that danger lurked at every turn: ‘Guard strictly and faithfully the royal favour of indulgence which you have received’ (ibid.).¹¹¹

These perils could be moral: Zeno dwelt on a number of such issues, such as avarice, chastity, and patience;¹¹² as has been seen, paganism also posed a threat. But in the vast majority of his references to the dangers of deviating from devotion to God, Zeno focuses on the Jews. Although such polemic might be dismissed as the mere rehearsal of a series of tropes, it is more likely that Zeno has an identifiable Jewish target in mind. Any attempt to reconstruct the late ancient Jewish community of Verona faces many difficulties. Apart from Zeno’s sermons, there is no evidence for a Jewish community there.¹¹³ But their existence seems consistent with other evidence. In the first place, Verona, as can be expected of such an

¹¹⁰ Cf. Tract. 1.8; 1.47; for commentary see Jeanes, The Day, 121-7.

¹¹¹ Nowhere in his extensive commentary on this sermon does Jeanes (The Day, 130-7, 215-57 passim, esp. 217-18) dwell on this warning: a reflection of his concentration on the ‘joyful’ aspects of Zeno’s baptismal theology almost to the exclusion of all other factors. This derives from Jeanes subscription to the portrait of Zeno in the preaching of the fifth-century bishop Petronius of (?) Bologna, who states that ‘de fonte perpetuo sanctitatis [sc. Zenonis] latex iocundus erumpens peccatores lauat, et gaudia salutis admiscet’ (ed. D. G. Morin, ‘Deux petits discours d’un évêque Petronius, du Ve siècle’, RB 14 [1897], 4; cf. Jeanes, The Day, 17-18 and esp. 259: ‘Petronius said that Zeno multiplied the joys of salvation. His effervescent spirit melted the medieval sculptor [who carved a smiling statue of him now in S. Zeno Maggiore at Verona], and whether we look on his image, read about him, or read his own words, that bright enthusiasm shines through.’

¹¹² The moral sermons are: Tract. 1.1 (chastity); 1.4 (patience); 1.5 (avarice); 2.1 (justice); 2.2 (fear); 2.7 (continence); 2.9 (humility).

important strategic city, had a diverse population, including many from the eastern provinces of the empire. The conditions which fostered the arrival of Christianity in the city, then, could also have led to the establishment of a Jewish community there. Second, anti-Semitic polemic of the type seen in Zeno’s sermons never occurs in a vacuum. The anti-Jewish tirades of other north-Italian bishops all take place against a background of active Jewish religious life in their respective cities. Beyond northern Italy, Zeno’s invective finds a significant echo in the sermons preached by John Chrysostom against Christians seceding to the Jews in Antioch. If Zeno’s constant harping on the Jews and the dangers they posed was not directed against a section of Verona’s population, then they would be, without doubt, the most pointless writings of the patristic age. There is clearly an element of rivalry between Jews and Christians:

> If Jews can glory in the remembrance of a vacuous image, how much more is it possible for the Christian, for whom it is not a figure but the truth (Tract. 1. 46B. 1).

Yet all a Christian has to do is look at the evidence: the Jews live in a condition of misery and subjugation, the greatness of their past irrevocably destroyed (cf. Tract. 1. 52; 2. 17). Such is the price of turning away from God and Zeno’s argumentative style suggests that he saw it as a danger threatening his congregation. His references to the Jews are all articulated in the present tense: hence, despite the collapse of their pact with God, they remained a threat.

It is possible to isolate some aspects of Jewish-Christian religious competition at Verona from what Zeno says in his sermons. Zeno always talks of Judaism in the present tense, just as he does with paganism: a familiar topic is how

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114 Ruggini, 'Ebrei e Orientali', 257-8 n. 214, 283.
the wretchedness of the Jews in the present contrasts with their former enjoyment of God’s favour:

The temple of Solomon, which they had taken for granted, has fallen... Lamentation is imposed on their priests. Sacrifice is taken away. Anointing has ceased. Circumcision is void. The Sabbath is a stigma. New moons and feast days are held in odium. The Romans wield power over their kingdom (Tract. 2. 17). 116

In the conviction of his denunciations, it appears that Zeno saw the attraction of Judaism as a challenge to Christianity. In this he was not alone: other north-Italian bishops found themselves confronted by members of their congregations drifting dangerously close to the society of synagogues. In the early fifth century, for example, Maximus of Turin found his own flock confronted by problems identical to those threatening the Christians of Verona. Maximus acknowledged that the Christians of Turin had little option to live among pagans and Jews, but he warned that such intercourse could cause magna pollutio (Max. Taur., Sermo 6. 4); his warnings can be paralleled in the works of his younger contemporaries such as Gaudentius of Brescia and Chromatius of Aquileia. 117

Just as Zeno had seen the greatest risk from paganism occurring at times when the festivals of both religions coincided (‘in unum sibimet conuenire diuersae religionis diem’: Tract. 2. 7. 14), so his concerns about Judaism concentrate on the closeness of Passover and Easter. One of Zeno’s most common anti-Jewish taunts

116 This formula is repeated in Tract. 1. 51: ‘Salomonis templum hostili uastatione subuersum cum ruina sua iacet sepultum: ubi sacrificant? Sacerdotes iam non habent: qui eorum pro salute sacrificant?’ The concept of Judaism’s historical bankruptcy is common to all Zeno’s anti-Jewish tirades: for example Tract. 2. 21: ‘Iudaicum populum inuersum saliutis suae amisisse praesidium diuin carminis textus ostendit.’

