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Apamea was the first city to be founded after the biblical Flood pushed all the right buttons for the pagans of Apamea; the town's Christian community had found the perfect way of legitimizing and publicizing their religion in terms which could be easily understood and appreciated by non-Christians.

We have no way of telling how many Christians there were in the Roman empire in the first three centuries AD. Most probably, the size of the Christian community differed radically from one region, even from one city, to another. According to a reliable source (Eusebius' *Church History*), there were 155 members of the Christian clergy in the city of Rome in AD 251; by this point the Christian population of Rome must have numbered in the thousands. The only area where we have real evidence for the spread of Christianity is, once again, the Phrygian highlands of inland Asia Minor. Christianity struck deep roots in Phrygia at an early date. This isolated rural area had had a large Jewish population since the Hellenistic period, and the Phrygian brand of paganism had strong monotheistic tendencies even before the coming of the Church. In the upper Tembris valley, a remote part of northern Phrygia, around 20 per cent of the population was openly professing the Christian faith on their tombstones by 230; by the end of the third century the proportion has risen to more than 80 per cent. In the late third and early fourth centuries AD Egyptian papyri show a sudden explosion of characteristically Christian personal names like David, Matthew, Johannes. The proportion of identifiably Christian names in Egypt rose from around 10-15 per cent of the population in AD 280 to c. 50 per cent at the death of Constantine in 337. By 425, a century later, the proportion had reached 80 per cent. At least in the eastern provinces, then, the late third and early fourth centuries mark the crucial turning point; by the end of Constantine's reign, the victory of the Church was assured. It is this new, Christian empire of the fourth century AD which will be the subject of our final chapter.

## The Later Roman Empire:

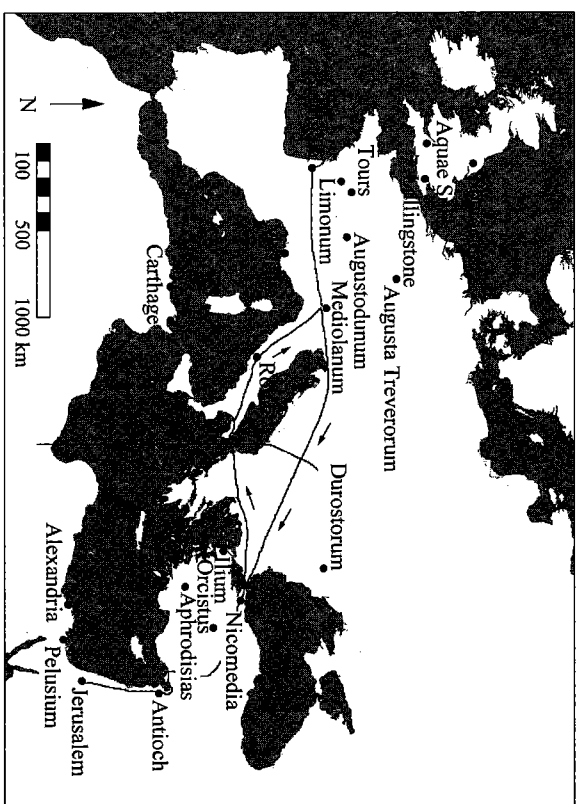
AD 284-425

In the middle of the fourth century AD, the owner of a modest country house in south-east England, at Lullingstone, Kent, decided to decorate the reception room with a new mosaic floor. In the centre was a depiction of the ancient Greek hero Bellerophon riding the winged horse Pegasus, attacking the Chimaera, a monster that was part lion, part goat and part snake. The floor of an apsidal dining room built out at one side of the reception room was decorated with an even more remarkable mosaic (Plate 29). In the centre is Europa riding on the back of the bull, that is, Jupiter. These two stories were ancient by this time, a version of the Bellerophon story appearing more than a thousand years previously in Homer's *Iliad*, and they were widely known among the educated classes of the Roman empire. But the level of education presupposed by the Europa mosaic is hugely increased by a Latin verse couplet set above it: 'If jealous Juno had seen the swimmings of the bull, most justly would she have gone to the halls of Aeolus.' This allusion to Juno plotting against Aeneas, partly in order to gain vengeance on her faithless husband Jupiter, assumes a detailed knowledge of Virgil's *Aeneid*, which refers specifically to Juno asking the wind-god Aeolus to wreck Aeneas' ships. The mosaic cleverly, and humorously, brings together the conventional visual repertoire of antiquity with a reading of Virgil's classic text. A decade or two after the mosaics were laid, a room in the house was converted into a Christian chapel, and was decorated with figured scenes, including six praying figures, who may represent the family of the house, and three large monograms XP, the first two Greek letters of 'Christ'.

These snapshots of Lullingstone encapsulate the themes of this chapter: the extraordinary stability and success of Greek and Latin culture, which was still the path to success in the western parts of the Roman empire; and the relation of this culture to the newly emerging Christianity.

After the emperor Constantine had converted to Christianity in AD 312 Christians moved from being a persecuted group to being supported by Constantine and subsequent emperors. The issue of how far Christianity was compatible with the inherited culture of the past continued to be, and still is, contested. We shall begin by looking at how central government became highly interventionist, which brought about great changes to civic life.

A map of the Roman empire in AD 284 would look much like a map of the empire 200 years previously. Roman rule stretched from Britain to the Euphrates, from the Rhine and Danube to the deserts of North Africa. But in the middle of the third century AD, the state faced a conjunction of major problems. The northern and eastern frontiers were not secure, with threats from the Sasanians in the east and 'barbarians' in the north. There was very serious inflation. And central leadership was weak: between 235 and 284 there were twenty-two emperors, most of whom died violent deaths. Diocletian, on becoming emperor in 284, built on the achievements of some of his immediate predecessors, and succeeded in creating a new, and relatively durable, imperial system. But by



Map 33. The Roman empire c. AD 400. The vertical line marks the division of the empire in AD 395 between east and west, along the old line between the Greek- and Latin-speaking regions. The route of a pilgrim travelling between Burdigala and Jerusalem illustrates two of the overland arteries of the empire.

the end of our period the state had begun to lose control of some territory. The Romans pulled out of Britain in AD 409, and at around this time the Lullingstone house was destroyed by fire and abandoned.

Emperors had to carry on fighting on the northern and eastern frontiers. The state suffered some disasters: in 363 the emperor Julian invaded Sasanian territory, where he died. But emperors did retain almost all the old territory in the fourth century. A speech delivered in Augustodunum (modern Autun) around 298 records how the young men there used a map of the world in a portico to understand the scope of imperial successes, from Britain to the Euphrates. Emperors were shown as busy at war throughout the world, and as always victorious.

The army was reorganized, with many smaller units, though probably around the same number of men under arms. During the fourth century the processes of recruitment changed, with large landowners expected to supply men, or to pay cash in lieu. Later in the fourth century, to replace soldiers lost in battle, emperors recruited large numbers of Germans to serve in the army and even to form an officer class. Under Diocletian, military forces were concentrated along the frontiers, but subsequently, with the development of flexible response forces, many troops were billeted in cities and towns when not on active service. The impact on the life of those communities was vast. According to a pious Christian account, a Christian soldier in the legionary city of Durostorum (modern Silistra in Bulgaria) who declined to play the role of Saturn during the Saturnalia was put to death. The setting of the martyrdom is significant: during the thirty days of the Saturnalia festival, the soldiers regularly ran amuck in the city in a riot of licentiousness. This sort of abuse of power by soldiers remained an endemic problem in the Roman empire (above, pp. 288–90).

Partly to meet the needs of military leadership, Diocletian formalized the idea of an imperial team, of two emperors, titled 'Augusti', and two deputies, titled 'Caesars'. This system had some precedents at Rome, but a contemporary imperial panegyric also managed to find a precedent rather further back, in the unique dual kingship at Sparta. The initial intention of the new scheme was to ensure the unity of the Roman empire in the face of continued threats. By the end of the fourth century, the consequence was the division of the empire into eastern and western spheres, with one 'Augustus' in charge of each. This political division corresponded to, and reinforced, the linguistic division between Greek

and Latin (see above, pp. 272-3): Italy and middle Europe were Latin-speaking zones, and Greece, Asia Minor and the Levant Greek-speaking, a pattern that would endure for centuries to come.

