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Pagan Apologetics and Christian Intolerance in the Ages of Themistius and Augustine¹

CLIFFORD ANDO

This essay charts some trends in pagan-Christian dialogue in the fourth and early fifth centuries, particularly in light of recent attempts to foreground the intellectual achievement of post-Constantinian Christian apologetics and political thought. Many pagans consciously attempted to appeal to Christians on their own terms through allusions to themes in contemporary Christian debate and, above all, through the adoption of Christian vocabulary; this rhetorical strategy is compared to the introduction into early Christian apologetic of currents in middle Platonic theological speculation. Contrasting Christian response to such appeals with Christian legislation on pagan ritual behaviors allows us to collapse a distinction traditional in both fourth-century attitudes and modern scholarship between literary defenses of paganism and “pagan survivals,” and reveals a distinct lack of philosophical rigor among Christian legislators and bishops alike.

INTRODUCTION

Among historians of the Christianization of the Roman empire certain generalizations have not died easily. Foremost is the assertion that by the fourth century paganism was morally, spiritually, and intellectually bankrupt and that consequently the men who would formerly have served their

1. The following abbreviations are used: *Conflict* 5 *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, ed. A. Momigliano (Oxford, 1963). *Knowledge* 5 *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. R. van den Broek, T. Baarda, and J. Mansfeld (Leiden, 1988). Themistius is cited from the Teubner edition by Schenkl-Downey-Norman. Dates for Augustine’s sermons are supplied from P.-P. Verbraken, *Études critiques sur les sermons authentiques de Saint Augustin*, *Instrumenta Patristica*, vol. 12 (Steenbergen, 1976). I would like to thank for assistance and en-

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country now chose to serve the Church. That such an analysis was already expounded by Lactantius has not convinced many that it might be biased.² It is also a commonplace observation that, for all their apologetics, Christian and pagan had very little to say to one another.³ The accompanying tendency to see the issue in terms of moments of crisis was largely set by ecclesiastical historians;⁴ and recent attempts to reevaluate the vitality of late antique paganism have yet to make their mark.⁵ This traditional narrative requires a twofold correction: an appreciation of those moments in which the categories pagan and Christian may be deconstructed,⁶ and a reevaluation and redefinition of the historical process that we call Christianization. The dearth of the former no doubt results from

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2. See for example A. Momigliano, "Christianity and the Decline of the Roman Empire" (in *Conflict*), 9; A. D. E. Cameron, "Paganism and Literature in Late Fourth-Century Rome," *Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique* (Fondation Hardt) 23 (1977): 1–40 at 22, 27–28; J. Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton, 1987), 76. For S. Mitchell, Christianity was based on "humility and charity"; its victory was therefore "social" as well as "moral": *Anatolia* (Oxford, 1993), 2:82 and 108. R. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, 1993), 261–268, writes on a similar premise: once the institutional supports for paganism disappeared, it did, too. Cf. Lactantius, *inst.* 5.19, esp. at 28–29 (SC 204.236–238).

3. The classic statement is by E. Norden, *Antike Kunstprosa* (Leipzig, 1909), 2:517f. See more recently F. Paschoud, "L'intolérance chrétienne vue et jugée par les païens," *CrSt* 11 (1990): 549.

4. F. Thélamon, *Païens et chrétiens au IV^e siècle* (Paris, 1981), provides an exemplary analysis of Rufinus' vision of "Christianization"; see esp. 159–163 and 309–322; cf. P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity* (Madison, 1992), 28, and idem, "The Problem of Christianization," *PBA* 82 (1992): 89–106. One expression of this tendency in ancient thought is the frequent attribution of mass conversions to the miracles of a particular saint: see Thelamon, *Païens*, Part III, and C. Stancliffe, *St. Martin and His Hagiographer* (Oxford, 1983), 328–340. Pagans also understood the process in these terms: Eunapius, *v. soph.* 6.9.17, ed. Giangrande (Rome, 1956), 36.

5. G. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor, 1990); F. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c. 370–529* (Leiden, 1993); cf. R. Rémondon, "L'Égypte et la suprême résistance au christianisme," *BIFAO* 51 (1952): 63–78.

6. Some earlier efforts along these lines include P. Batiffol, "La conversion de Constantin et la tendance au monothéisme dans la religion romaine," *Bull. d'ancienne litt. et d'arch. chr.* 3 (1913): 132–141, reprinted in his *Paix Constantinienne*, 5th ed. (Paris, 1929); C. Guignebert, "Les demi-chrétiens et leur place dans l'église antique," *RHR* 88 (1923): 65–102; A. D. Nock, "Studies in the Graeco-Roman Beliefs of the Empire" (*JHS* 45 [1925] 5 partially reprinted as chapter 4 in *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* [Oxford, 1972]); B. R. Rees, "Popular Religion in Graeco-Roman Egypt II: The Transition to Christianity," *JEA* 36 (1950): 86–100; H.-I. Marrou, "Synesius of Cyrene and Alexandrian Neoplatonism" (in *Conflict*), 141–144; and J. J. O'Donnell, "The Demise of Paganism," *Traditio* 35 (1979): 51–52.

our post-Christian perspective, which encourages us to view pagan and Christian as inherently mutually exclusive categories differentiated ultimately by beliefs rather than behaviors. Robert Markus has provided a distinguished and thought-provoking contribution to the latter process, in which he emphasizes first “that in the non-Christian world religion touched everything, that the distinction between sacred and secular is essentially a Christian one which we impose on a culture to which it is foreign,” and second “there just is not a different culture to distinguish Christians from their pagan peers, only their religion; and any attempt to invent one reveals itself as a disguise for what is simply a difference of religion.”⁷ In his essay Markus draws our attention away from traditional fields of inquiry—for example, the continued existence of pagan rituals in daily life—and towards the intellectual debate among Christians about the formation and definition of the Christian community.

Within this debate, the coercive power of the government gave new force to the public utterances of Christian intellectuals in both ecclesiastic and political contexts. Two distinguished historians of late antiquity have recently examined the place of a specifically Christian rhetoric in the post-Constantinian age: Averil Cameron concentrates on the development of a “Christian discourse,” and Peter Brown presents with a wealth of anecdotal data the replacement of “men of *paideia*” with “Christian spokesmen.”⁸ At one level this essay both complements and complicates these inquiries by examining the rhetorical tropes exploited by pagan apologists in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, and by suggesting that pagan intellectuals developed their rhetorical strategies by imitating those previously adopted by Christians in the foundational period of Christian apologetics.⁹ One important strand in Christian apologetics had been its “exploitation of areas of ambiguity, the appeal to and subsequent use, that is, of themes and language already familiar” to the Christian author’s postulated audience.¹⁰ In his political speeches, Themistius presented his political program as a more tolerant and catholic alterna-

7. R. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, 1990), 7, 12–13.

8. See Av. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Berkeley, 1991), 1–14, and Brown, *Power*, 3–4 and 33–34.

9. For example, scholars have long recongized that many pagans agreed with Christian objections to sacrifices—indeed, that Christians learned how to debate the subject from pagans; see R. Turcan, “Les motivations de l’intolérance chrétienne et la fin du Mithriacisme au IV^e siècle ap. J-C,” *Actes du VII^e Congrès de la FIEC* (Budapest, 1984), 214–218.