concerns the lawful celebration of the Pasch. Six of his *Tractatus* open with challenges such as ‘Hear briefly, Christian, how the Jews are not able to celebrate the lawful Pasch’ (*Tract. 1. 51*).118 This idea that Jewish rites are invalid is a recurring theme throughout the sermons.119 Zeno couched his arguments as if some members of his congregation did find Judaism an attractive option. Easter, the time of year when Zeno preached many of those sermons which include his most virulent anti-Semitic sentiments, was a time when the awkward relationship between Judaism and Christianity was thrown into high relief. It was the time when the Messianic hopes of Old Testament prophecy had been realised: just as the Fall had proceeded from a tree, so salvation would be achieved through crucifixion on a tree (*Tract. 1. 36. 29*); the pillars of cloud and fire which had guided Moses and the Israelites out of Egypt (Exodus 13-14) were the same as the cross upon which Christ suffered (*Tract. 1. 61. 8*).120 It was also the pre-eminent day for baptism in Verona, as for many early Christian communities, when the Christian would be reborn, and all sins would perish in, to paraphrase Zeno’s splendid oxymoron derived from the image of the Hebrews in Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace (Daniel 3: 19-28), the fire of the baptismal waters (e. g. *Tract. 2. 27*).121 Consequently, this ‘splendid day’

118 ‘Iudaeos legitimum pascha celebrare non posse paucis accipe, Christiane.’ There are precise verbal parallels, especially for the phrase *legitimum pascha celebrare non posse* in *Tract* 1. 19. 1: ‘Pharisaeus quemadmodum legitimum pascha possit celebrare, non video’; 1. 28. 1: ‘Iudaeus legitimum gerere se pascha contendit, cui nihil aliud de uteri sacramento quam inanibus intexta suspirris fabula remansit’; 1. 46A. 1: ‘Pharisaei agere se legitimum pascha contendunt, qui cum templo summo, ut putabatur, summum sacerdotium perdiderunt’; 2. 17: ‘Iudaeus non tantum legitimum pascha celebrare non posse’; 2. 25. 1: ‘Iudaeos legitimum pascha celebrare non posse.’ Cf. similar ideas expressed in 1. 52: ‘Quid tumet Pharisaeus inanis, quem momenti praeterita delectatur umbra’?

119 In addition to the texts cited in the previous note, cf. *Tract. 1. 46A. 2*: ‘... a quibus, quomodo, unde pascha celebratur?’: 2. 20: ‘... Verumtamen pro tuo sensu si uis [sc. Iudaee] pascha legitimum celebrare, agnus [sc. Dei] requirendum est tibi, ...’


('magnificus dies': Tract. 2. 13) highlighted God's rejection of the Jews. The very calculation of when Easter fell was tightly bound up with Jewish-Christian conflict in the fourth century. Its close association with Passover was undeniable, but also a source of controversy, as councils and churchmen sought to distinguish the veritas of Easter from the pale imago of the Jewish feast: just such a confusion had provoked John Chrysostom to anger at the Judaizing practices of Antiochene Christians. In Zeno of Verona we see a similar concern. His persistence in denying the validity of Jewish ritual, especially at the time of year when major Jewish and Christian festivals overlapped, suggests that he saw the Judaism as a potential source of apostasy in his flock.

CONSTRUCTION, COMPETITION AND PLURALISM

The evidence presented in this chapter has been very diffuse, and the picture it yields is one of considerable complexity. There is an undeniable increase in the scale and frequency of church building throughout the region, but against this must be set evidence for the continued vitality of paganism and a vigorous debate between Christianity and Judaism. Traditional pictures of 'Christian triumph' are inadequate to explain the complexities of religious pluralism. Indeed, in the clandestine character of Theodore's church and the vitriolic anti-Semitism of Zeno's sermons, it is possible to glimpse Christian communities to whom the 'triumph' of their faith may not have been an obvious fact.

As ever, it is difficult and unwise to generalise for every north-Italian city from the experience of a few specific examples, as the differing experience of each community was embedded in the particularities of local contexts. Magnificent, imperial Christian basilicas could be built at Milan, where the emperor and his court

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were resident for long periods of time. Likewise, the confrontation between church and synagogue of the type seen at Verona, could only occur in cities that, for a variety of reasons, supported sizeable populations of both Christians and Jews. The variability of Christian experience from place to place across the Po valley mirrors the unevenness of the spread of the church there. Some Christian communities were plainly large and influential forces in local urban society, as at Aquileia, Milan and, to a rather different degree, Aosta. Elsewhere, as is eloquently demonstrated in the grim protests of Zeno at Verona, Christians might have formed only a small religious minority by the 380s. The implication is clear. Despite incontrovertible evidence for the expansion of the church and its increasingly monumental presence in the cities, congregations lived side by side with members of other religious groups. By the late-fourth century, northern Italy was not yet a thoroughly Christian space.
At various times in the first decade of the fifth century, the Gothic leader Alaric led an army through the passes of the Julian Alps into Venetia and the Po valley. The invasions provoked panic throughout northern Italy, to the extent that the emperor Honorius no longer felt safe at Milan and retreated to Ravenna, behind its protective ring of marshes. The response of the population of Aquileia, despairing of any effective imperial intervention, was to turn to its bishop, Chromatius, for reassurance. As part of his campaign to strengthen their spiritual resolve, he called on his old friend Turranius Rufinus, a fellow member of the Aquileian *chorus beatorum* under bishop Valerian, to prepare a Latin translation and continuation of Eusebius of Caesarea’s *Ecclesiastical History*. In this narrative, the people of Aquileia would find examples of how devotion to God had been rewarded by protection from adversity. In these uneasy days, this was what they needed to believe.¹

Chromatius stands at the head of a list of Aquileian bishops who provided leadership for the city in the insecure period of barbarian invasions. After the city was sacked by the Huns in 452, it rose again grouped around its cathedral complex, a symbol of the increasingly central role played by the church in Aquileian society (cf. Ch. 8). Just over a century later, when Alboin and his Lombard armies flowed through the Julian Alps into the plains of Venetia, the people of Aquileia again looked to their bishop for reassurance. This time the reaction was more drastic.

Bishop Paul decided that the exposed position of Aquileia was no longer tenable and, like many of his fellow bishops in north-eastern Italy, he led his people away from the plains to the comparative security of islands in the coastal lagoons (Paul. Diac., HL 2. 10).