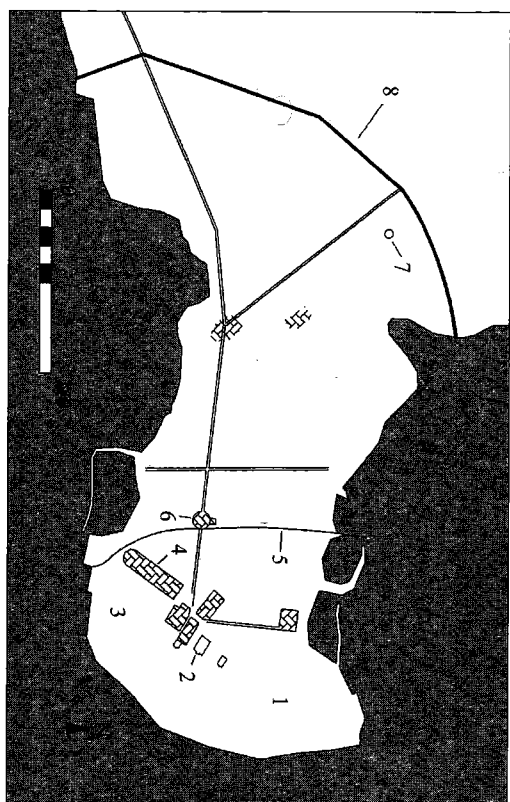
Diocletian's aspirations in tackling the problems facing the Roman state were deeply traditional, but the methods he used were not. He wanted to stabilize the situation by calling on traditional values, but in ways that were highly interventionist. Worried about the spread of Manichaeism, a religion founded in Persian Mesopotamia in the previous generation, Diocletian issued a ruling to the governor of Africa that adherents of Manichaeism should be severely punished: the gods had providentially ensured that true principles should be established and preserved by the judgement and deliberation of many wise men, but this new sect sought to undermine what had been fixed by the ancients. On much the same grounds, he next took action against Christians. Between 303 and 304 a series of increasingly severe measures were enacted, ending with an order that the whole population of the empire sacrifice to the traditional gods. Diocletian wanted everyone to pull together at this time of crisis, as did his predecessors Decius and Valerian in the mid-third century: only universal sacrifices would ensure the support of the traditional gods for the Roman state. As in the past, and the future, religion was primarily state-centred.

Diocletian also established a new administrative system, building on the piecemeal changes of some of his immediate predecessors. In the early empire, the state operated a somewhat *laissez-faire* system. Neither emperor nor governors went out looking for trouble. They wanted to maintain good order, but assumed that individual cities would provide the basic fabric of life. The problems facing the empire in the third century made the old system look weak. Diocletian and his successors felt that they could not stand by, and intervened much more widely than had previously been the case. Diocletian undertook various measures to tackle inflation, which had been a feature of the Roman economy for the previous century. These included the setting of maximum prices for goods and salaries throughout the empire, worried as he was that his soldiers were being defrauded by high prices. The price edict is the most widely attested imperial edict on any subject, but it was a complete failure and was probably repealed within a year. Diocletian was able, however, to protect his troops from the worst effects of inflation by paying them in rations, levied as taxation, and in semi-regular gifts of gold and silver coins.

Diocletian divided the provinces into smaller areas, more than doubling the total number of provinces from forty-eight to more than a hundred. For example, the old province of Thrace (north-east Greece and Bulgaria) was divided into four provinces, including 'Europa', which contained just twenty-two cities: the name of this tiny area, just west of the Bosphorus, harks back to Homer's usage of the name. The provinces were then grouped into twelve large districts: for example, Galliae (covering central-northern France, Belgium, the Netherlands and part of Germany), Africa (central North Africa) or Oriens (all the way from the Tigris to the Red Sea). In addition, both the provincial governors and the officials in charge of the new districts came to have large staffs, 100 and 300 respectively. This creation of new provinces and of a new layer of Roman administration greatly increased the number of officials on the Roman payroll. The recurrent cost was deemed worth bearing, given that the Roman authorities, or so they believed, would now be able to run things better than the cities had done in the old *laissez-faire* system.

Military pressures on the empire demanded new imperial centres. In the course of the third century AD, largely because of military problems to the north and east, emperors had come to spend long periods of time outside Rome, in Augusta Treverorum (modern Trier; Plate 26), Mediolanum (modern Milan), Antioch on the Orontes (modern Antakya) and Nicomedia (modern Izmit, both in Turkey). The emperor, and his immediate troops, were thereby enabled to respond much more quickly than if he had resided at Rome. The emperor Constantine also wished to found a new eastern imperial centre, to commemorate his victory over his rival Licinius in 324. He toyed with the idea of placing it at Ilium (that is, Troy), but was deterred by a divine vision, that he should not found another Rome on the origin of the old Rome. Instead, he chose Byzantium, an ancient but minor Greek city on the Bosphorus, where the land routes between Europe and Asia converged. The new city of Constantinople (modern Istanbul) was intended to rival, though not replace, Rome; indeed, at c. 430 hectares it was only a third the size of Rome within its walls. But in the long run the foundation of Constantinople was a major event in European history, ultimately restructuring the region as a bipolar entity with centres in the east and west, and further institutionalizing the Latin-Greek linguistic and cultural divide.

The founding of Constantinople was highly controversial. Was it a new Christian city? The public position of Christianity had certainly



Map 3.4. Constantinople in the mid-fourth century AD. 1: location of ancient acropolis; 2: St Sophia; 3: palace; 4: hippodrome; 5: Old Severan wall; 6: forum of Constantine; 7: mausoleum of Constantine - Holy Apostles; 8: Constantinian walls.

changed dramatically with the conversion of Constantine. Constantine claimed that a decisive victory in 312 over a rival for power in the west was due to the Christian God. Within a month or two of the battle, Constantine joined with the eastern emperor Licinius to permit Christian meetings and the rebuilding of churches. In early AD 313 he restored Church property in the west, made huge donations to the Church from the public treasury and granted exemption to the clergy from compulsory civic duties. These were revolutionary moves, which made a public statement that the Christian Church was of benefit to the Roman state. Imperial favour from now on was behind Christianity and not the traditional cults. At Constantinople, Constantine's treatment of the traditional cults is controversial. Did Constantine leave alone the ancient temples on the acropolis, or did he erase the old cults, creating a new Christian city? Eusebius, the emperor's contemporary Christian biographer, certainly claimed that Constantinople was wholly Christian, with former pagan idols placed in the city as merely decorative features. And epigrams of Palladas, which seem to have been written here in the 330s, note that statues of the Greek gods in the city were now Christian, and, unlike other temple fixtures, would not be melted down to make new coins, and they also refer to the city as 'Christ-loving'. At least some

people believed that Constantine created a high-profile position for Christianity in the new city.

Constantine built a palace and hippodrome in the city, where the people assembled for racing and shows, and acclaimed the emperor when he appeared in person. The central spine of the hippodrome was adorned with memorials of the Greek and Roman past, now placed in a new context: the bronze serpent column erected at Delphi to celebrate the Greek victory over the Persians in 480-479 BC; or statues from Rome of the sow with her piglets and of the she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus, which recalled the dual stories of the foundation of Rome by Aeneas and by the twins. Only the serpent column survived: turned into a fountain in late antiquity, it was not pillaged by the Crusaders in 1204, and came to be seen as a talisman against poisonous snakes; it stands to this day in Istanbul in its original location. In addition, the Lupercalia, at which the crown had been offered to Julius Caesar, was celebrated in the new city, the racing conducted not through the streets, but by charioteers in the hippodrome. It was now a movable festival, held just before the start of Lent. The precise date depended on the date of Easter, but it still took place close to the original date of 15 February.

Constantine also built churches in Constantinople. He may have started the first church of St Sophia, which his successor Constantius finished, and which was eventually replaced by the surviving church in the sixth century AD, but he built fewer churches than in either Palestine or Rome. He also built a Christian mausoleum, the shrine of the Holy Apostles, where he himself was buried. In the course of the fourth century, the Christian presence in the city grew. Constantius transferred to the shrine of the Holy Apostles the bodies of three famous martyrs, Timothy, Luke and Andrew, who was said to have been active in the initial Christianization of Byzantium. This is the first time that relics were moved from their original places of burial, in Asia Minor and mainland Greece, a practice that was to become widespread; by the fifth century Constantinople itself acquired a huge collection of relics. The innovation shows the pressing need to furnish Constantinople with a rich Christian past.

The overall number of cities in the empire was unaffected by the reorganization of provinces and the creation of districts. In the Greek east, there were about a thousand cities, mostly with quite small territories. By contrast, in the area of Gaul that had been conquered by Julius Caesar

there were only seventy-eight cities, all with large rural territories, over ten times the size of those in the Greek east. In both cases, there was continuity back to the early empire, and beyond. The Gallic cities of the fourth and fifth centuries AD corresponded in general to the tribes identified by Caesar at the time of conquest. The size and prosperity of individual cities did, however, change in comparison with previous centuries, with some winners and some losers. For example, Massilia in the late Roman period regained its role as a major port for inter-regional trade, and recovered the prosperity lost in the first century BC, when it had backed the wrong side in the civil war between Pompey and Caesar.

The key overall issue affecting the prosperity of individual cities was changes to the structure of Roman government. Because the new imperial bureaucracies were recruited locally, made hereditary and given exemption from civic office-holding, they drew upwards the talents and resources of local families. Those families had previously been the mainstays of their native cities. The effects are very clear in the public sculpture of Aphrodisias, an important city in south-west Asia Minor. In the first to third centuries AD local politics had been strongly contested by leading members of local families, who had memorialized themselves in hundreds of portrait statues, in local Greek dress. But from the fourth century onwards the old practice of competitive donations to the city by local dignitaries ended. Public statues were now mostly not of local citizens, but of emperors and high-ranking Roman officials. The ending of civic munificence is visible in large areas of the western empire, in Iberia, Gaul and Britain. Local elites diverted their wealth from cities to grand houses in the countryside, and also into church-building. In Britain, where cities had been of relatively new creation, there was widespread loss of civic spaces and amenities in the fourth century; of fifteen major public baths built in the first or second century AD, nine were still in use in 300, but all had gone by 400.