10. The quotation is from Av. Cameron, *Christianity*, 130, where she discusses the oratory of Chrysostom, Basil, the two Gregorys, and Ambrose; it seemed appropriate to Christian apologists as well.

tive to the sectarian politics of the Christian court; he expounded this ideal using “themes and language” already familiar from contemporary Christian debate, concentrating in particular on the unknowability and consequent possible identity of the pagan and Christian supreme deity (Section I). The size of Themistius’ corpus permits a reasonably full survey of the motifs within Christian rhetoric and literature which struck a chord with sympathetic pagans; this in turn permits us, somewhat counter-intuitively, to review the background to Themistius’ rhetoric within Christian apologetic in a more selective fashion. Briefly put, Christian apologists of the second century adapted concepts and vocabulary popular in middle Platonic theological speculation in order to render Christian theology intelligible to themselves and to a wider, Christian and pagan audience in the terms in which they both had been educated (Section II).

This Platonic veneer remained visible in Christian writings of the fourth century and suggested to pagans that appeals to Christian “ignorance” might succeed. We can observe their attempts at two levels. In public discourse some pagan orators invoked a supreme deity of ambiguous religious persuasion, at times explicitly responding to the traditional aspects in the monotheism of the Constantinian court. In private correspondence with Augustine, some pagans wrote in these terms and some along more traditional lines, while others evinced an astute appreciation for specifically Christian elements in contemporary philosophical jargon. When in a reflective mood, Augustine doubted even the possibility of secure knowledge about the divine, but in responding to these letters he showed no hesitation. He subverted traditional pagan attacks with clever allusions to pagan literature; he proved, however, unable or unwilling to justify his rejection of his more subtle correspondents. Ultimately he fell back on a position which proved useful in his fights with heretics: a shared and proper Christian faith was necessary for any profitable exchange (Section III).

The conversion of the emperor of the Roman world had marked in one fashion the end of an era in Christian literature: martyr-acts and apologetic, two major genres, had no place in a Christian empire.¹¹ Apologetic arises from its author’s minority status and position of relative weakness in his political context, and to that extent post-Constantinian tracts like the *Contra gentes* of Athanasius were anachronistic; the aggressive tone of Firmicus Maternus is more comprehensible.¹² Understandably, it took some years before Christian writers and Christian emperors began to take

11. G. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge, 1995), 23–24, 55–57.

12. Cf. Av. Cameron, *Christianity*, 120–123.

aggressive action against paganism in its varied manifestations, but the vigorous activity under Theodosius ultimately had a profound effect on Christian conceptions of their community and of the recent past, as well as on attitudes towards the scope and efficacy of religious legislation.¹³ Christian legislators attempted to end pagan belief by outlawing pagan practice. At one level this started a long debate among Christians over the virtues of forced, and therefore possibly faked, conversions; and on another it caused more thoughtful Christians to reflect on the interaction between the faith of the inner man and the outward, physical signs of that faith in his words and behavior (Section IV).

Ultimately pagan apologetic was bound to fail, because neither Christianity nor paganism was intellectually respectable: Platonism could not become an intellectual meeting-ground because it did not map the concerns of either Christianity or fourth-century paganism. As intellectuals and as historians dependent on literary texts, we might wish that it did. Yet even an educated man like Praetextatus defined his religion by listing the ritual acts which he regularly performed as an initiate of several mystery cults. Christian bishops and legislators indirectly confronted this fact when they outlawed sacrifices and magical practices, but they justified this legislation in terms of its potential impact on an individual's beliefs. Since officials could not test an individual's convictions, they attacked the outward expressions of belief: words and deeds. In responding to apologetic rhetoric from pagans, Christian intellectuals privileged words as signs of pagan belief, and on this subject they have exercised a profound influence on modern scholarship; this is true even though, in Augustinian thought, words and actions operate equally well as carriers of meaning. Perhaps Christians of that day sensed, but were not able to express, that a much greater gulf separated the pagan and the Christian than the similarities in their writings might lead one to believe (Conclusion).

One methodological point. It has become fashionable to lament the use of the terms "pagan" and "paganism" in scholarship.¹⁴ I do not see that we have many alternatives, nor does that upset me. The categories pagan

13. Av. Cameron, *Christianity*, 129, and Markus, *End of Ancient Christianity*, 28–30, emphasize the increased confidence among Christian writers at the end of the fourth century; Brown, "Problem," 100, cites the battle of Adrianople as a turning-point.

14. G. Fowden, *JRS* 81 (1991): 119 n. *; Av. Cameron, *Christianity*, 122. Fowden has henceforth used the term "polytheist," but he applies it quite arbitrarily wherever another might have used "pagan" and to men of sharply different religious sympathies: Eunapius may have been a "polytheist," but I suspect that Themistius (or Symmachus or Longinianus, for that matter) would have found the term insulting (G. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth* [Paris, 1993], 44 on Eunapius, 100 on Themistius). See now

and Christian, always applicable in the study of apologetic literature, serve us well enough in the fourth century, by which time it had become clear to pagans that the Christian authorities viewed these categories as mutually exclusive. For example, in his famous plea to Theodosius, Libanius clearly divides the world into two religions: “[You could forbid paganism], but you don’t think it worthy of your position to place such a yoke on the souls of men; you think that this [religion] is better than the other one, but the other is neither impiety nor just reason to punish a man.”¹⁵ To insist on further specificity all the time would be self-defeating, for there are surely as many types of Christians, all of whom viewed each other with a degree of suspicion and hostility, as there are of pagans. The more important issue, which a change in terminology will not address, is whether men who identified themselves as Christian, knew what that label properly entailed.

I. THEMISTIUS AND THE EAST

There can be little question that the persecution of Christians launched at the beginning of the fourth century did not have the support of all the pagans in the empire;¹⁶ Lactantius suggests that some were so repulsed by the scenes in the arena that they converted—or, at least, admitted what they already knew in their hearts, that there was only one living God, and He was in heaven.¹⁷ But we should never underestimate, in the words of Momigliano, “the determination, almost the fierceness, with which the Christians appreciated and exploited the miracle that had transformed Constantine into a supporter, a protector, and later a legislator of the Christian Church.”¹⁸ The attitude is nicely expressed by Eusebius, whose statement also represents a tidy transformation of the accusations of anti-Christian polemic: all war, rape, adultery—indeed, the very lack of unity among men—are attributable to polytheistic error.¹⁹ Indeed, almost as soon as the emperor converted, Eusebius—and a generation later Firmi-

the insightful responses to such complaints by F. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion*, ix–x, and T. D. Barnes, *From Eusebius to Augustine* (London, 1994), x–xi.

15. Libanius, *or.* 30.53 (LCL 452.148)

16. See R. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York, 1987), 596–601.

17. Lactantius, *inst.* 5.13.11 and 22.18–23 (SC 204.194, 254–256); cf. Ambrose, *ep.* 18.11 (CSEL 82.3.39–40). See also Gregory of Nazianzus on Julian: from his knowledge of the history of persecutions, Julian knew that it was counterproductive to make martyrs (*or.* 4.57–58 [SC 309.162–164]).