With Paul and his contemporaries we enter a different phase in the dialogue between church and society from the one observed in the period covered by this study. In the 560s it was Christianity that was determining the shape of society, and the sense of identity that shaped people's attitudes was largely dictated by religious concerns. Religious, local and political loyalties, for example, became inextricably intertwined. Thus, when in 610 a substantial part of the population of the bishopric of Aquileia living in exile at Grado opted to reject the side their bishop was taking in the Three Chapters controversy, they not only rejected him, but Grado itself in favour of a return to Aquileia, as well as allegiance to Constantinople for the Lombard dukes of Friuli.

In the late-third and fourth centuries, the picture has been almost totally the reverse. When Zeno of Verona had addressed his congregations as the aetheriae gentes, they were not society itself, but an element within it. This study has argued that in northern Italy—as indeed elsewhere in the Mediterranean (Ch. 1)—the origins and development of Christian communities were determined by an established matrix of social networks. The medieval sources which have determined the shape of all previous studies of the topic do not reflect this situation: rather, they yield anachronistic projections of later ecclesiastical power struggles onto an earlier period (Ch. 3). Even contemporary records, such as lists of conciliar subscriptions, are by themselves inadequate to explain the early development of north Italian Christianity (Ch. 3). However, by fitting whatever meagre data such sources and the archaeological record yield into the framework of the human environment of northern Italy (Ch. 2), it is possible to explain why Christianity appeared in certain centres but not at others. In particular, towns and cities which.
for economic or administrative reasons, had constantly changing populations provided that environment of interpersonal contact crucial for the dissemination of the Gospel message (Ch. 4).

In the period between Constantine’s conversion and Ambrose’s triumph at the Council of Aquileia, the development of north Italian Christianity continued to manifest strong regional characteristics. Involvement in the Donatist schism and the Christological controversy had been fitful, and was dictated largely by periods of imperial presence in northern Italy itself. Constantius II’s residence at Milan in 355 was the most fateful. North Italian bishops had hitherto been rather remote from the centre of the theological debates of the controversy, but this ended with the emperor’s determination to impose a homoian settlement throughout his realm. Not only were bishops required to submit to a credal formula which many found repugnant, but during their periods of exile in the east they came face to face with different shades of Christological opinion. With the return of Eusebius of Vercelli to northern Italy in 362, the region’s ecclesiastical politics changed character, from a situation where orthodoxy was defined, in effect, by allegiance to champions such as Athanasius of Alexandria, to one where credal minutiae assumed central importance. In these new circumstances it took Auxentius of Milan all of his theological and political—not to mention linguistic—acumen to retain his see. For all that, the broadening of north Italian theological horizons occurred along idiosyncratic north Italian lines. As Filastrius of Brescia’s definition of Arius’ beliefs as homoianism shows, north Italian perceptions had been shaped both by Constantius’ visit in 355 and by the prevalence of homoian bishops in the Balkans (Ch. 5).

Involvement in a wider arena of ecclesiastical politics influenced more than the theological evolution of the north Italian episcopate. The resulting struggles provided Ambrose of Milan with an impetus to acquire for himself the regional supremacy necessary to secure a pro-Nicene victory in the west. Church
administration in northern Italy was, however, generally embedded in the region's social networks. Bishops' regional spheres of influence developed within an existing framework of interconnections between neighbouring towns and cities. At a more local level, a bishop's leadership of his congregation involved him in the patronage networks and power relationships of civic society (Ch. 6).

The fourth century also saw the continued diffusion of the church in northern Italy (Ch. 7). Despite the favour Christianity now enjoyed with the state, the establishment of new congregations was subject to the same constraints as in the pre-Constantinian period. The scatter of new communities continued to follow patterns laid down by existing social networks, particularly along communications routes, even into seemingly remote areas such as the Alto Adige. There was, of course, consolidation in some areas, most notably in *Venetia et Histria*, but by 381 the dissemination of Christianity was still as patchy as it had been in 312.

Looking within the cities, we see a reflection in microcosm of the unevenness of Christian growth (Ch. 8). To be sure, in some centres the Christian population displayed increasing self-confidence as the century progressed. In centres such as Aquileia, as is clear from the growing monumentality of its cathedral complex already in the first half of the fourth century, the Christian presence would have been hard to ignore. Yet this was no universal phenomenon. In many other centres, large church buildings did not appear until much later, or they were relegated to peripheral parts of town. More importantly, Christianity did not yet hold a monopoly on the sacred. As Zeno of Verona's histrionics show, pagans and Jews continued to flourish in the cities of northern Italy. In short, north Italian Christianity continued to exist in an essentially alien social environment even in 381.

The picture of early Christianity in northern Italy yielded by an approach sensitive to its social environment is very different from the traditional narrative based on medieval sources. Gone are the planned apostolic missions to Aquileia.
Ravenna, Milan and Padua, in favour of a more haphazard, anonymous dispersal of the Christian message. Similarly, some of the great ecclesiastical centres of the early medieval period make only a fleeting appearance in the fourth century. Apart from archaeological remains hinting at a Christian community at Classe and the participation of its bishop Severus at the Council of Serdica, the church of Ravenna has hardly been glimpsed in these pages. The Ravennate church only becomes important in the fifth century, with the move of the imperial court to the city and the occupation of the see by important bishops like Peter Chrysologus. Also looking forward into the fifth century, it is clear how ephemeral was Ambrose's achievement of ecclesiastical hegemony for Milan. His successor Simplicianus managed to preserve the illusion enough for Vigilius of Trento to send him relics of the martyrs of the Val di Non. Yet, at a council held at Turin around this time, the Milanese church had to insist on its rights; interestingly, it could provide no more compelling justification for this position than the vanished glory of Ambrose.²

In essence, the picture I have drawn is rather more sketchy than that which earlier generations would have drawn. It also defies generalisation, as Christian presence and practice varied markedly across northern Italy. Northern Italy is also very different from other parts of the Mediterranean world, even those in the west. To be sure, northern Italy was beginning to acquire its rural parishes by the 380s, but their distribution was uneven and the general picture differs drastically from the picture of a Christian countryside offered by many parts of north Africa. Such regional peculiarities have important ramifications for the study of early Christianity not just in northern Italy, but in the Roman empire as a whole. If a realistic picture of the processes of evangelisation, dissemination and consolidation is to be achieved, it must be sensitive to the special dynamics of local society: this

² Munier, Conc. Gall., 57-8; for comm. see Lizzi, Vescovi, 209-10 and nn. 192-5. On the vexed problem of the Council of Turin, see most recently: M. E. Kulikowski. 'Two Councils of Turin'. JThS n.s. 47 (1996), 159-68.
was the framework that guided all aspects of ancient life, and no study of the early church should ignore it.