On the other hand, those cities that were or became the seats of provincial or regional governors benefited from the attention and wealth of the governor. Carthage, the seat of the regional governor of Africa, reached its greatest ever size by the early fifth century, some 320 hectares, with buildings displaying great wealth. Aphrodisias, which lost the civic munificence of its local citizens, became the seat of the governor of the new province of Caria. The governor was responsible for extensive

building works in the fourth and early fifth centuries. These works had the aim of supporting the traditional image of the city. A fortification wall was built round the city, probably to enhance the city's prestige. Major public and civic buildings (baths, theatre, stadium) were repaired or redesigned, and two monumental gates were entirely restored.

As a result of these changes to the governance of the empire there emerged new elites, operating not at a civic, but at a regional or supra-regional level. Those who held imperial office at court had the highest prestige. Some families succeeded in maintaining their position over several generations, others had more rapid rises and falls. The career of Ausonius of Burdigala (modern Bordeaux) illustrates the latter pattern. For many years he taught literature and rhetoric in his home city, which had taken over from Augustodunum the reputation for the best centre of higher education in the west. Aged nearly 60, he was summoned to the imperial court by the emperor Valentinian to teach his young son Gratian. With Gratian's accession in 375, Ausonius obtained high imperial offices both for himself and for members of his family, which became the most important family in the western empire. On the murder of Gratian in 383, Ausonius moved back to his estates near Burdigala, and his family returned to relative obscurity. Ausonius also had renown for his poetry. He was interested in the period of the Trojan War, writing epitaphs on the heroes of the day. But he also wrote about the present. His twenty poems on famous cities rank them in order of importance, with Rome and Constantinople at the head, proudly including among five Gallic cities his native Burdigala. His most successful poem, the *Mosella*, united the classical and the contemporary by talking about the river Moselle in terms of Virgil's *Georgics*. Like other classically educated people, Ausonius was rooted both in the classical past and in the contemporary world.

Another change affecting cities of the empire was the system of Roman roads. Major arteries linked together the whole empire, from Eburacum (modern York) overland via Mediolanum and Constantinople all the way round to Alexandria in Egypt. These major arteries had been developed in the first instance for military and state purposes, going back to the early empire, but they were also used by private citizens. In 333 a wealthy pilgrim travelled from Burdigala to Jerusalem and back, along these roads, and the surviving record of the journey gives precise details of the route, which is shown on Map 33. There were three types of stop: cities or towns, hostels for overnight stays and places for changes of

horse. The longest gap between any of these is about twenty Roman miles (30 kilometres), and mostly there was one or other type of stop every eight to ten miles. The travelling time from Burdigala to Jerusalem and back, at about twenty Roman miles per day, was about eight months. Such a long journey was unusual, but the major routes did provide an extraordinary degree of connection within the Roman empire. The cities lying on these routes had extra reasons to prosper, from the transit of people and goods.

A final issue that might affect cities was their relation to Christianity. Around 325 the small town of Orcistus in central Asia Minor (150 kilometres south-west of modern Ankara) petitioned the emperor Constantine for the reinstatement of the community's civic status. The Orcistians claimed that their town used to enjoy the splendour of a city, with proper magistrates, town councillors and a large number of citizens; that it lay at the junction of four roads, offering a hostel for those travelling on public business; that there was abundant water, and a forum decorated with statues of leading citizens of the past. These were not very strong claims: Orcistus was on only the lesser of the two main roads running through Asia Minor, and it did not have any notable buildings. Very strikingly, the Orcistians do not make any play with the ancient history of the city, that it was founded by Hercules or the like, claims which had been the mainstay of diplomatic arguments by Greek cities for more than seven hundred years. Instead, the Orcistians pointed out that the whole population of Orcistus were 'followers of the most holy religion', that is, Christianity. That Constantine accepted this as the clinching argument is a token of the new world created by the newly prestigious religion of Christianity.

Christianity was growing in strength, but it was not yet the official religion of the empire. The main way of understanding developments in the course of the fourth century is in terms of the relationship between Christianity and the traditional cults, each embodying different views of the past. Traditional cults continued to be practised in the fourth century, and into the fifth century in some places. Constantine himself was responsible for very few destructions of traditional temples, only those associated with Apollonius of Tyana, a first-century AD wonder-worker who had come to be seen as a rival of Christ. Subsequent emperors issued legal protection of temple structures, though they were not to be used for rituals after 389. In 391 and 392 the emperor Theodosius prohibited

all sacrifices and closed all temples. Even these bans were not the end of the story, because Theodosius no longer had control of the west in 392, and the western emperor Eugenius restored some elements of the traditional cults. In 408-9, when Rome was under siege from the Goths, the Prefect of the City consulted Etruscan diviners and celebrated the ancestral rites with the Senate on the Capitol. But zealous bishops sometimes instigated direct action against temples. In 392 the great sanctuary of Serapis in Alexandria in Egypt was stormed and sacked, following provocative actions taken by the local bishop. This sack was a particular success for hardline Christians, as the sanctuary had considerable importance as a cultural centre. Only in the fifth century were more temples destroyed, and others, such as the Athenian Parthenon or the temple of Aphrodite at Aphrodisias, converted into churches; at Rome, the Pantheon was the first temple to be converted into a church, as late as 609. In the course of the fourth century, the scales were increasingly weighted against the ancient cults. In 420, a Christian priest, Isidore of Pelusium (near modern Suez) could write: 'The religion of the Greeks, made dominant for so many years by such pains, by the expenditure of such wealth, and by such feats of arms, has vanished from the earth.'

The sense of the past held by traditionalists was very different from that of Christians in the fourth century. Traditionalists continued to promote a vision of Rome's history familiar already to Cato the Elder or Virgil. An anonymous treatise on the *Origin of the Roman People* started with the earliest times, with Picus and Faunus, early kings of Latium, before reaching Aeneas, Ascanius, the kings of Alba Longa and kings of Rome. Then the treatise continued with Roman *dictatores*, and a list of Roman emperors down to Licinius (AD 324). Like Tacitus, it assumed that Rome was always ruled by autocrats. The work listed the length of each reign: for example, Aeneas 30 years; Romulus 38 years; Augustus 56 years, 4 months and 1 day. But it did not attempt any overall chronology. We might note here that counting 'ab urbe condita', from the foundation of the city, though used by scholars in the nineteenth century, was not much used by the Romans, partly because of disputes about precisely when Rome was founded. A second fourth-century AD anonymous treatise on the same subject focused entirely on the earliest times, from the kings of Latium down to Romulus' foundation of Rome. En route, it told the story of Hercules, Cacus and the Ara Maxima, and of Aeneas in Italy. Such a view of the past was very familiar, but also



extremely narrow, suffering from real tunnel vision in its focus on just one city, even though that city was Rome.

Christian views of the past, by contrast, were far broader and more inclusive, though of course equally tendentious. Eusebius' *Chronicle* is one of the most remarkable intellectual achievements of the period. It became the standard account of world chronology from the birth of Abraham down to the present day. The first edition probably ended c. AD 311, the final went down to the twentieth year of Constantine (325/6). The original Greek text is lost, but part was translated by Jerome into Latin in the 380s, and part into Syriac and from that into Armenian. The first part of the *Chronicle* was a *Chronography*, which discussed the sources of evidence for world history. Its objective was to date Moses and the Jewish prophets in relation to the birth of Christ, and to correlate this story-line with that of the Chaldeans, Assyrians, Medes, Lydians, Persians, Egyptians, Greeks, Macedonians (including the Successors of Alexander the Great) and Romans; unsurprisingly, given the obliteration of the history of western people conquered by Rome, there is no separate story-line for the west. The second part consisted of a *Chronological Canon*, which tabulated the various chronologies, noting all sorts of historical dates and events. It stood in the tradition of Greek chronological writing, going back to Hellanicus of Lesbos, and subsequent dating by Olympiads, but it was novel in two ways. Following the work of an earlier Christian author, Julius Africanus, it added Jewish and Christian history to the Greek chronological tradition, and for the first time in a work of chronology it used tabular form to set out the story-lines of different peoples, allowing the reader to see what happened simultaneously in different traditions. Eusebius used the birth of Abraham as the starting date of his chronology. The story-line from the birth of Abraham, via Moses and the Prophets, to the birth of Christ was the spine against which all other events were set; Eusebius worried about the seemingly earlier chronologies of the Near East and Egypt, but made them conform to his Abrahamic spine. Eusebius included the era of the sack of Troy, as established by Eratosthenes, but for Eusebius some Jewish history was much, much earlier. Cecrops became king of Athens 375 years before the sack of Troy, but the creation of the first king of Athens occurred in the thirty-fifth year of Moses, and no less than 460 years after the birth of Abraham. Similarly, 'Europa, daughter of Phoenix, had union with Zeus' 572 years after the birth of Abraham. The primacy of the biblical story-

line had obvious apologetic implications in favour of Christianity in a world where religious traditions were valued in terms of their antiquity. Europa and Zeus, a primordial event for many Greeks, happened long after the start of history. And Christianity, Eusebius argued elsewhere, was of extreme antiquity, going back to the time of Abraham, and was therefore older than Judaism as reformed by Moses.