18. Momigliano, “Pagan and Christian Historiography in the Fourth Century A.D.” (in *Conflict*), 80.

19. Eusebius, *l.c.* 16.2–3 (GCS 7.248–249).

cus Maternus—urged him to use his power to eliminate pagan worship altogether.²⁰ At the very least, adherence to a non-Christian set of beliefs, like visitations to astrologers in the first century, became yet another charge to be leveled against one's enemies before a court.²¹ At its worst, this politicizing of religious issues produced a climate of fear in which people shunned pagan learning as well as pagan practice. During the witch-hunts under Valens at Antioch, men throughout the east burned their entire libraries rather than be caught owning improper books.²² Some members of the western aristocracy felt threatened enough to flock to the standards of the Christian usurper Eugenius when he waved a token flag of tolerance.²³ Augustine quite typically wrestled with the issue of religious coercion, but there can be no doubt where he finally ended up: "it is well established that it has benefitted many to be compelled initially by fear so that later they might learn."²⁴

The philosopher Themistius had the gall to flourish in this environment; indeed, he was without a doubt the most important public official in Constantinople for almost forty years, maintaining close relations with every

20. Firmicus Maternus, *err.* 16.4 and 20.7, ed. Turcan (Paris, 1982), 112–113 and 125–126. Though Turcan doubts that Firmicus here alludes to actual legislation (i.e., to *C. Th.* 16.10.2–4), I find it easy to believe that Firmicus knew of and was influenced by the content and wording of contemporary legislation: cf. below on Palladas, at n. 26.

21. Eg. the thorny case of Isocasius (*PLRE* 2.633–634). Accused of being a pagan in 467 he was arrested and sent to Bithynia for trial. He was released after Iacobus Psychristus interceded with Leo and had the good sense to "convert" immediately thereafter: John Malalas *chron.* 14.38 (CSHB 15.369–371) and *Chronicon Paschale* s. a. 467 (CSHB 16.595–596).

22. Ammianus, 29.1.41, 2.4, ed. W. Seyfarth (Leipzig, 1978), 103, 104–105; cf. Synesius, *insomn.* 12.145A–C, ed. Terzaghi (Rome, 1944), 169–170.

23. Eugenius a Christian: Paulinus, *vit. Ambr.* 8.26 (PL 14.36B), and Ambrose, *ep.* 10(57).8–10 (CSEL 82.3.209–210); an important fact sometimes forgotten (eg. R. Van Dam at *Viator* 16 [1985], 2; A. D. E. Cameron at *JRS* 55 [1965], 25). Several Gallic bishops supported him and went in embassy to Theodosius (Rufinus, *b.e.* 2.31 [PL 21.538B]). Eugenius' motives and religious convictions nevertheless aroused speculation in antiquity, as in the present: see J.-R. Palanque, *Saint Ambroise et l'Empire Romain* (Paris, 1933), 274–275; on distortions, deliberate and otherwise, in Ambrose's and Paulinus' accounts of these events, see N. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan* (Berkeley, 1994), 344–354.

24. *Ep.* 185.6.21 (CSEL 57.19–20), cf. 7.28 on heresies (CSEL 57.26–27); see also *ep.* 93 (CSEL 34.2.445–496), 204 (CSEL 57.317–322) and compare Firmicus Maternus, *err.* 16.4. On Augustine and religious coercion, see P. Brown, "Religious Coercion in the Later Roman Empire: The Case of North Africa," *History* 48 (1963), and "St. Augustine's Attitude to Religious Coercion," *JRS* 54 (1964), both reprinted with addenda in his *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (Berkeley, 1972); and esp. C. Kirwan, *Augustine* (London, 1989), 212–218. On Ambrose, see Palanque, *Saint Ambroise*, 358–364, with the cautions offered by McLynn, *Ambrose*, 332.

eastern emperor from Constantius to Theodosius—with the exception of Julian.²⁵ For this crime modern scholars have generally condemned him to obscurity.²⁶ Though Themistius was quite public about his paganism, he was the most prominent orator of his day, serving on ten embassies from the Senate to the emperors. How did Themistius manage this tight-rope act?

We must first credit him with considerably more political astuteness than Julian: Themistius certainly realized that Christians were around to stay and that nothing would be gained by antagonizing them. More importantly, he succeeded in part by adapting the methods of Christian apologetic, though he probably did not think of it in such terms; he simply paid close attention to the contemporary political rhetoric of Christians. In doing so he acted no differently than did Palladas who, as Alan Cameron has shown, absorbed and iterated—though with a rather different spirit than Themistius—“the catch-phrases and clichés of Christian apologetic”; nor differently than Libanius, who imitated the utterances of Constantine’s apologist when declaiming before and about his sons.²⁷ Indeed, Averil Cameron’s generalization—that Themistius and Eusebius possessed a view of the Constantinian empire quite different from that of Julian, Libanius, and Synesius²⁸—must be qualified: when appropriate, Libanius could express views similar to those of Eusebius and did so by direct imitation of the Christian rhetor. This was, after all, a technique familiar to Christians, displayed above all in the forgery of imperial rescripts in their favor.²⁹

For example, it has been suggested that in his first public performance Themistius made a chiding reference to the Arian controversy, chiding because he suggests that disputes about names are unworthy of the divine.³⁰ But such a reference might well have aroused anger if it had not been couched in language otherwise calculated to sound comfortably familiar

25. *PLRE* 1 Themistius 1; *PW* 5.1642–1647 (Stegemann). See also O. Seeck, *Die Briefe des Libanius* (Leipzig, 1906), 291–306.

26. The publication of G. Downey’s translation of the orations might have changed this, but only Oration 1 ever appeared (“Themistius’ First Oration,” *GRBS* 1 [1958]: 49–69); the mss. of the remaining text was apparently deposited with W. Kaegi and has not been published (cf. MacBain in *BS/ÉB* 10.2 [1983]: 247). The most significant modern work is G. Dagron, “L’Empire romain d’orient au IV^e siècle et les traditions politiques de l’hellénisme: le témoignage de Thémistios,” *TM* 3 (1968): 1–242.

27. A. D. E. Cameron, “Palladas and Christian Polemic,” *JRS* 55 (1965): 17 and *passim*; P. Petit, “Libanius et la ‘Vita Constantini,’” *Historia* 1 (1950): 562–582.

28. Av. Cameron, *Christianity*, 131–132; cf. Dagron, “L’Empire romain,” 183.

29. See the famous, fake letters in the *Passio S. Sabini* and *Passio S. Symphoriani* and those attached to Justin’s corpus. On the fabrication of imperial rescripts, see L. Wenger, *Die Quellen des römischen Rechts* (Vienna, 1953), 431.

30. Themistius, *or.* 1.8b; cf. Downey, “Themistius’ First Oration,” 59 n. 11.

to its imperial audience. In that same speech he describes the good king as one who chooses to do good by viewing himself as analogous on earth to God in heaven. The theme is a common one, its most recent exponent having been Eusebius in his *Tricennial Orations*;³¹ and Eusebius, as Norman Baynes has shown, drew on a set of Pythagorean political tracts, by Sthenidas, Diotogenes, and Ecphantus, accessible to us in the anthology of Stobaeus.³² I wish to suggest that Themistius got the idea from Eusebius himself.³³ The concept is discussed in Stobaeus almost exclusively through forms of *μυέομαι/μίμησις*; Eusebius uses both forms of *μυέομαι* and forms of *εἰκόν*; the vocabulary used by Themistius is suggestively close to that of Eusebius.³⁴ Since Themistius returned to Constantinople from his philosophical studies in Pontus around 336, he may have been able to hear Eusebius himself, but obviously it is not necessary for him to have done so.