In the early fifth century, Chromatius of Aquileia found himself working within these social constraints. He might well be offering guidance to the people of Aquileia, but that guidance was directed primarily at the city’s Christian population. On the night of the Paschal Vigil during one of those uncertain years, Chromatius preached to the faithful in an effort to calm their fears (Sermo 16.4):

Since this is the night on which, once, the firstborn of the Egyptians were struck down and the sons of Israel set free, so we pray to the Lord with all our hearts, with all our faith, that He might free us from the attacks of all our foes, and from our fear of all our enemies. . . . For as He says through the prophet: Invoke me on the day of tribulation, and I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me (Ps. 49 [50]: 15).

Chromatius’ view was still that of a Christian who lived within a society where non-Christians were present, and he saw his congregation much as Zeno had done, as aetheriae gentes living among pagans and Jews. In the gathering gloom induced by Alaric’s invasion he could not vouch for the safety of the pagans and Jews who lived in Aquileia; as for devout Christians immersed in prayer, he could be more certain: ‘vincuntur tenebrae noctis lumine devotionis’, ‘the shadows of night are vanquished by the light of devotion’ (Sermo 16.3).
Appendix 1
The Martyrs of Northern Italy

This appendix will list the data available for martyrs in northern Italy, supplementing the information on earliest north Italian Christianity presented in chapters 3 and 4. Material will be arranged by city. In the catalogue, references will be given to the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina*, and to any relevant commentary in the *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*; an asterisk indicates that the martyr or group of martyrs is listed in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* (hereafter *Mart. Hier.*). The dates given for each martyrdom are approximate, based on the details given in the *passiones*. Each catalogue will be followed by a brief commentary, and a general conclusion will analyse the utility of these texts for a reconstruction of Christian experience, particularly persecution, in northern Italy before Constantine.1

AQUILEIA

* Cantius, Cantianus, Cantianella: *BHL* 1543-9; *BS* 3. 758-60; tetrarchic (284-305).

(*) Chrysogonus: *BHL* 1795-7; *BS* 4. 306-8; tetrarchic (284-305).

* Felix and Fortunatus: *BHL* 2860; *BS* 5. 588-91; tetrarchic (284-305).

* Hilarus (or Hilarius): *BHL* 3881; *BS* 7. 728-30; under Numerian (283/4).

* Protus: cf. under Cantius, Cantianus, Cantianella, with whom he was martyred.

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1 The only treatment of the subject is H. Delehaye, *Les origines du culte des martyrs* (1933). 322-40; however, Picard, *Souvenir*, is a useful supplement in some respects, especially on episcopal martyrs.
Commentary

Aquileia quickly developed a cult of martyrs,² around which there rose a complex hagiographical tradition. The Aquileian martyrs are universally attributed to the late-third or early-fourth centuries, mainly under the tetrarchy. That the imperial government should be so interested in Aquileia at this time is reasonable: the city was of considerable strategic importance, and transport between it and Alexandria is covered by Diocletian’s Price Edict (see Ch. 2). Thus many of the passiones may reflect a certain reality, especially the interesting detail of Hilarus’ execution under Numerian as he is an obscure emperor. It is worth noting some difficulties. The Chrysogonus listed in the Mart. Hier. appears to have no connection with the Aquileian saint: cults associated with martyrs of that name are known in Milan, Zara, Ravenna, Carthage and Rome, leaving ample scope for confusion. The passio of Chrysogonus, however, links him to a certain Anastasia from Sirmium, a city with which Aquileia had many contacts.

The earliest recorded cult is that of Felix and Fortunatus. Chromatius of Aquileia (388-407/8) mentions them as one of the glories of the sacred heritage of Aquileia (Sermo 7), but by the time of the Mart. Hier. they—and Fortunatus in particular—had also become associated with Vicenza, where a church was erected in their honour. The reason for this connection is impossible to ascertain. all that can be said is that Vicenza, an important city in north-eastern Italy, was well placed for its early Christian community to have had regular contact with Aquileia. For all that, however, there is no direct evidence of cooperation between them, even when the bishops of several Venetic churches were active in support of Athanasius’ efforts to gain an audience with Constans in the 340s.

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BRESCIA

* Faustinus and Iovitta: *BHL* 2836-40; *BS* 5. 483-5.

**Commentary**

Their *passio* (*BHL* 2836) relates that they suffered under Hadrian. This, however, is undoubtedly a spurious detail: the texts associated with their cult have evidently undergone a long and complex process of shaping and reshaping. Their entry in the *Mart. Hier.* is also problematic, listing them as having been venerated ‘in Britannis’. This is very probably a corruption of ‘in Brixia’.4

IMOLA (*FORUM CORNELII*)

* Cassian: *BHL* 1625-9; *BS* 3. 909-12.

**Commentary**

Among the earliest martyr cults to develop in northern Italy. Prudentius describes visiting his tomb (*Peristephanon*, 9), above which was a painted representation (‘colorum picta imago martyris’) of his martyrdom (by being stabbed with the nibs of his students’ pens), but mentions no date for the event. Cassian’s cult was widely disseminated: it is mentioned by Gregory of Tours (*Glor. Mart.* 42); and Pope Symmachus (498-514) dedicated an altar to him at Rome. This popularity is probably due the patronage of the cult by the bishops of Ravenna: Peter Chrysologus was buried at Imola so as to be near him;5 and he appears in the procession of martyrs in S. Apollinare Nuovo.6

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MILAN

* Gervasius and Protasius: *BHL* 3513-22; _inventio_ in 386 described by Ambrose (*Ep. 22*), Augustine (*Conf. 9. 7. 16*), and Paulinus (*Vita Ambr.* 14).