### Chronologies of the past

We now call Eusebius' date for the birth of Abraham '2016 BC', and the union of Europa and Zeus '1444 BC', but Eusebius does not use this method of calculation. Counting backwards from the birth of Christ ('Before Christ') was established only in the seventeenth century, and did not come into common use before the late eighteenth century. Eusebius counts forward from the birth of Abraham to the present day. Though he noted the birth of Christ, he had no need to count forwards from it as we do ('Anno Domini'); 'AD' dates were invented only after our period. In what we call AD 526, Dionysius Exiguus, writing in Alexandria in Egypt, set out a new basis for the calculation of the correct dates for Easter. Wishing to avoid the local, Alexandrian era, which began with Diocletian, the 'impious persecutor' of the Christians, he noted years since the Incarnation, linking them to Roman chronology. But Dionysius' work was not historical. Dates from the Incarnation of Christ, one year earlier than modern AD dates, began to be used for general chronological purposes only with Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* in the eighth century.

Scaliger, one of the great scholars of the Renaissance, stood in the tradition of scholarship developed by Eusebius. His *New Work on the Correction of Chronology* (1583) discusses the main calendars, ancient and modern (Books 1-4), gives key days from the Creation to more recent times (Books 5-6), prints texts and translations of medieval Jewish, Ethiopic and Byzantine calendrical treatises (Book 7), and draws implications for contemporary calendar reform (Book 8). The book stood on the shoulders of the previous century's work on these subjects, but was extremely original and acute. For example, on the basis of a lunar eclipse before the defeat of the Persian king Darius III by Alexander the Great at Gaugamela, Scaliger argued that the battle followed the eclipse of 20 September 331 BC, rather than Eusebius' date of 328 BC (or rather,

Scaliger offered a date in his own complex dating system, which corresponds to our 331 BC). This date still stands, and is an important underpinning of our Greek chronology. In 1606 Scaliger also edited the Latin translation of Eusebius' *Chronological Canons*. Drawing on humanism, Hebrew and mathematics, he was able to show, against Eusebius and his followers in Scaliger's day, that chronology could not rest on the authority of the Bible, and that all authorities, including the Bible and Eusebius, must be subject to criticism in the search for truth. Scaliger's methods exemplify the great achievements of Renaissance humanism.

Eusebius was also responsible for establishing a new sort of historical writing. Josephus, our main source for the Jewish revolt of AD 66–70, later also wrote the *Jewish Antiquities*, a history of the Jewish people from the Creation down to the outbreak of the revolt. Inspired in part by Josephus, Eusebius wrote the first ever history of the Christian Church, from the birth of Christ 'in the forty-second year of the reign of Augustus, and the twenty-eighth after the subjugation of Egypt and the death of Antony and Cleopatra, with whom the dynasty of the Ptolemies in Egypt came to a final end', and ending with the unification of the whole empire under the Christian emperor Constantine. Eusebius, though beginning his account in what we call 2 BC, claims that Christianity is as old as the world, being foretold in the Hebrew Bible, and being a restoration of the religion practised before Moses. But this history is of Christianity as an institution, with established sequences of bishops in the major sees, and an inherent orthodoxy seeing off challenges from heresies and schisms. The manner in which he presents the history is quite different from the style of earlier Greek or Roman historians. They generally paraphrase the sources in their own words, much as we have done in this book, but large chunks of Eusebius' *Church History* consist of verbatim quotations of earlier authors and documents. The validity of the evidence was an important justification of the truth of the Church.

Emperors after Constantine were all Christians, with the exception of Julian (360–63). While a prince and still publicly a Christian, Julian was instructed in 354 by the emperor Constantius to leave Nicomedia and join him in Mediolanum, but he made a detour off the main road to visit the historic site of Troy. He was shown round by Pegasus, who despite being the local Christian bishop supported the worship of the goddess

Athena, and of the heroes Achilles and Hector 'just as we worship the martyrs'. This willingness by some Christians to favour elements of the pre-Christian past persisted, but Julian on becoming emperor declared himself a committed pagan. He promoted the traditional cults, somewhat reformulated so as to offer greater resistance to Christianity. Though he did not revive persecution of Christians, he banned them from teaching: Christians were unsuitable because such people expounded the works of Homer and Hesiod, while rejecting the gods whom those works honoured. Christian attempts to assimilate the classic literary heritage without accepting its religious values were, for Julian, absurd and unacceptable. In terms of religious practice, Julian was enthusiastic about large-scale animal sacrifices, for example at Antioch on the Orontes before the start of a campaign against the Sasanians. He even sought to bring about the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, so that the Jews could again sacrifice there, perhaps in order to drive a wedge between the Christians, who would not sacrifice, and the Jews, who would if they had a chance and would do so in a manner quite similar to traditional Greek and Roman sacrifices. According to Cyril, the contemporary bishop of Jerusalem, laying the foundations of the new Temple was halted by a disastrous earthquake that struck the region. When Julian died on his eastern campaign his dream of a revival of pagan practices died with him. In addition, Jews found themselves increasingly circumscribed by imperial legislation.

Despite the failure of Julian's policies, some aspects of traditional paganism might seem to be alive and well at the end of the fourth century AD. Take, for example, the sculpture being worked on in a sculptor's workshop at Aphrodisias at the time of its destruction, perhaps in an earthquake, in the late fourth or early fifth century. A statuette of Europa and the bull was in process of being carved, in a virtuosio fashion, from a piece of two-tone marble, so as to create a white Europa riding on a dark blue bull. Small-scale versions of other standard mythological figures were also in production: the gods Artemis, Asclepius and Aphrodite. Sculpture like this had been carved for centuries, and its display in houses and public buildings formed an important element in the historic memory of the Greek east. Scenes of classical mythology continued to feature in mosaics on the floors of houses in the Levant for the next two hundred years.

How far did such historic memories form part of a specifically religious



identity at this period? How to conceptualize the issue is hotly debated. We have avoided the term 'paganism' in relation to previous periods, because it was only in the course of the third century AD, because of the growing strength of Christianity, that people came to see themselves not just as just as worshippers of Greek, Roman or other traditional gods, but also as being 'pagan'. At the same time some proponents of Christianity saw a conflict with paganism. So what sort of conflict was there between pagans and Christians? It seems that the so-called 'last pagans' of Rome in the late fourth and early fifth centuries were not hostile to Christianity, indeed some of them were in fact Christians, and their admiration for classical culture did not entail acceptance of the pagan gods. On the other hand, some Christians were responsible for serious acts of violence against pagan cults, but others attempted to find common ground. That is, there was both antagonism and assimilation.

Towards the end of the fourth century and into the fifth the classical past and its culture were much contested between pagans and Christians. Pagan senators in Rome were involved in the copying and correction of texts. For example, our texts of Livy go back to a project by the related families of the Nicomachi and Symmachi in the late fourth and early fifth centuries to edit the whole of Livy's *History*; later versions of the manuscripts preserved their 'signing-off' on sections of the *History*.<sup>1</sup> Nicomachus Flavianus, senator, three-times Prefect of the City [of Rome], corrected the text at Enna; Enna on Sicily was where his family had an estate. Such editing was not part of a co-ordinated propaganda move by the diehard pagans to preserve and transmit their culture to posterity, but equally it was not simply a private matter. Senators in Rome were known to possess large libraries. Even if critics alleged that few senators read the contents of their libraries any more, some certainly did. On their joint funeral monument, Paulina honoured her husband, Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, who died in AD 384, for his learning; that is, for his ability to improve the texts of the wise, by correcting manuscripts in Greek and Latin, prose and verse. Paulina went on to compare the transformation of texts with the much greater and more significant transformation of individuals through their initiation into mystery cults. Praetextatus was a notable pagan, and Paulina herself felt that she had been transformed by her husband, and so saved from death. That is, it was a culturally significant fact that members of the elite spent their time correcting classical manuscripts. It was also significant what texts

they selected. Christians read both secular and Christian texts, but pagans read only secular texts, and could interpret them within their own religious framework.

Views of classical culture in the 420s and 430s remained highly charged. By this time all senators were Christians, but the reading of the classics remained problematic. Macrobius' *Saturnalia*, written in the 430s, was set back in AD 384, at the time of the struggles between paganism and Christianity. The work took the form of conversations between the leading pagans of the day, including Praetextatus, Symmachus and Nicomachus Flavianus, during the festival of the Saturnalia. They discuss frivolous and serious topics, such as the Saturnalia itself, and the Roman calendar, but devote most time to Virgil. Virgil is treated as the master of philosophical and religious knowledge, described as their *pontifex maximus*, the title which the Christian emperor Gratian had just repudiated. He was not just the author of a classic school text, but also the source of precise religious information. The *Saturnalia* has been seen as nostalgia for a lost age, when paganism might have been saved as an alternative to Christianity. In fact, it is more interesting than mere nostalgia. The author was no doubt a Christian, and he could not have circulated the work over his own name if it had been seen as anti-Christian, but the work, which never mentions Christianity, was a meditation upon the previous generation's dream of a revival of paganism.