Two further observations strengthen this possibility. In a speech delivered before Jovian in 364, Themistius made a plea for religious toleration. He argued primarily that men have a natural tendency to follow different paths to God; significantly, his evidence for this was a simplistic description of the variety of traditions in contemporary Christianity.³⁵ In that same year, he gave another speech to celebrate the accession of Valentinian and Valens; in this speech he suggests once again that kings have a duty to imitate God, noting that God is not like the god described by Homer: “he does not have two urns, one filled with evil and the other with noble gifts, for there is no storehouse of evil in heaven.” There follows an odd picture of a vessel filled with dirt of the earth, and of a God attended by

31. Cf. H. A. Drake, *In Praise of Constantine: A Historical Study and New Translation of Eusebius' Tricennial Orations*, University of California Publications in Classical Studies, no. 15 (Berkeley, 1976), 10–11, 57.

32. N. H. Baynes, “Eusebius and the Christian Empire,” *Mélanges Bidez* (Brussels, 1933), 13–18, reprinted as chapter IX in his *Byzantine Studies* (London, 1960). Excerpts from the Pythagorean texts are translated by E. R. Goodenough in *YCS* 1 (1928): 55–102, and have since been edited with translation and commentary by L. Delatte as *Les Traités de la Royauté d'Ecphante, Diotogène, et Sthénidas*, Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège no. 97 (Liège, 1942).

33. General similarities between the political views of Eusebius and Themistius are canvassed by Dagron, “L'Empire romain,” 135ff., F. Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy* (Washington, D.C., 1966), 622–626, and Av. Cameron, *Christianity*, 131–132; none advances the suggestion that Themistius had read Eusebius, though Dagron (135 n. 70) notes some similarities in their vocabulary.

34. Compare Eusebius, *I.C.* 1.6 (GCS 7.198–199), with Themistius, *or.* 1.9b, and especially *or.* 11.143A.

35. On this oration see L. J. Daly, “Themistius' Plea for Religious Toleration,” *GRBS* 12 (1971): 74–75; for another, more persuasive view, see Dagron “L'Empire romain,” 163–172 (with his note 135), or Petavius' note ad loc., reprinted in Dindorf's edition on p. 534.

the Graces, to whom are attached a series of epithets appropriate to Zeus.³⁶ Some years later Themistius again urged an emperor, this time Theodosius, to model himself on God, and again he cites and refutes the description by Homer; but Themistius has learned an important lesson in the meantime: no, writes Themistius, a king has only a jar of life, and would do better to abide by the saying of the Assyrians, that the heart of the king is guarded in the hand of God.³⁷ Themistius has changed his practice and astutely employed an apologetic technique—privileging Scripture over pagan literature—in a plea for toleration. The remaining question then is where did his inspiration lay? He need not himself have read Scripture, but only the letter to Jovian from Athanasius and the Alexandrian synod of late 363, which opens with a quotation of the Proverb in question.³⁸

Finally, mention should be made of Themistius' most interesting speech, the lost *oratio ad Valentem* delivered, in all likelihood, *circa* 375; it was a plea for religious toleration as well, but it was specifically addressed against Valens' attack on non-Arians. Themistius apparently suggested to Valens that disagreement about the nature of God was inevitable because true knowledge of Him was beyond the capacity of men. Valens, we are told, softened, if only a little.³⁹ The Latin version of that speech, printed in all editions of Themistius, is now thought to have been written by Andreas Dudith in the mid-sixteenth century.⁴⁰ Of course, if Themistius had wanted Valens to understand something he would have had to say it in Latin;⁴¹ and there is no reason why he couldn't have read a translation into a language in which he himself was not fluent:⁴² after all, for that he had a precedent in Constantine and Constantius.⁴³

36. Themistius, *or.* 6.78d–79a, 79c–d.

37. Themistius, *or.* 19.228d–229a; cf. 7.89d and 11.147b–c.

38. Quoted by Theodoret, *h.e.* 4.3 (GCS 44.212–216).

39. Socrates, *h.e.* 4.32, ed. Hussey (Oxford, 1893), 209; Sozomen, *h.e.* 6.36.6–37.1 (GCS 50.294); cf. Themistius, *or.* 1.8b.

40. Printed by Dindorf as *or.* 12, printed in vol. 3 of Schenkl/Downey/Norman. The speech is at the very least a clever pastiche of themes Themistius used or very well might have exploited. See in particular 156d–57b, 158d, 159b, and 160a–c.

41. Themistius himself writes that Valens did not know Greek (*or.* 9.126b).

42. If, that is, we are prepared to believe Themistius when he says that he did not know Latin (*or.* 6.71c–d); but I incline to believe that this is part of the posturing which also gave rise to his apologetic works (on which see the translations and commentaries of H. Schneider [on *or.* 34; Winterthur, 1966] and J. G. Smeal [on *or.* 23; dissertation, Vanderbilt 1989]).

43. For the sources on Constantine's difficulty with Greek, see Lane Fox, *Pagans*, 629–630, 643ff.; T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, 1981), 215 with notes 62 and 63; and H. Dörries, *Das Selbstzeugnis Kaiser Konstantins* (Göttingen, 1954), 55–66. Constantius wrote to the senate of Constantinople in Latin concerning the adlection of Themistius, and a Greek translation of that document has come down

Themistius' patent success—if measured by the length of his career—appears all the more exceptional when contrasted with the contemporaneous challenge posed to Christianity by Julian and its place in the history of pagan-Christian dialogue. If Themistius resembled Palladas and Libanius in his belief that addressing the Christian entailed the reading not of Christian Scripture but of contemporary legislation and apologetics, his approach was anything but typical of rhetoric in the East. In the generation of the Great Persecution and later, that debate was marked by an increasing knowledge of Christianity on the part of pagan apologists. Continued pagan devotion to the formulae of apologetic literature lends fourth-century works a sense of unreal continuity with the past—as though, for a time, some intellectuals refused to believe that the imperial throne was permanently Christian. Porphyry's books interest modern readers because of their sophisticated analysis of the authorship of Scripture,⁴⁴ but both Eusebius and Athanasius open their catalogs of Porphyry's accusations with the long-familiar slanders against the Christians' irrational πίστις.⁴⁵ Julian explicitly appeals to this tradition in his *contra Galilaeos* when he tells the Christians, "There is nothing to your philosophy but confusion, boorishness, and the word 'Believe!'"⁴⁶ Julian's Christian upbringing served him well when he forbade Christians from holding high office, on the grounds that their own Scripture forbade them to do things which a governor of a province would have to do; and he explicitly turned Christian law against the Christians of Edessa: since their own "most admirable" law urged them to renounce their material property, Julian would help them by confiscating it.⁴⁷ In general authors of this

with Themistius' corpus (printed in vol. 3 of Schenkl/Downey/Norman; Dindorf pp. 21–27). Seeck, *Die Briefe*, 294 n. 1, canvasses the idea that Themistius wrote this translation himself (cf. Stegemann, *RE* 5.1646), though this suggestion has not met with much approval (see Downey/Norman's introduction to this speech; Dagron, "L'Empire romain," 20 and 82); nevertheless, I take assurance in Seeck's willingness to posit real knowledge of Latin on the part of Themistius.

44. On Porphyry see J. Bidez, *Vie de Porphyre* (Gand, 1913), esp. 1–4, 65–79; on his knowledge of Christianity see J.-M. Demarolle, "Un aspect de la polémique païenne à la fin du III^e siècle: le vocabulaire chrétien de Porphyre," *VC* 26 (1972): 117–129; T. D. Barnes provides an assessment of the fragments of his *contra Christianos* in "Porphyry Against the Christians: Date and the Attribution of Fragments," *JTS* 24 (1973): 424–430.