* Nabor and Felix: *BHL* 6028-9; *BS* 9. 689-93; tetrarchic (after 296).

* Victor: *BHL* 8580-3; *BS* 12. 1274-5; tetrarchic (after 296).

* Valeria: *BHL* 8699-8704; usually associated with Felix, Nabor and Victor.

_Commentary_

All materials purporting to recount the earliest history of the church of Milan must be treated with caution because of the manner in which traditions were manipulated in the middle ages. For example, although Ambrose, Augustine and Paulinus are unanimous that Gervasius and Protasius were unknown prior to their miraculous _inventio_, there exists a tendentious medieval _passio_ (*BHL* 3514) which reports their deaths. The text reports the events form the perspective of a certain ‘servus Christi Philippus’ who claims to have recovered the martyrs’ bodies: this is clearly a fabrication based on the location of their _inventio_ and subsequent burial in churches in the Hortus Philippi.

Likewise, the texts of the _passiones_ of Nabor and Felix and of Victor bear the hallmarks of early medieval fabrication. The texts are almost identical verbally; compare, for example, their opening sentences: ‘Regnante impio Maximiano Imperatore cum in civitate Mediolanensi esset persecutio ingens Christianorum, erant ibi quidam milites Nabor et Felix notissimi Imperatori’ (*BHL* 6028) with ‘Regnante impio Maximiano Imperatore, in civitate Mediolanensi erat persecutio ingens Christianorum. Erat autem ibi quidam miles, nomine Victor, notissimus Imperatori’ (*BHL* 8580). These verbal and narrative similarlities—which reflect the close association between their cults—persist for much of both texts, although the climax of each account is different (Nabor and Felix are executed at Lodì, Victor outside Milan).
Of particular interest is the note in the *Passio SS. Naboris et Felicis* (*BHL* 6028) that their relics were translated to Milan from Lodi by bishop Maternus in the first half of the fourth century. This association is eloquently reflected in the fifth century mosaics in the vault of the chapel of S. Vittore in Ciel d’Oro. Nabor and Felix are shown flanking Maternus opposite the depiction of Ambrose standing between Gervasius and Protasius, implying that Milanese tradition already viewed Maternus as the *inventor* of these martyrs. This tradition might well reflect reality. The cult of Nabor and Felix was well-established at Milan by 386, when the bodies of Gervasius and Protasius were found ‘ante cancellos sanctorum Felicis atque Naboris’ (*Ambr., Ep. 22. 2*). But, when describing that discovery, Ambrose remarks that the church of Milan had been ‘sterile of martyrs’ (*Ep. 22. 7*: ‘sterilem martyribus ecclesiam Mediolanensem’) and hitherto had merely taken other cities’ martyrs (*Ep. 22. 12*: ‘Perdiderat civitas [sc. Mediolanum] suos martyres quae rapuit alienos’). This means, therefore, that Felix and Nabor must have been imported to the city. Whether this actually happened under Maternus is impossible to ascertain.

**PADUA**

Justina: *BHL* 4571-8; tetrarchic (after 286).

*Commentary*

Justina is not attested until the sixth century. Once again there is need for a vigilant awareness of medieval fabrication, especially bearing in mind her association with the protobishop of Padua, Prosdocimus (cf. *BHL* 6960-1). Prosdocimus is of uncertain antiquity: no record of him exists prior to the dedication of a chapel to him and Justina by Venatius Opilio in the early sixth century. The surviving *Vita* (*BHL* 6960-1) portrays him as dying early in the reign of Antoninus Pius (138-161), but makes Justina, his protégée, live until the tetrarchic persecutions! Such

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"Picard, *Souvenir*, 39."
documents, and indeed the whole fostering of his cult, seems designed to grant the Paduan church a certain apostolic prestige.\(^8\)

POREC

Maurus: \textit{II} 10/2. 64: (?) tetrarchic.

\textit{Commentary}

Like Ravenna (see below), Porec attracted the cults of various saints and martyrs from elsewhere, as is eloquently demonstrated by the sixth century mosaics in the Euphrasian basilica. Only one martyrdom can be associated with the city itself, that of Maurus. His death is recorded in an inscription from the primitive church underlying the Euphrasian basilica. This document is of no assistance in dating Maurus’ death, so my suggestion that his was a tetrarchic martyrdom is merely a conjecture, based on the most likely date for persecutions in other north-Italian cities. A surviving \textit{passio} of Maurus (\textit{BHL} 5786-91) is of no use: it discusses an African Christian, martyred at Rome under Numerian, who somehow came to be identified with the martyr of Porec.\(^9\)

RAVENNA


\textit{Commentary}

As with Milan and Aquileia, the hagiographical traditions of Ravenna are dauntingly complex: in particular, the city’s bishops were active in appropriating and promoting the cults of saints from other centres (cf. above on Cassian of Imola). An additional layer of confusion is provided by the move of the court to Ravenna from Milan under Honorius: Delehaye suggests that this was responsible for the

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\(^9\) Full discussion in H. Delehaye, ‘Saints d’Istrie et de Dalmatie’, \textit{Ab} 18 (1899), 370-84.
profusion of Milanese saints in the city.\textsuperscript{10} Such imperial patronage was certainly important, as is demonstrated by the number of foundations made by Galla Placidia.\textsuperscript{11}

The earliest developments at Ravenna itself of an indigenous martyr cult are associated with Apollinaris at Classe, whose veneration seems to begin in the fourth century if not before. Beyond that, however, details of Apollinaris are substantially irrecoverable. His cult, like so many, has been manipulated for political reasons in order to grant the Ravennate church apostolic status. Thus reports of his martyrdom under Vespasian ought to be treated with caution.