### Transmission of ancient texts

How do we know what ancient authors wrote? We have no ancient literary manuscripts in the authors' own hand. For Greek authors the library in Alexandria attempted to establish authoritative texts (above, pp. 159–61). The Nicomachi and Symmachi did the same for Livy, with much success: their text is far superior to an independently surviving manuscript of the same period, the early fifth century AD. How, though, do we know what these texts were? In some cases, texts, or more commonly, parts of texts, survive from antiquity: papyri from Egypt, mostly of Greek authors; or writing tablets from Vindolanda, which include odd lines of Virgil. But if we were dependent on such finds, we would be able to piece together very little classical literature. Two texts survive largely complete in antique

manuscripts. Virgil survives in three manuscripts of the fifth-seventh centuries AD (see also Plate 28). And the Greek Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, is known in copies of the fourth century AD: a manuscript preserved until the nineteenth century in the Monastery of St Catherine's on Mt. Sinai, the Codex Sinaiticus, most of which is now in the British Library, and a manuscript in Rome, the Codex Vaticanus. It is no accident that two of the greatest classics of antiquity are so well preserved in antique manuscripts; oddly, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* do not survive complete from antiquity. For other texts, we are mostly dependent on what was transmitted after antiquity. Sometimes, the transmission is a matter of translation into other languages, into Syriac and Armenian, as we saw with Eusebius, or into Arabic, as we saw with Greek scientific works (above, Chapter 5). Mostly, it is a matter of copying, and recopying, of the original in cathedrals and monasteries. The Carolingian period (751-887), notable for its interest in the classical past, was crucial: the royal court had an outstanding classical library, from which abbots and bishops could take copies. Manuscripts rarely survive from this period, but they formed the basis for the more plentiful surviving copies after around AD 1000. For Livy, we are fortunate that the edition by the Nicomachi and Symmachi was copied in the Carolingian period, and is thus the origin of our medieval manuscripts. But the line of transmission is sometimes very thin, even for major authors. Most of Tacitus' historical works are lost: of the *Annals*, Books 1-6 survive only in a single manuscript of c. AD 850; Books 11-16 and *Histories*, Books 1-5, survive only in another single manuscript, of the mid-eleventh century.

Against this impression of stability in paganism, we must emphasize the growing prominence of Christianity. From 312 onwards imperial patronage was put behind Christianity and not paganism, pressure was put on senators to convert to Christianity, and imperial legislation gradually defined more and more aspects of pagan religious rituals as illegal. But religious festivals continued, reinterpreted by the Christian authorities as 'amusements' and hence acceptable, though in 389 they lost their formal status as 'holidays'. The Lupercalia, for example, continued to be celebrated at Rome. It had been stripped of its accompanying sacrifices, and those who ran naked through the streets of Rome to the Forum were no longer senators, as in the time of Caesar, but hired people

of low status. Gelasius, bishop of Rome (492-96), as part of a polemic against spiritual adultery on the part of Christians, criticized the leading Romans for believing that the festival brought them salvation. The Christian supporters of the festival, on the other hand, felt that the Lupercalia was an innocent carnivalesque festival, part of the heritage of Rome, tying the present back to the ancient days of Evander and Romulus.

Christian festivals in the meantime began to take over from the traditional ones. From 321 onwards Sunday possessed the status of a 'holiday', and in 389, when pagan festivals lost their protected status, the Easter period was added to Sundays as times when courts could not be held. The timing of Christian festivals sometimes also competed with paganism. In the fourth century the birth of the Sun was widely celebrated on 25 December; according to one Greek calendar, this was when 'light increases': 25 December was the winter solstice in the Julian calendar, after which the days get longer again. In the fourth century 25 December was also chosen as the date for the birth of Christ by the Church of Rome. Previously, this event had been assigned to various dates, but in an attempt to assert the theological importance of Christ, against eastern Christians who argued for the subordination of Christ to the Father, the Roman Church settled on 25 December; from Rome the festival spread to other western churches, and eventually to most eastern churches. This date had some biblical support: a prophet, Malachi, had foretold the coming of the Sun of Righteousness; and the new Christian festival would counter the popular pagan festival.

Another pagan festival at around the same time also had to be countered. The festival of the Kalends of January (1 January) was celebrated with great fervour throughout the Roman empire. The date marked the start of the Roman year, and was accompanied by the exchange of gifts, competitive feasting and drinking. Christian bishops often inveighed against it. Augustine once preached a sermon that lasted for over two and a half hours, in order to distract his congregation from the potentially corrupting festivities outside the church.

Christianity had spread rapidly during the fourth century, in comparison with the third century, increasing both its geographical coverage and the number of its adherents. A fourth-century curse tablet from the sacred spring at Aquae Sulis (modern Bath) appealed for help to 'you, lady goddess', that is, Sulis Minerva, against the thief who took six silver coins

from a purse, 'whether pagan or Christian, whosever, whether man or woman, whether boy or girl, whether slave or free'. The last three alternatives are standard in earlier curse tablets. As the purpose of the alternatives was to cover all possible categories to which the thief might belong, the novelty of the first alternative, 'whether pagan or Christian', is striking, indicating the pervasiveness of Christianity in Britain in the fourth century.

One of the mechanisms by which Christianity spread was by active, and now legal, evangelism. Martin of Tours (in central France) offers an extreme case of what was possible. Martin (died 397) was a contemporary of Ausonius, but unlike Ausonius he was an outsider to Gaul. Born in Pannonia (modern Hungary) and brought up in northern Italy, he served in the Roman army; it was while still a soldier, in his simple military dress, that he divided his cloak and gave half to a beggar. On being discharged from the army, he became a wandering Christian monk and finally bishop of Tours. He was famous for his miraculous cures, even raising people from the dead, and for his destruction of rural pagan cults. For example, in the territory of the Aedui, when attempting to destroy a pagan temple, he had to face down an angry and violent mob. Several cults in this area did indeed end in the time of Martin, with the deliberate destruction of cult images. Later local tradition even associated Martin with the site of Bibracte, the old centre of the Aedui; at the end of the fourth century, a chapel there to St Martin was built on the ruins of a temple, whose statues had been smashed. His biographer, Sulpicius Severus, writing towards the end of Martin's lifetime, was faced with a problem of how to describe such a remarkable person. Even if Homer were to reappear, he would not be able to put the life of Martin into adequate words. Martin's miracles, and his dialogues with saints and demons, were genuine, just as the miracles and dialogues with demons ascribed to Christ in the Gospels were genuine. Sulpicius was a man of classical learning, but for him the past against which Martin should be set was that of the Bible. Martin was another Apostle, whose dramatic actions fitted within an established narrative for the spread of Christianity.

By AD 400 each city in the Roman empire had its own bishop and at least one church. Huge regional councils of bishops met from time to time to decide matters of doctrine: more than three hundred mainly eastern bishops at Nicaea in 325, nearly two hundred at Constantinople in AD 381 and more than two hundred at Ephesus in 431. There were

similar gatherings in the west: thirty-three western bishops at Arles (modern Arles) in 314, but more than four hundred at Ariminum (modern Rimini) in 359, in each case including three bishops from Britain. These bishops had become prestigious figures in their own cities. It was increasingly common for them to be drawn from local aristocracies: Hilary of Limonum (modern Poitiers), the most important bishop in Gaul and a highly educated man from a good family, was more typical than Martin in this respect. Bishops also came to take on themselves the role of representing their cities to the central government. In 387, when the people of Antioch on the Orontes faced fearsome imperial retribution for a riot and the destruction of statues of the emperor, it was the bishop and monks, not the magistrates and council, who succeeded in obtaining an imperial pardon for the city. This pattern of widespread and powerful bishops would endure for centuries to come.

Monasteries were also becoming widely established by 400. The monastic movement began in Egypt under Antony (251-356) and then Pachomius. By the time Pachomius died in 346 his followers were said to number 3,000, and as many as 7,000 by the early fifth century. From Egypt the idea spread first to Palestine and then to inland Asia Minor, but it was slow to catch on elsewhere. In the west, the pioneer was Martin. He tried, but failed, to found a monastery in northern Italy soon after he ceased to be a soldier, but he did found one at Ligugé outside Hilary's city of Limonum, and another at Marmoutier outside Tours in 372, just after he became bishop there. Martin lived an ascetic life at Marmoutier with eighty monks, who were dressed, not in local wool, but in rough camel hair imported from Egypt, the home of monasticism. The monks had no personal possessions, and undertook no work except for the copying of texts. Though there was debate about whether monks should do no more than pray and transcribe texts, the practices of monasticism would prove to be extremely durable.

Christian communities in the fourth century created Christian pasts for themselves through the cult of saints. Initially, the key people were those who had been martyred at the hands of the authorities in the time before Constantine. The calendar of the Church of Rome in 354 consisted almost entirely of commemorations of the deaths of third-century Roman martyrs. Apart from the birth of Christ at Bethlehem in Judaea and the anniversary of Peter becoming first bishop of Rome, all other entries were anniversaries of martyrs. Fifty-two people were commemorated on

twenty-two occasions throughout the year. All died and were buried at Rome, apart from three North African martyrs, Cyprian (bishop of Carthage), and Perpetua and Felicitas, martyred in 203. There are no first- or second-century martyrs in the calendar, except for Peter and Paul, whose cult was reorganized in 258. The vision of the past implied in the calendar extended back to the beginnings of Christianity in Rome, but focused mainly on the events of the third century.