45. Eusebius, *p.e.* 1.2.4 (SC 206.106); Athanasius, *gent.* 1 (SC 18bis.46–48).

46. Julian *apud* Gregory Nazianzus, *or.* 4.102 (SC 309.250); cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Juln.* 1.20 and esp. 1.30 (SC 322.144–146 and 164–166).

47. Socrates, *h.e.* 2.13 (ed. Hussey, 74); for the sources see Bidez and Cumont, *Caesaris Iuliani Epistulae Leges Poematia Fragmenta Varia* (Paris, 1922), no. 50; and Julian, *ep.* 115 (ed. Bidez³ [Paris, 1972], 196–197 5 Spanheim 424d). Compare Gregory, *or.* 4.57–58 (SC 309.162–164): Julian knew better than to make martyrs.

period indicate their nervousness about how well-informed their opponents are by slandering them with charges of intimate and personal familiarity: Porphyry suggested that Origen was simply a renegade pagan ripping off Greek philosophy; Lactantius thought Hierocles so familiar with exegetic technique that he might have been a Christian; and many later writers accused Porphyry of having apostatized from Christianity—to the list of such passages compiled by Dodds should be added the complaint by Proclus that Porphyry has, on the subject of demons and angels, adopted phrasing full of barbarian arrogance.⁴⁸

II. BORROWING THE PLATONISTS' INEFFABLE DEITY

Themistius had good reason for believing that an appeal for tolerance based on a mutual belief in God's transcendence might succeed. As a man steeped in philosophical learning, he no doubt recognized familiar concepts and terminology in the theological and political literature of his Christian contemporaries. He would have felt far less confident if he had read only Scripture. This use of Platonic language is a distinguishing characteristic of Christian apologetic literature; theological concerns of this sort, expressed in such language are absent from the Apostolic fathers. A review of the history of this development within Christian literature will highlight the apologetic nature of Themistius' rhetoric and provide perspective on the challenges faced by Augustine.

The dialogue between pagan and Christian in its first two centuries was notable primarily for getting nowhere. Even to those who got past the slanders about secret meetings and the sacrificing of babies,⁴⁹ the strategies of attack rapidly became fixed along traditional lines, to which Christians responded in an equally dogmatic way.⁵⁰ Celsus had iterated the charge that Christians should not call themselves patriotic if their law forbids them to serve the state, and he probably would not have accepted Origen's defense, that Christians do more good than anyone else by staying at home and praying.⁵¹ This was an issue of considerable importance,

48. E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge, 1965), 126 n. 4; Proclus, *In Timaeum* 47c, ed. E. Diehl (Leipzig, 1903), 1.153.

49. For the weight carried by this latter charge in its cultural context, see now A. McGowan, "Eating People: Accusations of Cannibalism against Christians in the Second Century," *J ECS* 2 (1994): 413–442.

50. The best introductions to pagan-Christian dialogue in the second and third centuries are P. de Labriolle, *La réaction païenne*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1948), and R. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven, 1984).

51. Origen, *Cels.* 8.73–75 (SC 150.344–352).

and it seems likely that Plotinus echoes this sentiment in order to indict the Christian: “But it is not lawful for those who have become wicked to demand others to be their saviors and to sacrifice themselves in answer to their prayers, nor, furthermore, to require the gods to direct their affairs in detail . . .”⁵² Nor would Celsus have liked Origen’s response to his challenge over the divisiveness of contemporary Christians: Origen simply berates him for not noticing that Christians had been a divided lot since the beginning.⁵³ Celsus apparently added the suggestion that what unity exists among Christians comes about through their fear of outsiders; any triumph by Christianity, he implies, would be short-lived because internal differences would destroy the faith.⁵⁴ In works not intended for a pagan audience Origen himself expressed doubts about the rapid expansion of the Church, but these doubts were not voiced in the *Contra Celsum*.⁵⁵

Christians seem to have been of two minds in their response to the debate over faith and reason. Christian response was primarily twofold—Tertullian’s antagonistic attitude represents an exception⁵⁶—: first, they insisted on the rationality of Christian belief by claiming a privileged place in the history of philosophy for Scripture. This insistence was often joined to a claim that Plato simply represented an offshoot of Hebrew wisdom. Christians even managed to convince one pagan—or at least claimed that they had (the only references appear in Christian authors); they quoted Numenius asking “What is Plato other than Moses speaking Attic?”⁵⁷ Second, apologists explained that the rationale, the λογισμός, behind their religion was properly kept to those who could understand it, and

52. Plotinus, 3.2.9 (LCL 442.72–74; trans. Armstrong); cf. 3.2.8 (LCL 442.70–72). On these passages see C. Schmidt, *TU*, n. F. 5, part 4 (Berlin, 1901), pp. 82ff and M. Wundt, *Plotin: Studien zur Geschichte des Neuplatonismus* (Leipzig, 1919), 54–55.

53. Origen, *Cels.* 3.10ff. (SC 136.30ff.). Compare the claims of Hegesippus on the uniformity of belief among early Christians *apud* Eusebius, *h.e.* 4.22.1–3 (LCL 153.374). Polemon was probably ridiculing Christian divisiveness when he asked Pionius which church he belonged to (*Acta Pionii* 9.2, ed. L. Robert [Dumbarton Oaks, 1994], 25); Polemon would have learned quickly about such matters, since before questioning Pionius he had already imprisoned a Catholic and a Montanist; for a different interpretation of this passage, see Bowersock, *Martyrdom*, 31 and 35.

54. *apud* Origen, *Cels.* 3.14 (SC 136.38) and cf. 6.57 (SC 147.156).

55. Origen, *comm. in Matt.* 13.24 (PG 13.1158–1160); cf. *comm. in Rom.* 5.8 (PG 14.1040–1041). See also H. Chadwick, “The Evidences of Christianity in the Apologetic of Origen,” *Studia Patristica* 2 (1957): 337.

56. See his quips at *apol.* 38.3, 46.2 and 18 (CCL 1.149, 160, and 162), and *carn. Chr.* 4–5 (CCL 2.878–882).

57. Numenius fr. 8, ed. E. des Places (Paris, 1973), 51.

that simple faith, πίστις, would have to do for the multitude.⁵⁸ This last claim, of course, was simply taken over from the *Timaeus*.⁵⁹

The Christian writers who turned to the *Timaeus* to justify Christian practice came from a different culture than the writers of the Gospels, and they wrote for a different audience. The apologists of the second century were educated Greeks living in big cities; they were not bishops, and their audience was likely to have been other educated men with similar backgrounds.⁶⁰ In the initial stages of the apologetic movement some hesitated about where to ground their claims for the validity of Christian theology: like Theophilus, Melito of Sardis explicitly denies that his philosophy has any connection to Greek learning. His use of the word φιλοσοφία, however, gives voice to this developing concern for communicating with the pagan, as well, perhaps, to the growing influence wielded by the curriculum in which these men were educated.⁶¹ This concern also manifests itself in the addressing of apologetic tracts to prominent pagans, even if we are inclined to doubt that apologetic literature had pagans as its primary audience.⁶² Origen certainly doubted the efficacy of apologetic in converting the unbeliever; however, it was, he asserted, a boon to those weak in faith.⁶³ The genre undoubtedly underwent a fundamental transformation during the reign of Constantine. By the time we get to the anti-Christian arguments cited by Ambrose and Ambrosiaster and so carefully catalogued by Courcelle, the accusations merely provide the Christian preacher with the means to highlight whatever he feels is basic and fundamental to proper belief.⁶⁴

58. For the term, see Athenagoras, *leg.* 8.1, ed. W. R. Schoedel (Oxford, 1972), 16, and compare the phrasing of Eusebius at *p.e.* 3.13.24 (SC 228.246).