\textbf{TRIESTE}

Justus: \textit{BHL} 4604; tetrarchic (after 286).

\textit{Commentary}

Although the text gives a very precise formula for the persecution in which Justus died ("Temporibus Diocletiani et Maximiani imp. consulatus eorum anno IV"), it is entirely spurious. The attestation of another martyr at Trieste, a certain Apollinaris (\textit{BHL} 633), is also tendentious: this saint is evidently the protomartyr and protobishop of Ravenna, albeit in a heavily disguised form (\textit{BS} 2. 249).

\textbf{VERCELLI}

Theonestus: unknown.

\textsuperscript{10} Delehaye, \textit{Origines}, 322-8.
\textsuperscript{11} S. I. Oost, \textit{Galla Placidia Augusta} (1968), 273-8.
Commentary

The *Vita Antiqua* of Eusebius of Vercelli (*BHL 2748*) records that he built a church in honour of a martyr Theonestus. This is impossible to verify, but the story does not inspire confidence: the *Vita Antiqua* is a tendentious and unreliable document, which makes Eusebius himself a martyr.

VICENZA

Felix and Fortunatus: see under Aquileia.

PERSECUTIONS IN NORTHERN ITALY

There is always the danger when dealing with martyr texts that too much is put down to the rehearsal of tropes, and not enough account is taken of the sources and motives of the hagiographer.\(^\text{12}\) Taking a positivist line, it might seem that a great deal can be recovered from these texts about the various mechanisms by which persecution was implemented by the government. Many details seem in keeping with what is known about the persecutions from contemporary sources like Eusebius and Lactantius. For example, the Milanese martyrs Victor, Nabor and Felix were detected during a purge of Christians from the army, a circumstance known to have accompanied the outbreak of the tetrarchic persecution. Similarly, the insistence that the Christians should offer sacrifice, as Maximian puts it to Victor, *per salutem [imperatoris] et statum reipublicae* rings true.

Yet a blithe acceptance of what such *passiones* tell us may be misplaced. While the generalities seem fine, the narratives often fall apart on their specifics. Turning again to the martyrdoms of Victor, Nabor and Felix, they go seriously awry when they begin describing the persecutors. In both texts, the prosecuting official is

\(^\text{12}\) P. J. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (1994), 9-29.
the *consularis* Anullinus. There are two problems here. First, the title is anachronistic: no *consulares* governed in northern Italy until after Constantine's victory over Maxentius; under Maximian, such governors were called *correctores*. Second, no-one called Anullinus seems to have filled an administrative post in northern Italy under the tetrarchy.\(^{13}\) Even the detailed descriptions of tetrarchic Milan cannot inspire confidence. A strong classical tradition endured at Milan, preserving the memory of its Roman past long after the demise of the empire, and it is possible that the author(s) of these *passiones* drew on it for details of Milanese topography.

We may be on securer ground with regard to the chronological information preserved in the north-Italian *passiones*. With a few exceptions (such as Faustinus and Jovitta at Brescia), they confine their narratives to the late-third or early-fourth century. While earlier martyrdoms are not impossible, the surviving accounts attesting persecution in the first and second centuries are too tendentious to inspire confidence. The inescapable conclusion must be that harassment of north-Italian Christians by the imperial authorities was insignificant prior to the tetrarchic period. It seems unlikely that the region's Christian communities were significant enough to attract attention even in the Decian persecution. This supports the picture painted in chapters 3 and 4 of the retarded growth of Christianity in the region.

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\(^{13}\) It is possible that these *passiones* have been contaminated by north African materials. Two Anullini are known from the period. There was the Anullinus who served as proconsul of Africa and was Constantine's chief intermediary with the Carthaginian church in the early stages of the Donatist schism (*PLRE* 1. 78-9, 'Anullinus 2'). A more likely candidate, however, might be C. Annius Anullinus, the *impius iudex* who presided over the trials of many Christians in a series of north African *passiones* (*PLRE* 1. 79, 'Anullinus 3').
This appendix will examine the evidence for cathedral churches at Milan in the period up to Ambrose’s election as bishop in 374. It will argue for the existence of an intramural episcopal complex comprising two cathedrals and a baptistery, before challenging the common identification of S. Lorenzo with the basilica Portiana, which Valentinian II tried to sequester as a homoian cathedral during the dispute of 385-6. The primary evidence for all the churches under discussion comes from Ambrose himself, but a more comprehensive understanding of the topography is only possible when the archaeological evidence is considered.¹

THE DOUBLE CATHEDRAL

Ambrose’s references to the cathedral of Milan come in his account, in a letter to his sister Marcellina, of his dispute with Valentinian and Justina at Easter 386. He begins by distinguishing between the Portiana hoc est extramurana basilica (see below) and the basilica nova hoc est intramurana quae maior est (Ep. 20.1) which was to be the major focus of the struggle. The dispute itself broke out when, on Palm Sunday, after Ambrose had rejected Valentinian’s requests for both the basilica nova and the basilica Portiana (20.2-3), imperial officials came to put up hangings on the basilica Portiana. At this point, Ambrose was teaching the creed in the baptisterii basilica (20.4).

¹ This is a notable failing of an otherwise admirable article: A. Lenox-Conygham, ‘The Topography of the Basilica Conflict of A.D. 385/6 in Milan’, Historia 31 (1972), 353-63.
It is crucial to determine what Ambrose means by the *baptisterii basilica*. Although it is usually assumed to be a baptistery in its own right,² this interpretation is unsound. Immediately before Ambrose talks of teaching the creed to the *competentes*, those catechumens going forward for baptism, he remarks that the catechumens who were not preparing for baptism had been dismissed from the building (*post lectiones atque tractatum dimissis catechuminis symbolum aliquibus competentibus in baptisterii tradebam basilica*). Then he heard about the efforts to sequester the *Portiana*, but seemingly unperturbed he continued celebrating mass (*ego tarnen mansi in munere, missam facere coepi*). Thus far, then, we have a building which must satisfy certain criteria:

1. Catechumens were dismissed from it;
2. *Competentes* received instruction in the creed inside it;
3. Mass was celebrated there.