Tertullian, writing in Carthage around the time of the martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas, had ended his *Defence of Christianity* with a warning to the authorities that the blood of those killed was the seed of Christianity. This was a debating, and debatable, point. The prospect of bloody death in the arena was hardly a good advertisement for a minority sect. Christian leaders were not in favour of people seeking martyrdom, and indeed established proper forms of penance for Christians who had complied with orders to sacrifice. Only after the ending of persecution did cults of those put to death develop. The first Christian saints were all martyrs, but in the fifth century the cult of saints extended to include charismatic Christians who died peacefully.

Martin is an early example of this new type of saint (see Plate 30 for an eastern example). After Martin's death, Sulpicius Severus wrote letters and dialogues which retold stories about the miracles, anti-paganism and ascetic ideals of Martin. In one of the letters he claimed that Martin, with his endless sufferings, had endured a non-bloody martyrdom. At the monastery at Ligugé, soon after the death of Martin, a new shrine was built just west of Martin's original church, and at Tours his successor as bishop in 430 built a small chapel over Martin's grave. But the real growth in the local cult of Martin occurred more than fifty years after Martin's death, from the 460s onwards, and only in the sixth century did his cult become widespread, Martin being adopted by the Frankish king Clovis as his patron saint.

The building of churches in the fourth century constructed new religious topographies, and hence new readings of the past. By the time that the anonymous Burdigala pilgrim visited Palestine, as it was then known, in 333, the region had already been transformed. Constantine, in the nine years since he gained control of the east, had poured imperial resources into the region. Only two hundred years after Hadrian had transformed Athens, imperial interest had moved elsewhere, despite the memorable episode in the Acts of the Apostles of St Paul preaching in Athens.

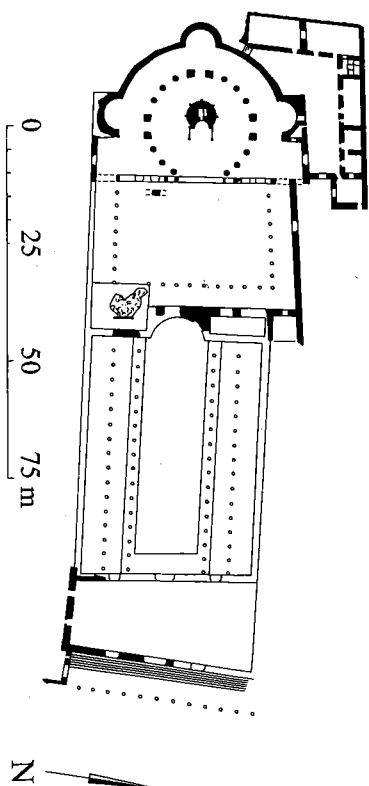


Figure 31. Floor plan of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem, as built by Constantine. At the left is the monument built to enclose the shrine built over what was believed to be the tomb of Christ; in the centre was an open courtyard; and at the right a basilica, whose plan is uncertain because of later buildings.

Constantine destroyed the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, built by Hadrian at Jerusalem after the Bar Kokhba revolt, and he built no fewer than four churches: one at Bethlehem, where Christ had been born; one on Golgotha, the place of Christ's crucifixion and also burial (see Figure 31); one on the Mount of Olives, from where Christ had risen to heaven; and one at Mamre (near modern Hebron), where Abraham had entertained three angels unawares and received the prophecy that he would be the father of a multitude of nations. Constantine's choice of locations for these churches was guided by existing Christian traditions about these places. In the case of Mamre, he took one of the three angels to be Christ, the first appearance of God to the world; he had also been warned by Eutropia, his mother-in-law, that she had seen the spot defiled by pagan ceremonies, but his decision to build a church here reminds us of how the birth of Abraham was the starting point of world chronology for Eusebius.

The record made by the Burdigala pilgrim shows how Palestine was seen at this early date. The description of the journey to and from Palestine consists largely of a bare list of the staging posts, but in Palestine the text gives instead a very rich account of the historical importance of the places visited. The pilgrim was interested in the entire run of biblical history, mentioning thirty-two places linked to the Old Testament, and twenty-one to the New. In Jerusalem, the text talks about the pools

by the Temple of Solomon, Solomon's palace (above, p. 56), and within the Temple of Solomon an altar marked by the blood of the Christian Zacharias; it notes that Jews were allowed each year to anoint a pierced stone here, mourn and rend their garments. In Jericho, the pilgrim saw the house of Rachel the harlot, which plays an important part in Joshua's story of the falling of the walls of Jericho (above, p. 54). The pilgrim also commented, very favourably, on Constantine's four churches, but was also interested in landmarks not flagged by buildings: the tree which Zacchaeus climbed in order to see Christ, or the place where Christ was baptized in the river Jordan and where the prophet Elijah was taken up to heaven. The author is barely interested in contemporary Jews, and not at all in the non-biblical history and cults of the region: there is no mention at all that there had been a temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Jerusalem. As was true for many later pilgrims, the past of the Burdigala pilgrim was entirely biblical, but from the perspective of Christianity. The land the Jews regarded as their holy land was now a Christian holy land.

In Palestine, because contemporary Jews were very weak politically, the creation of new topographies of the past was rapid and unproblematic. Elsewhere, there were real struggles over memory, for example at the temple and oracle of Apollo at Daphne outside Antioch on the Orontes. The local story about the origins of this shrine was that Seleucus I (308-281 BC), out hunting one day, came upon a tree, which he believed was the one into which Daphne, daughter of the local river-god, had transformed herself in order to escape the clutches of Apollo. The unearthing by the hoof of Seleucus' horse of a golden arrowhead with Apollo's name on it confirmed that the god continued to frequent the place. The story of Apollo and Daphne, known all over Greece and beyond, was still being told in Antioch in the third and fourth centuries AD. Here it was made to relate to a local cult, as had long been done in Greece with other stories about the gods and heroes. In the mid-third century AD one Babylas was martyred at Antioch, and was buried there. But in 353, Gallus, Caesar to the emperor Constantius and living at that time at Antioch, transferred the remains of Babylas the 9 kilometres from Antioch to Daphne. Here he built a mausoleum for Babylas, which became a centre for Christian worship.

In 362, Julian, Gallus' brother, now emperor, was horrified at the lack of piety at Antioch, blaming the city for neglecting the festival of Apollo.

He took it upon himself to restore the temple and statue of Apollo at Daphne, and attempted to revive the oracle and to cleanse the sacred spring, which had long since ceased to flow. The spring did not restart. When he was told that this was because of pollution caused by the presence of the body of Babylas, he had the remains taken back to their original burial spot in the city. However, as soon as the body re-entered the city, the temple roof mysteriously caught fire, and the ancient statue of Apollo was destroyed. Julian was furious. When a tribunal failed to identify the culprits, he punished the Christians collectively, shutting their principal church and confiscating its goods.

This whole story was much contested between pagans and Christians: the pagan Libanius and the Christian John Chrysostom, both locals of Antioch, had very different takes on it. Libanius, immediately after the events, wrote a dirge-like lament on the destruction of the temple, and its dreadful consequences for traditional religion. John Chrysostom, twenty years later, took the burning of the temple as divine retribution on Julian and his pro-pagan policies, but also talked about how the presence of Babylas at Daphne improved the moral climate of the place, the dissolute and depraved becoming restrained, as under the gaze of their teacher. The case of Babylas and Daphne is a wonderful example of conflicting attempts to memorialize religious places, and hence to emphasize different pasts.

The religious changes, accommodations and conflicts of the fourth century AD need to be seen in the context of major differences between Greek and Roman religion on the one hand, and Christianity on the other. Greek and Roman religion did not have sacred texts, or congregational temples, but did have both male and female deities, and both male and female priests. Christianity had had both male and female martyrs, and female prophets, but by the fourth century AD there were only male priests and bishops. The change in gendered authority aligned Christianity with Judaism as a (male) religion of the Book.

Augustine in the late fourth and early fifth century offers us a Christian perspective on the religious and cultural changes that had been taking place for the previous hundred years and more. Standing at the tipping point between the ancient and the medieval western worlds, he developed especially influential views on the classical past and present. His writings were arguably the most important Latin texts in the west for the next

thousand years. Not long after the laying of the Lullingstone mosaic, with which this chapter opened, the young Augustine (born 354) was following the traditional educational curriculum in North Africa. As boys had done for centuries, he studied with *grammatici*, and loved reading Virgil. He wept for the death of Dido, and first made his mark at school with a speech that the jealous Juno might have made when watching Aeneas leave Carthage for Italy. He went on to study rhetoric, and began a meteoric rise, teaching rhetoric in Carthage and Rome, before becoming professor of rhetoric at Mediolanum (Milan) in 384. Augustine's mastery of Latin, and the standard curriculum, was clearly extraordinary. Not that such knowledge was easy to acquire, even for the most able: Augustine found that after he had been in Mediolanum for two years the Italians still mocked his African pronunciation. And in North Africa, some of the more remote towns remained primarily Punic-speaking in the early fifth century AD.