59. *Timaeus*, 28c. It would be difficult to find a Platonist, however broadly defined, who doesn't cite these lines; for example, Albinus, *epit.* 27.1, ed. P. Louis (Paris, 1945), 129; Apuleius, *de Plat.* 1.5, ed. C. Moreschini (Leipzig 1991), 92–93; Athenagoras, *leg.* 4.1–2 (ed. Schoedel, 8–10); Celsus *apud* Origen, *Cels.* 7.42 (SC 150.110–112)—but it is a sentiment of which Origen approves, and he himself paraphrases it at 1.10 (SC 132.102); Clement, *str.* 5.12.1 (SC 278.152, and many other times); Eusebius, *p.e.* 11.29.4 (SC 292.200).

60. Lane Fox, *Pagans*, 515–516; Av. Cameron, *Christianity*, 78–80, 109; cf. on Origen and Celsus, H. Chadwick, “Origen, Celsus, and the Stoa,” *JTS* 48 (1947): 34–49.

61. See Melito, fr. 1 *apud* Eusebius, *b.e.* 4.26.7 (LCL 153.388–390).

62. Cf. two recent efforts to understand the public and rhetorical nature of these tracts: R. M. Grant, “Forms and Occasions of the Greek Apologists,” *SMSR* 52 (1986); and M. McGehee, “Why Tatian Never ‘Apologetized’ to the Greeks,” *J ECS* 1 (1993): 143–158.

63. Chadwick, “Evidences,” 338, citing Origen, *Hom. in Ps.* 36 5.1 (Lommatzch 12.221 5 PG 12.1360); cf. Lactantius' criticism of earlier apologetic works at *inst.* 5.4 (SC 204.146–150).

64. P. Courcelle, “Propos antichrétiens rapportés par saint Augustin,” *Rech. Aug.* 1 (1958): 149–186; “Critiques exégétiques et arguments antichrétiens rapportés par

Educated Christian apologists turned, in these circumstances, to “themes and language already familiar” to themselves and to their audience, and sought in popular philosophy a mode of discourse which could make Christianity explicable to their educated peers.⁶⁵ Platonism thus provided a language with which both sides would be intimate: that is, after all, why both sides fought so hard over Plato himself.⁶⁶ To the modern observer the superficial similarities between pagan and Christian theologies of this era are startling. Though the specific vocabulary which they use to describe God appears most clearly for the first time in Philo,⁶⁷ both pagan and Christian Hellenizing authors of the second century and later learned to discuss theology from the same passages of Plato—primarily from the *Republic*, *Timaeus*, and seventh *Letter*—and from the hermeneutic tradition which surrounded them. Thus Dio Chrysostom,⁶⁸ Pseudo-Aristotle,⁶⁹ Seneca,⁷⁰ Albinus,⁷¹ Maximus of Tyre,⁷² Am-

Ambrosiaster,” *VC* 13 (1959): 133–169 (5 Chapter 8 in *Opuscula Selecta* [Paris, 1984]); and “Anti-Christian Arguments and Christian Platonism: From Arnobius to St. Ambrose” (in *Conflict*).

65. The bibliography is huge. Some highlights include C. Andresen, “Justin und der mittlere Platonismus,” *ZNTW* 44 (1952/53), 157–195; J. H. Waszink, “Der Platonismus und die altchristliche Gedankenwelt,” *Entretiens sur l’antiquité classique* (Fondation Hardt) 3 (1955), and “Bemerkungen zum Einfluss des Platonismus im frühen Christentum” *VC* 19 (1965). Hilary Armstrong’s recent essay, “Plotinus and Christianity,” in *Platonism in Late Antiquity*, S. Gersh and C. Kannengiesser, eds. (Notre Dame, 1992), is full of insights: see, for example, 119 on Numenius fr. 2 (ed. des Places, 43–44).

66. This reaches a rather amusing summit in [Justin], *coh. Gr.* 21 and 26 (CA CSS 3.74–76, 88–90), where [Justin] maintains that Plato learned much from Moses but was afraid to say what he knew because he feared to suffer the fate of Socrates. Eusebius did not so much assert dependence on the Old Testament on the part of Plato as simply find Plato in the Old Testament (see E. des Places, “Eusèbe de Césarée juge de Platon dans la *Préparation Évangélique*,” *Mélanges Auguste Diès* [Paris, 1956], or the introduction to Book 11 of the *praep.* by G. Favrelle in her edition [Paris, 1982]).

67. *De mutatione nominum* 9–11, 27–30 (LCL 275.146, 156–158); *Quod deus sit immutabilis* 78 (LCL 247.48); *de somniis* 1.67 (LCL 275.330). See Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 155; H. Chadwick, “Philo and the Beginnings of Christian Thought,” in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (1967), 141–143; and D. T. Runia, “Naming and Knowing: Themes in Philonic Theology” (in *Knowledge*), 77.

68. Dio Chrysostom, *or.* 12.27 (LCL 339.28–30), 31.11 (LCL 358.16).

69. [Aristotle], *de mundo* 397b.13–20, 400b.10–15; and 401a.12–13 (LCL 400.384, 402, 404).

70. Seneca, *nat. quaest.* 2.45 (LCL 450.172).

71. Albinus, *epitome* 10.3–4 (ed. Louis, 57–59).

72. Maximus Tyrius, *Philosophumena* 2.10a, 11.5a–b, 39.5b–e, ed. G. Koniaris (Berlin, 1995), 28, 129, 468.

monius,⁷³ Apuleius,⁷⁴ Plotinus,⁷⁵ and even the author of a late Orphic hymn⁷⁶ describe their transcendent, nameless, incorporeal, and ineffable supreme deity with the same vocabulary used by Aristides,⁷⁷ Justin,⁷⁸ Athenagoras,⁷⁹ Tatian,⁸⁰ Theophilus,⁸¹ Pseudo-Justin,⁸² and, to an extent, Origen⁸³ and Arnobius.⁸⁴ Indeed, I have sometimes felt a vague desire to read the famous assertion by Maximus of Tyre, that Greek and barbarian share a vague concept of the Deity, as an early reference to Christians.⁸⁵

It is difficult to tell how deeply this Platonism permeated; Christian authors also possessed a theological vocabulary independent of this tradition. For instance, Origen, Eusebius, and Chrysostom follow Philo in calling their God incomprehensible, ἀκατάληπτος, but I do not think pagans use the word thus. The commonplace adoption of this rhetorical strategy imposes on apologetic literature in particular, both eastern and western, a similarity which belies modern treatments of their respective theological traditions. In addition, such a strategy may be compared to the Christians' somewhat more fitful acknowledgement of the similarities between Christianity and the mystery religions and the use they made of this common ground in apologetic literature.⁸⁶

73. *apud* Plutarch, *de E apud Delphos* 393a–b (LCL 306.244–246).