This sequence of rituals and their celebration on Palm Sunday make it clear that a baptistery building is not meant. Catechumens were dismissed from the basilica (not the baptistery), and the celebration of mass, even a mass for baptised candidates, occurred in the basilica.³ Also, it is unlikely that any candidates were admitted to the baptistery until the performance of initiation on Easter Sunday: in his own descriptions of baptismal rites, Ambrose talks only of entrance to the baptistery on the day of baptism itself.⁴

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² Thus M. Zelzer, *CSEL* 82/3 (1982), 110 app. crit.
⁴ In the *de Sacramentis*, Ambrose describes a clear sequence of events. On Easter Saturday there was the Opening (1. 3; cf. Yarnold, *Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, 17-18). Then on Easter Sunday the candidates are admitted to the baptistery, and approached the font itself for immersion. The issue is clouded because on both occasions Ambrose uses the word *fons*; but the sequence of *venimus ad fontem, ingressus es* (1. 4) followed by *deinde accessisti proprius: vidistifontem* (1. 9) and *ingressus*
A clue to the identification of this *baptisterii basilica* is that it must have been the church in which Ambrose conducted the rest of the Easter Week liturgy. He describes to Marcellina how, later in the week, he taught in the *basilica vetus* (20. 10: *ego in basilica veteri totum exegi diem*). This church is distinguished from the *basilica nova* which, Ambrose tells us, filled up with his adherents while he was teaching (20. 13: *dum leguntur lectiones, intimitatur mihi plenum populi esse basilicam etiam novam*). Ambrose's description of the *basilica vetus* is qualified further when recounts how *cum fratribus psalmos in ecclesiae basilica minore diximus* (20. 24). This event also occurred during Easter Week.⁵ Thus far, then, it is clear that the *baptisterii basilica*, the *basilica vetus*, and the *ecclesiae basilica minor* were the same church.

The terms *vetus* and *minor* are significant, as they give comparative details about the *baptisterii basilica*. But compared to what? There can be little doubt that in both cases Ambrose is comparing this basilica with the *basilica nova*.⁶ The location of this *basilica vetus* is unclear: Ambrose merely states that the Portiana was extramural and that the *nova* was intramural. There is no *a priori* reason for supposing that the *vetus* was outside the walls also. Rather, the weight of evidence suggests that it was an intramural church, just like the *basilica nova*.

Although any identification will always be conjectural, the *basilica nova* is most probably that church known in the early middle ages as S. Tecla, which lies under the Piazza del Duomo (figs. 15-16). The style of both its architecture and decoration mark it out as a fourth century building.⁷ The form of the church—an

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enormous five-aisled basilica with an apse—is almost identical with Constantine’s Lateran basilica, of which it seems to be a conscious imitation.⁸ A verse inscription, preserved in a manuscript known as the Lorsch sylloge, helps secure the identification.⁹ Four lines of verse record how Eusebius, bishop of Milan in the later 450s, reconstructed the culmina templis in formam rediere suam quae flamma cremarat (CIL 5, p. 617, no. 1). The culmina templis was almost certainly the apse which, excavation has demonstrated, was rebuilt several times, once during the fifth century.

South-east of the apse of this basilica was the octagonal baptistery of S. Giovanni alle Fonti (fig. 16), which, as another inscription preserved in the Lorsch sylloge shows, was built by Ambrose (CIL 5, p. 617, no. 2). This baptistery is sometimes dated to early in Ambrose’s episcopate, since in his lament on the death of his brother in 378, the bishop refers to his construction of ecclesiastical buildings (de excessu Satyri 1. 20).¹⁰ This is improbable, primarily because it would make the baptisterii basilica identical with the basilica nova, which cannot be the case for the reasons outlined above. Further, Ambrose’s words—in fabricis ecclesiae—are too imprecise to allow a secure connection with any building (or buildings).¹¹ There are more likely candidates for such early constructions, like the huge,

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¹¹ A. Calderini, ‘La tradizione letteraria più antica sulle basiliche milanesi’, RAL 75 (1941-2). 70.
cruciform basilica apostolorum (modern S. Nazaro), which certainly existed by the mid-380s. 12

So where was the baptistery, and its related basilica, which formed the focus of Ambrose’s activities in Easter Week 386? Excavations under the northern transept of the current Duomo revealed another baptistery, known later as S. Stefano alle Fonti, which was considerably smaller and cruder than S. Giovanni (figs. 17-18). 13 It is difficult to explain this second baptistery, not least because medieval traditions concerning its use for female baptism made it seem a much inferior building. 14 The earliest reference to the building comes in a short poem by Ennodius (Epigr. 379), referring to renovation of the building by a bishop Eustorgius. This is undoubtedly Eustorgius II (early-sixth century), rather than the Eustorgius who preceded Dionysius (mid-fourth). 15 But Eustorgius II did not build S. Stefano: the thrust of Ennodius’ poem is that the bishop had merely renovated it, improving the water supply to the font. Rather, the structure of S. Stefano is much

12 It is explicitly referred to Ambrose’s account of the discovery of the relics of Gervasius and Protasius, which was prompted by the clamour of his congregation that Ambrose dedicate a new basilica, the Ambrosiana (modern S. Ambrogio), in the same way as the basilica apostolorum (Ambr., Ep. 22. 1). That it is the basilica apostolorum which is meant is clear from the designation of it by Ambrose’s flock as the basilica in Romana, a reference both to its location outside the Porta Romana of Milan, and to its original dedication to SS. Peter and Paul (cf. McLynn, Ambrose, 211, 231-2).

13 The basin at S. Stefano measures 3.40 m in diameter; that at S. Giovanni some 5 m: Apollonj Ghetti, ‘Le cattedrali di Milano’, 34.