Following his very successful career in rhetoric, Augustine came to a new understanding of Christianity, was ordained priest at Hippo (modern Annaba in Algeria) in 391, and then bishop in 395. As bishop, his rhetorical skills remained important, and his Latin sermons became famous, which is why hundreds of them survive. Quite a few have only recently been discovered in libraries, first appearing in print between 1981 and 2009. Many were addressed to his existing flock on matters of doctrine or practice. Two of his recently discovered sermons were delivered on the feasts of African martyrs, Cyprian, and Perpetua and Felicitas. The latter pair was honoured, according to Augustine, not just as women, but as wives and, in the case of Perpetua, as mother, in which roles they were exemplars to everyone. Augustine talked about the vision of Perpetua of a black Egyptian, which was fulfilled in her victory over the devil; both Perpetua and Felicitas were triumphant despite their weakness as women. Some sermons dealt with the need for unity in the Church, following an imperial ruling that sought to suppress a long-standing breakaway Church. Others offered arguments designed to attract adherents of paganism over to Christianity. Augustine sometimes left Hippo to preach in the region of northern Tunisia and north-eastern Algeria. Christianity had only recently spread to some areas that he visited. Preaching at Tignica (modern Ain Tounga in Tunisia), Augustine noted that the whole congregation was made up of children of pagan parents. Elsewhere, he had to admit that he had been unable to convert

educated pagans, and that the problem was the greater the more educated they were. At Boseth (in the Medjerda valley of Algeria-Tunisia), he preached twice to a congregation that included educated pagans, presumably specially invited for the occasions. The pagans held that the soul needed purification through pagan rituals, which placated the traditional gods and made possible ascent to the supreme deity. How could Christians object to this, as they ascribe a mediating role to Christ and the martyrs, who have an important place in their calendar? Augustine responded that the pagan philosophers' view of the soul needed to be modified, in that the soul, as they saw it, was less than divine, and that their purificatory practices depended on human pride. In other sermons, he had to face Christians who thought that paganism offered an alternative, and acceptable, path to God. This was the argument which some pagans had developed when arguing for the legitimacy of continued pagan practices in Rome, but Augustine would have none of it. There was only one path to the true God, and that was via the one Church.

In 397, two years after he became bishop, Augustine decided to write a spiritual autobiography outlining his progress towards Christianity. The *Confessions* is strikingly modern, and remains a gripping work. It deals with the facts of his life, down to his conversion to Christianity, ending with the death of his mother Monica in 387, as they waited to return home. It includes his successive conversions, to philosophy, thanks to reading a treatise by Cicero, to Manichaeism, a religion inspired in part by Persian ideas, which propounded an eternal struggle between Good and Evil, and which Diocletian had tried to stamp out, and to a version of Christianity much influenced by the thought of Plato. But having recounted events in Books 1-9, in Book 10 he develops an original theory of memory. The first books offered his memory of the failings of his past life and of his movement towards God, but the point of the work was to point the reader too towards God. How was it possible for anyone to seek God, and hence the happy life, which lay beyond ordinary sense perceptions? Augustine argues that it is through remembrance of something he has lost. Memory of God is like remembering joy, which all humans once knew, before Adam and the Fall. Augustine's theory of memory links together his past, present and future. As a condition for knowledge and understanding, memory explains his past, reveals his full identity, and mediates God's presence to him and his readers. The idea that the full meaning of memory could be seen only in a religious context



would be important also for Augustine's handling of cultural memory.

At the same time as he was writing the *Confessions*, Augustine also turned his thoughts to classical education. The young Augustine may have wept for Dido, but he came to argue in the *Confessions* that this passion had blinded him to his true spiritual position. He was therefore ambivalent about Virgil, despite the fact that he knew the text by heart, and that he considered it to be written in far better Latin than the existing Latin Bible. In *On Christian Doctrine*, he handles at length the relationship between Christians and classical culture. The Bible was, of course, primary. Like other books, it was also complex, requiring sophisticated techniques of interpretation, not simply acceptance of authority. It also required a breadth of knowledge in Hebrew and the history of the Near East not possessed by those educated merely in the classics. But Augustine does not argue that the Bible alone should be studied, nor that extra-biblical education is unnecessary for a good Christian. Instead, he argues that culture is a social phenomenon, the extension of language. Even pagan religion is a social construct, with sacrifices a means of communion between humans and demons. In literature, religion is not a source of danger to Christians. Contrary to the view implied in Macrobius' *Saturnalia*, Virgil in describing sacrifices does not inspire religious feelings on the part of pagans, and need not inspire horror on the part of Christians. The pagan gods are simply 'traditional forms, laid down by humans, adjusted to the needs of human society, with which we cannot dispense in this life', and as such can be put to Christian use. Virgil and the other Latin classics were at a stroke made unthreatening, and could thus continue to serve as the basis for European education in a Christian age.

Augustine also began to think about Rome and the Roman empire, and its relationship to the Christian faith. He might have reacted to Rome as the whore of Babylon, as did St John of Patmos (above, p. 298). Or he might have treated the empire as the work of divine providence and the emperor as the vice-regent of God on earth, as Eusebius had argued. In fact, he did neither. His interest in the biblical theme of the two cities, the divine and the human, was already established when the actual city of Rome was sacked by the Goths in 410. It is one of the ironies of history that Augustine could look at the troubles afflicting Rome and Italy from the stability of North Africa, seemingly remote from invasions; a further irony is that the Vandals, a tribe originating in Poland, which had fought

its way down through Gaul and Iberia, invaded North Africa in 429 and conquered Carthage in 439. In the course of AD 410-11, Augustine preached four sermons on the sack of Rome, but was faced with a challenging audience of refugees from Rome, who were Christian in name but classical in allegiance. The need to address waverers like these was the precipitating factor that led him to start writing the *City of God*, which appeared in sections between 413 and 425.

The *City of God* turned out to be the longest work of argumentative Latin ever written, excluding narrative histories like Livy, or codes of law. It has a complex structure, summed up by Augustine in a letter written to accompany a copy he was sending to a pagan friend, Firmus. The first five books were written against those who maintain that the worship of the gods, or rather demons, leads to happiness in this life. The next five books were written against those who think that such worship brings happiness in the next life. Then three groups of four books each describe the origin of the heavenly city, its development and the ends in store for it. The argument required that Augustine spend much time on Roman culture and history. In the first section, denying that paganism leads to happiness in this life, he writes at length on the material ills of Rome before the coming of Christ. The gods had no good reason for allowing the destruction of Troy. They did not avenge Romulus' murder of his brother Remus. Under the kings, Rome's lust for power, at the price of so much blood, resulted in the expansion of Rome's border only twenty Roman miles from the city, which would hardly stand comparison with the territory of a contemporary North African city. On the period after the sack of Carthage in 146 BC, Augustine stresses the violence in Rome from the Gracchi down to Augustus, and the massacre of Romans in Asia by Mithradates. All these disasters occurred while the pagan gods were worshipped at Rome. Subsequently, Augustine admits that some ancient Romans, such as Julius Caesar, possessed virtues, a point claimed strongly by contemporary pagans, but he argues that their virtues were unable to control the forces of moral corruption, and that they were not real virtues in comparison with those of the saints.

The second half of the *City of God*, on the origins, history and ends of the two cities, outlines human history from the Creation down to the time of David and Solomon, on the basis of the biblical accounts. The work then pauses to sketch the history of the human city, in opposition to the heavenly city, down to the coming of Christ, with the Assyrians

and then the Romans as the principal examples of the human city. Augustine adopts the chronological framework established by Eusebius, as known to him in the Latin translation by Jerome, which as we have seen pegged other civilizations to a biblical story-line. So it was in the period after the departure of Israel from Egypt that cults of the false gods were introduced to Greece, and Europa was carried off from Phoenicia to Crete, though, according to Augustine, the contemporary pagans held that she was carried off by a king of Crete and that the story about Zeus and the bull was a mere popular fable. Augustine dates the arrival of Aeneas in Italy to the time when Menestheus was king of Athens, Polyphides king of Sicily, Tantalus king of Assyria, and Labdon judge of Israel, just as Eusebius had done. This meticulous writing of the parallel histories of the two cities ended with the coming of Christ and the Church. Now the two are intermixed, and will be so until they are separated by the Last Judgement. Very remarkably, Augustine presents Rome as just another purely human institution, whose role could in principle be taken over by other states. How this came to pass is the subject of volume 2 of the Penguin History of Europe, *The Inheritance of Rome*.

Memories of the past within Classical antiquity have been the main recurrent theme within this book. Such memories of course do not start then, as we saw in relation to Bronze Age memories of the past, but from the early first millennium BC onwards two main sets of memories were, or became, important. The dominant one, first for Greeks and then for Romans, related various present days back to the time of the Trojan War and beyond. As peoples once peripheral to the Greek world sought to secure a place for themselves in that world, they related their pasts to the remote Greek past. Aeneas' journey from the burning Troy, via Carthage, to Italy became a repeated point of reference for people throughout the Roman world. The narrative of the rise of Rome, starting with Aeneas and Romulus, which was treated by Augustine as the main earthly city, formed part of the new ideological package transmitted to a Christian Europe. The other set of memories was that of the Israelites, consolidated in the sixth century BC, as a result of the experience of exile in Babylon. These memories were a defining force for the Jews, partially responsible for their revolts from Rome, but they remained particular to the Jews until they were partially adopted also by Christians, and so formed part of Augustine's history of the heavenly city.