74. Apuleius, *de Platone* 1.5 (ed. Moreschini, 92); cf. *de deo Socratis* 3 (ed. Moreschini, 11).

75. Plotinus, *enn* 5.3[49].13–14 (LCL 444.116–122). Cf. D. J. O'Meara, *Plotinus* (1993), chapter 5.

76. *Orphicorum fragmenta* no. 245.6–16, ed. O. Kern (Berlin, 1922), 257.

77. Aristides of Athens, *apol.* 1 (ed. and trans. by J. R. Harris² [Cambridge, 1893]; the Greek text edited from *Barlaam and Josephat* in that volume by J. A. Robinson). Cf. W. C. van Unnik, "Die Gotteslehre bei Aristides und in gnostischen Schriften," *TZ* 17 (1961): 166–174.

78. Justin, *1 apol.* 13.4, 20.3–4, 61.11, and *2 apol.* 5(6).1, ed. G. Rauschen (FP 2².28, 42–44, 100, 122). Cf. L. W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr* (Cambridge, 1967), 77–80.

79. Athenagoras, *leg.* 6.2 and 8.1 (ed. W. R. Schoedel, 12, 16).

80. Tatian, *orat.* 4.1–3, 15.1, 25.2, ed. M. Whittaker (Oxford, 1982), 8–10, 30, and 48.

81. Theophilus, *Autol.* 1.3–5, ed. R. M. Grant (Oxford, 1970), 4–6.

82. *Cob. Gr.* 21 (CACSS 3.74).

83. Origen, *Cels.* 7.43 (SC 150.114–116); cf. J. M. Dillon, "The Knowledge of God in Origen" (in *Knowledge*).

84. *Nat.* 1.62, ed. H. Le Bonniec (Paris, 1982), 188; cf. A. J. Festugière, *VC* 6 (1952): 222.

85. *Philosophumena* 11.5a–b (ed. Koniaris, 129).

86. Cf. R. P. C. Hanson, "The Christian Attitude to Pagan Religions" in his *Studies in Christian Antiquity* (Edinburgh, 1985), 166–167, citing in particular Tertullian, *apol.* 7.6 (CCL 1.99), and Clement, *prot.* 12.120.1–2; cf. also A. D. Nock, "Hellenistic Mysteries and Christian Sacraments," *Mnemosyne* 5 (1952): 177–213 (5 Chapter 47 in his *Essays*), especially sections 2 and 5.

It is important to recall here that the complex of philosophies which we call Middle Platonism was on the whole no more or less monotheistic than contemporary Christianity; whether this was due to Plato or to an influx of Stoicism was not entirely clear to later readers: lines of Vergil which Servius labels as “Stoic,” are used by Augustine to illustrate Platonic theology.⁸⁷ The position of all these men—with the possible exception of Theophilus—is well described by Celsus, who argues that there is indeed one supreme God, but they obviously disagree on how much to honor and to supplicate the other demons who surround God like so many satraps and generals.⁸⁸ Some Christians even conceded that they did honor these lesser figures, with the caveat that they did so when they paid their respects to the highest God of all;⁸⁹ Christians were, in fact, aware of monotheistic strands in contemporary paganism and were quick to distance themselves from such groups: thus Lactantius singles out as particularly impious those polytheists (*cultores deorum*) who “confess and acknowledge the Supreme God (*deum summum*) . . . who, when they swear an oath, or make a wish, or give thanks, name not Jupiter nor many gods, but God.”⁹⁰

III. AUGUSTINE, SYMMACHUS, AND THE WEST

Latin literature yields far less evidence on these issues than does Greek: the West produced no pagan literary figures to rival Porphyry or Julian, though these figures drew the attention of Latin writers. The single great literary moment in the conflict there centered on the struggle over the presence of the Altar of Victory in the Senate; on that subject from the pagan side we possess only the great *Relatio* of Symmachus.⁹¹ The corpus of Au-

87. On the mingling of Stoic and Platonic thought see H. Strache, *Der Eklektizismus des Antiochus von Askalon* (Philologische Untersuchungen, 26; 1926); and R. E. Witt, *Albinus and the History of Middle Platonism* (Cambridge, 1937), 11ff. See Servius on Vergil the Stoic at *Georg.* 1.5 and *Aen.* 4.638; and compare Augustine on the same passage of the *Georgics* at *civ.* 9.16 (CCL 47.265).

88. *apud* Origen, *Cels.* 8.35–36 (SC 150.250–254); cf. 7.68 (SC 150.172–174). On pagan monotheism see Batiffol, “La conversion de Constantin”; M. P. Nilsson, “The High God and the Mediator” (*HTbR* 56 [1963]: 101–120); the introduction to H. Chadwick’s translation of the *Contra Celsum* (Cambridge, 1953); and Armstrong, “Plotinus,” 122–130.

89. Arnobius, *nat.* 3.3 (CSEL 4.113). Compare also 3.2 (CSEL 4.112–113) with Origen, *Cels.* 8.35–36 (SC 150.250–254).

90. Lactantius, *inst.* 2.1.6–7 (SC 337.26), and cf. 1.6.4 (SC 326.74), on Hermes Trismegistus. On the names of the High God, cf. Celsus *apud* Origen, *Cels.* 5.45 (SC 147.128–130).

91. On the religious feelings of Symmachus see N. H. Baynes in his review of McGeachy, *Quintus Aurelius Symmachus*, *JRS* 36 (1946), 173–177, and Nock, “Studies,” 40.

gustine's correspondence, however, preserves several letters from pagans. This section concentrates first on the apologetic rhetoric employed by Symmachus and the men who wrote to Augustine and then on the evolution in Augustine's reaction to such letters, contrasting his rejection of appeals to God's transcendence with his personal ambivalence regarding human capacity to know God.

Like Themistius before Jovian or Libanius before Theodosius, in *Relatio* III Symmachus pleads for religious toleration and does so in a deferential tone: "to you we address prayers, not arguments." Like Themistius again, Symmachus bases his plea in part on the possible identity between the object of Christian and pagan worship—an identity made possible because of the unknowability of the supreme God. "It is reasonable," he writes, "to regard as identical that which all worship. We look on the same stars; we share the same heaven; the same world enfolds us. What difference does it make by what system of knowledge each man seeks the truth? Not by one road alone can man arrive at so great a secret."⁹² It has been suggested that Symmachus here makes an allusion John 14:6: "Ego sum via."⁹³ But a further question can be asked: why does Symmachus use *secretum*?

I do not believe this usage has much precedent in pagan literature, but *secretum* appeared most recently in the panegyric to Constantine of 313: "What god, what so imminent power encouraged you, so that, in spite of not merely the silent whispering but even the open fear of practically all your companions and generals, against the advice of men and the warnings of the *haruspices*, you decided on your own that the time had come to liberate the city? Surely, Constantine, you must share some secret with that divine intelligence which relegates our care to the lesser gods but thinks it appropriate to reveal itself to you alone."⁹⁴ The similarity of this vocabulary to that employed on Constantine's arch (*ILS* 694) seems to confirm that the panegyrist sought out suitable language to satisfy Constantine's predilection for ambiguous self-presentation; it is tempting, then, to ask whether, in the charged atmosphere of the religious and political discourse of that age, the panegyrist referred to the same *summus deus* and *dii minores* as Arnobius.⁹⁵ The peculiarly ancient monotheism

92. Symmachus, *rel.* 3.10 (MGH AA 6.1.282).

93. Cf. O'Donnell, "Demise of Paganism," 73 n. 113.

94. *Pan. lat.* 9(12), 2.4–5, ed. Galletier (Paris, 1952), 124. It is just possible that the author here uses *secretum* in its more literal sense of "private audience chamber."