14 Paredi, ‘Dove fu battezzato Sant’Agostino’, 24-6, records the account of Landulf Senior and others that Augustine was baptised in S. Giovanni alle Fonti. But this does not (pace Paredi) constitute independent evidence to prove this point. Rather it reflects the influence of the existing tradition that S. Stefano was used for female baptism on authors like Landulf, for whom it would be unthinkable that Augustine should have been initiated in the women’s baptistery.

older: all who have examined it date it to the fourth century.\textsuperscript{16} If so, this makes it probable that this was the baptistery of the \textit{baptisterii basilica}.

A firm identification for any church (the \textit{basilica vetus} proper) associated with this baptistery cannot be known: its remains lie embedded in the fourteenth century foundations of the present Duomo. From the early middle ages, however, there was a church called S. Maria Maggiore on this site.\textsuperscript{17} The \textit{baptisterii basilica}, if it indeed lay near the site of S. Stefano, would have been the late-antique precursor of S. Maria, and hence to the east of S. Tecla, the \textit{basilica nova}. In effect this means that Milan had a double cathedral, a circumstance reflected in medieval liturgical texts.\textsuperscript{18} It is in keeping, moreover, with the dualism implicit in Ambrose's descriptions of two basilicas, the \textit{nova} and the \textit{vetus}, the latter serving as a \textit{baptisterii basilica} (figs. 15, 18.).

\textbf{SAN LORENZO AND THE BASILICA PORTIANA}

The date of S. Lorenzo, lying south of the city beyond the Porta Ticinensis, has also provoked debate (fig. 19). Recent estimates have ranged widely, from the late-fifth or even sixth century to the fourth.\textsuperscript{19} The most popular dating, however, is that which dates it to the 340s or 350s and makes it an imperial construction under Constans or Constantius II; as a result it is frequently identified with the \textit{basilica Portiana}.\textsuperscript{20} The crucial features of the building, which have informed most efforts

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{16} Apolloni Ghetti, 'Le cattedrali di Milano', 28-32.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 54-61.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Paredi, 'Dove fu battezzato Sant'Agostino', 16.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Fifth/sixth century: P. Lemerle, 'L'archeologie paleochretienne en Italie. Milan et Castelseprio, "Orient ou Rome"', B 22 (1952), 169-84; late-fourth century (Theodosian) date: S. Lewis, 'San Lorenzo Revisited: A Theodosian Palace Church at Milan', \textit{JSIAH} 32 (1973), 197-222.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Variations on a theme: A. Calderini, 'Milano archeologica', \textit{Storia di Milano} 1 (1953), 598-605 (dating it to Constantius); reiterated at length (but dating it under Constans) by D. Kinney, 'The
to date it, have been its lavish scale and decoration, particularly the large stone platform built to support the superstructure (fig. 21). Built on sloping ground, a level surface was created by a foundation of some 6000 stone blocks. Examination of these has revealed that they were robbed from an older building. Archivolts with half-columns, capitals of Ionic, Corinthian and composite form, and pierced cornice blocks similar to those from the Flavian Amphitheatre which took to poles supporting the awnings make it clear that the source of the foundations was Milan’s amphitheatre; excavations of that structure in the 1930s revealed that it had been systematically destroyed. As a result, it has been surmised that the church was built, and the amphitheatre destroyed, on imperial orders, sometime before 402, when Milan was the seat of a Christian court. This supposed imperial nature of S. Lorenzo has been called on to explain other features, such as the sturdiness of its construction (very different from Ambrose’s churches), and especially the colonnaded atrium (also built from spolia) with its triangular pediment and arch (fig. 22), which seems to mirror palatial structures, such as the audience chamber at Split, the façade of Theoderic’s palace shown in the mosaics of S. Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, and the architectural setting on the silver missorium of Theodosius I. Yet it seems to me that both assumptions are mistaken.

First, the date. Subscribers to both the early- to mid-fourth century date and to the Theodosian date claim that the amphitheatre could only have been destroyed with imperial permission and that this securely dates S. Lorenzo to before Honorius’ withdrawal to Ravenna in 402. If this assumes that emperors can only

Evidence for the Dating of S. Lorenzo in Milan’, *JSAH* 31 (1972), 92-107; whose arguments are substantially accepted by Krautheimer, *Capitals*, 81-92.
21 In addition to the items cited in the previous notes, see W. Kleinbauer, ‘*Aedita in turribus*: the superstructure of the early Christian church of S. Lorenzo in Milan’, *Gesta* 15 (1976), 1-9.
Missing pages are unavailable
BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

This lists the major sources used for this study and the abbreviations used to refer to them. For minor works full details will be found in the notes (for example editions of medieval episcopal lists are given in the notes to chapter 3). Major classical works (Demosthenes, Herodian, Strabo, Tacitus, etc.) are referred to in standard Loeb Classical Library, Teubner, OCT and Budé editions.

*Altercatio Heracliani*  *Altercatio Hercaliani laici cum Germinio episcopo Sirmiens* in *PLS* 1: 345-50. Page references are given, however, to the standard edition of Caspari: these are noted in *PLS*.

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<td>Liberius</td>
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<td>Zeno</td>
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3. Verona. Plan of fourth (in yellow) and fifth (in blue) century churches on the site of the Duomo; showing the line of the Roman street (strata Romana) destroyed by the later church.
4. Porec (Istria). Plan of the church on the site of the Euphrasian basilica: (A) primitive hall; (B) extension to primitive hall.
5. Porec (Istria). Mosaic from the pre-Christian building with Christian renovations.

7. Aquileia. Theodorean pavements, showing location of chancel barriers (x-x).
8. Aquileia. Site of chancel barriers in (above) the north hall and (below) the south hall.


15. Milan. Piazza del Duomo. Location of late antique churches: (1) Basilica nova; (2) S. Giovanni alle Fonti; (3) Site of Basilica vetus; (4) S. Stefano alle Fonti.

18. Milan. Duomo showing earlier buildings: (A) S. Giovanni alle Fonti; (B) S. Stefano alle Fonti; (C) foundations of medieval campanile; (D) façade of medieval church of S. Maria Maggiore.