Memories defined, united and divided peoples in the ancient world, but other factors were also important. Languages were key. Greek became the dominant language in the eastern Mediterranean, no doubt explaining why the first Christian texts, including the New Testament, were written not in Aramaic, the language of Jesus, but in Greek. Similarly, Latin became the dominant language in the west. In the early empire, the Roman elite prided itself on being seriously bilingual in Latin and Greek, but such bilingualism was limited to the elite, and did not endure. Christian texts were translated into Latin from an early date, and even someone as highly educated as Augustine knew little Greek. The division of the empire between east and west, first under Diocletian, and again from the end of the fourth century, followed this deeply rooted linguistic division between the two languages.

In the east, the imperial government retained control and cities prospered until the seventh century AD. The Sasanians continued to be a threat in the east, and in the early seventh century they succeeded in gaining control of much of the imperial east, though they were beaten back. In their weakened state, the Sasanians succumbed to a new coalition of Arab tribes led by Muhammad from 622 until his death in 632. The rapidly growing power of the Arabs marks a new stage in the history of the Near East, and of Europe.

The changes in the east are encapsulated in the building of the Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem. Arab control of Jerusalem began in around 640. The new Umayyad caliph Abd al-Malik in year 72 of the hegira (Muhammad's migration to Medina), the equivalent of AD 691-2, ordered the construction of the Dome of the Rock, as part of his proclamation of Islam as the ideological basis of Arab rule. This extraordinary building, not a mosque as it is not designed for prayer, is essentially an octagonal shell round an exposed piece of bedrock of the Temple Mount. This was the same piece of rock that the Burdigala pilgrim had reported as being sacred to Jews lamenting the destruction of the Temple; since at least the third century BC, Jews had also believed that Abraham's binding and near-sacrifice of his son Isaac had once taken place on this hill. Dominating the skyline of Jerusalem, the building marked the symbolic takeover of Jerusalem by the new rulers. But it also had particular meaning for Muslims. From the outset, they recognized Jerusalem as an important religious spot. According to early traditions, Muhammad was taken on a mystical Night Journey from Mecca to Jerusalem. At the Rock, the

angel Gabriel told him that this was where God had ascended to heaven having created the earth, leaving behind him traces of his feet. This would also be the spot for the Last Judgement. Because of the position of Jerusalem in Jewish and Christian thought, the city in general, and the Rock in particular, had special significance for the beginning and end of things. Only in later traditions, from the eleventh century onwards, but usually repeated today, was the Rock the place from which Muhammad himself, on his Night Journey to Jerusalem, ascended to heaven to contemplate the universe, leaving *his* footprints behind.

The Dome of the Rock displays two huge mosaic texts, 240 metres long, on the inside and outside of the octagonal arcade inside the building. Dating to AD 691-2, they are almost the earliest datable Muslim texts. Both select and combine verses from the Qur'an to make powerful statements of the new religion. The text on the inside of the arcade begins: 'In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. There is no god but God. He is One. He has no associate . . . Muhammad is the servant of God and His Messenger.' The target of this claim was not just pagan polytheism, but more pressingly Christianity. 'The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a Messenger of God, and His Word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His messengers, and say not "Three".' Jesus was respected as a Messenger, and the days on which he was born, died and *will be* raised again were also respected, but it does not befit God that he should take unto himself a son. These are vigorously polemical statements. The Dome of the Rock illustrates how earlier traditions of Jews and Christians, the earlier people of the Book, were adapted and incorporated into Islam, but it also demonstrates Islam's claim to radical novelty.

In the west, the fragmentation of imperial control was beginning already by AD 425. Britain had been lost, the Vandals were about to overrun North Africa, Gaul and Iberia would soon include areas controlled by barbarian allies of Rome. When Rutilius Namatianus sailed home from Rome to Gaul in 417 he wrote a poem praising the greatness of Rome and congratulating the general Constantius for defeating the Goths in Iberia. Rutilius, a pagan, noted that thanks to Rome's temples he was not far from heaven, and acknowledged the dual origins of the Roman race in Venus and Mars — mother of the sons of Aeneas, father of the descendants of Romulus. As he sails up the west coast of Italy, Rutilius notes with pleasure the continued performance of pagan rituals, and

inveighs against both monks and Jews. He comments, in somewhat melancholy fashion, on the change and decay in the places which he passes, such as Pyrgi or 'desolate Cosa's ancient and unguarded ruins and dreadful walls', but the remote past remains a firm point of reference. At Pisa, where he had once served in the imperial palace, he recalls fondly the antiquity of the city: as a colony of Elis, which was the home of the Olympic games, the foundation of Pisa predated the arrival of Aeneas from Troy. Rutilius still conceives of himself leaving the centre (Rome) to return home to the periphery (Gaul). That is, he still thinks of himself as living in the world covered in this history of Classical Europe. In fact he is at the brink of the new world. Here the peripheries were becoming centres in their own right, with Gaul doing much better than Rome by the turn of the fifth century AD.

Views of the past in this new world varied in different parts of the west. In southern Gaul a remote monastery, now known as Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert, was founded in 804 by Count Guilhem. He had gained great glory in fighting back the Arabs from Gaul, but decided to retire as a monk. His cousin, the emperor Charlemagne, gave the monastery a fragment of the True Cross. In the twelfth or thirteenth century, at the time when a cult of Guilhem was developing, a fourth-century Christian sarcophagus was restored to hold the relics of the founder, a sixth/seventh-century sarcophagus was reused for his sisters Albane and Bertrane, and Roman busts were built into the façade of the main door of the church. Despite massive changes in political systems, this region could connect itself back to the Roman past. In Britain, things were different. Here, Romanization was more limited than in Gaul, in both extent and depth. Claims did come to be made about the Trojan origin of the Britons, but urbanization was collapsing even before the end of Roman rule. By the eighth century AD an Old English poet could reflect upon the ruins before him, probably those of Bath, that encapsulated complete collapse, and imagines the lives that had once been lived there:

Splendid this rampart is, though fate destroyed it,  
The city buildings fell apart, the works  
Of giants crumble. Tumbled are the towers,  
Ruined the roofs, and broken the barred gate,  
Frost in the plaster, all the ceilings gape,

Torn and collapsed and eaten up by age . . .  
 Resolute masons, skilled in rounded building  
 Wondrously linked the framework with iron bonds.  
 The public halls were bright, with lofty gables,  
 Bath-houses many; great the cheerful noise,  
 And many mead-halls filled with human pleasures,  
 Till mighty fate brought change upon it all.  
 Slaughter was widespread, pestilence was rife,  
 And death took all those valiant men away.  
 The martial halls became deserted places,  
 The city crumbled, its repairers fell,  
 Its armies to the earth. And so these halls  
 Are empty, and this red curved roof now sheds  
 Its tiles, decay has brought it to the ground,  
 Smashed it to piles of rubble, where long since  
 A host of heroes, glorious, gold-adorned,  
 Gleaming in splendour, proud and flushed with wine,  
 Shone in their armour, gazed on gems and treasure,  
 On silver, riches, wealth and jewellery,  
 On this bright city with its wide domains.  
 Stone buildings stood, and the hot stream cast forth  
 Wide sprays of water, which a wall enclosed  
 In its bright compass, where convenient  
 Stood hot baths ready for them at the centre.  
 Hot streams poured forth over the clear grey stone,  
 To the round pool and down into the baths.

(trans. R. F. Leslie)

## Further Reading

In what follows, we do not list the sources or the works of scholarship, in many languages, which underpin what we have written. Instead, we offer a guide to relevant works in English, including some modern historical novels, that we hope will interest and excite readers. We also include translations of some key ancient texts, and give pointers to memorable places to visit. Where possible, we have included online resources.

### INTRODUCTION

How societies think about and use their pasts has been explored in a number of important works. Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), and James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) are pioneering general studies. The place of monuments in the construction of social memory has been explored by Susan E. Alcock, *Archaeologies of the Greek Past: Landscape, Monuments and Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Ruth M. Van Dyke and Susan E. Alcock (eds.), *Archaeologies of Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003); and Lucia F. Nixon, 'Chronologies of Desire and the Uses of Monuments: Eflatunpinar to Çatalhöyük and Beyond', in David Shankland (ed.), *Anthropology, Archaeology and Heritage in the Balkans and Anatolia, or The Life and Times of F. W. Hasluck (1878–1920)* (Istanbul: Isis, 2004; freely available online at: <http://tinyurl.com/qo87mc>).

Stimulating introductions to the various uses of the classical past in more recent epochs are offered by: Mary Beard and John Henderson, *Classics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Simon Goldhill, *Who Needs Greek? Contests in the Cultural History of Hellenism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), and his *Love, Sex and Tragedy: How the Ancient World Shapes our Lives* (London: John Murray, 2004); Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), and *Dignity and Decadence: Victorian Art and the Classical Inheritance* (London: HarperCollins, 1991), explore Victorian literature and art. Anthony Pagden (ed.), *The Idea of Europe from*