95. Cf. Arnobius, *nat.* 1.25–27 (ed. Le Bonniec, 151–153), 2.2 (CSEL 4.48–49), and, esp. 2.3 (CSEL 4.49): *nisi forte dubitatis, an sit iste de quo loquimur imperator, et magis esse Apollinem creditis, Dianam Mercurium Martem . . . dii enim minores qui sint aut ubi sint scitis?*

which informs their vocabulary, regardless of their creed, must also lie behind the prayer written by Licinius at the behest of an angel of the *summus deus* before his battle with Maximin Daia, and likewise behind the prayer commended by Constantine to his armies and especially to those still ignorant of the θεῖος λόγος.⁹⁶ Furthermore, the resemblance between the language used in these prayers—pronounced by some to be neither “explicitly Christian” nor “unambiguously monotheistic”—and that adopted in the dedications of the *Divine Institutes* again suggests the deliberate adoption of terminology which could pass for pagan or Christian. A professional orator like Lactantius, whatever his religious inclinations and however strongly held, is likely to have learned from, and himself influenced, the way in which Constantine and his court described his God.⁹⁷ We cannot know conclusively whether Symmachus had read the panegyric of 313, but it is virtually certain that he had read the arch. In any event, he certainly appeals to the same vague, monotheistic sentiment with his own reference to the *mens divina*.⁹⁸ The broad applicability of the strategies adopted by the orator in 313 is proved by resonances with his speech found in the orations of Themistius and the letter of Maximus of Madaura.⁹⁹ Symmachus would have looked to the rhetoric of the Constantinian age for precisely the same reason that Libanius and Themistius evoked Constantinian tolerance: they assume that Christian emperors will look for precedents to the first Christian emperor.¹⁰⁰

Symmachus, however, uses *secretum* in a more metaphorical meaning

96. Licinius’ prayer *apud* Lactantius, *mort.* 46.6, ed. J. L. Creed (Oxford, 1984), 66. Constantine’s prayer *apud* Eusebius, *v.C.* 4.20 (GCS 7.125).

97. The judgement by Creed in his note *ad loc.* The authenticity of the dedications of the *Divine Institutes* has long been disputed; see *inst.* 1.1.13 (SC 326.36) and 7.27 (CSEL 19.668, in *app. crit.*); Monat has promised a thorough treatment of the issue in the Introduction Générale to his edition. On the evolution of religious language around the court of Constantine at this time I find Batiffol, *Paix Constantinienne*, 5th ed. (1929), 214–230, particularly persuasive; and I am inclined to agree with A. Piganiol in positing a close connection between Lactantius and the court at this time: *L’empereur Constantine* (Paris, 1932), 48, 69, 94–95.

98. Symmachus, *rel.* 3.8 (MGH AA 6.1.281).

99. Cf. *pan. lat.* 9(12).26.1 (ed. Galletier, 144): *Quamobrem te, summe rerum sator, cuius tot nomina sunt quot gentium linguas esse voluisti (quem enim te ipse dici velis, scire non possumus), sive tute quaedam vis mensque divina es. . .* For the vocabulary, cf. Arnobius, *nat.* 2.2 (CSEL 4.49). Compare also Themistius, *or.* 1.8b, the descriptions of his *or. ad Valentem* (references in n. 39); and Celsus *apud* Origen, *Cels.* 5.45 (SC 147.128–132). For Maximus, see *apud* Augustine, *ep.* 16.1 (CSEL 34.1.37).

100. Libanius, *or.* 30.6, 37 (LCL 452.104, 132–134); Themistius, *or.* 5.70d. That this is a purely rhetorical strategy on the part of Libanius, is asserted—I believe correctly—by S. Bradbury, “Constantine and the Problem of Anti-Pagan Legislation in the Fourth Century,” *CP* 89 (1994), 127–128; cf. Petit, “Libanius,” 578–582.

than does the panegyrist of 313. This usage, I suggest, he could have learned from a Christian. It is unnecessary for Symmachus himself to have read Scripture; indeed, the phrase as such is absent from surviving texts of the Bible. But Augustine, for instance, uses precisely the same phrase, *tam grande secretum*, twice, both times while alluding or explicitly referring to Ps. 72, verse 17.¹⁰¹ Curiously enough, his letter to Honoratus and his readings in the *Enarrationes* clearly show that his text of the Psalm read *donec introeam in sanctuarium Dei*; but *secretum* is quite common in the Vulgate. Though Augustine may have learned the psalm in a slightly different version, it is in any case clear that for Augustine knowledge of the Divine could be described as “so great a secret.” Ambrose’s sarcastic, condescending response to Symmachus closed the door on any chance for dialogue, but even before he had read the *relatio* he urged Valentinian that a vote for religious tolerance was equivalent to apostasy.¹⁰² His response typifies a generation that took the time to mock the eloquent and moving epitaph that Paulina wrote for Praetextatus.¹⁰³ And who could discuss anything with Prudentius, who asserted that while Romans and barbarians obviously shared the same sky, they were as different as man and beast, and concluded that a similar difference separated Christian and pagan?¹⁰⁴

The other echo of Symmachus in Augustine is well known, as is Augustine’s concern expressed in the *Retractationes* that this phrase could be interpreted to mean that there is a way other than Christ.¹⁰⁵ This reconsideration of the role of philosophical learning in Christian life and especially of the dangers inherent in language are entirely typical of Augustine, and it is to his apologetics, and the continuities and changes within it, that I now turn. Around 390 the grammarian Maximus of Madaura wrote to Augustine on behalf of his town and attempted to flatter the bishop by asking him to explain Christian theology: it seems obvious, he argued, that pagans and Christians agree about the nature of the one God, and equally obvious that their systems of veneration are different; can Augustine please explain, without resort to Chrysippean arguments, who that God is whom the Christians claim as their own.¹⁰⁶ Augustine’s re-

101. See *ep.* 140.5.13 (CSEL 44.164–165) and *vera rel.* 28.51 (CCL 32.220).

102. *Ep.* 17.8 (CSEL 82.3.14), and note the similarly rigid stance taken by Firmicus Maternus, *err.* 8.5 (ed. Turcan, 112–113), and compare also Ambrose, *ep.* 18.8 (CSEL 82.3.38) with Firmicus Maternus, *err.* 8.4 (ed. Turcan, 98).

103. For the epitaph see *ILS* 1259 5 *Carm. Lat. Epig.* 111; see Jerome, *ep.* 23.2–3 (PL 22.426), on which see P. Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers and Their Greek Sources* (Cambridge, 1969), 47 at notes 87–89.

104. *Symm.* 2.816–821 (CCL 126.239–240).

105. *Sol.* 1.13.23 (CSEL 89.35) with *retr.* 1.4.6 (CCL 57.14–15).

106. Maximus *apud* Augustine, *ep.* 16.1, 3 (CSEL 34.1.37, 38–39).

sponse typifies his methodology elsewhere; he shows himself superior in his use of quotations from classical authors against classical belief, and he mocks the silliness of polytheism.¹⁰⁷ Finally, Augustine tells Maximus that he will only correspond further, with the help of the one, true God, when he sees that Maximus is prepared to be serious (*ep.* 17.5 [CSEL 34.1.44]).

Augustine's harshness to the old grammarian comes as a surprise to the casual reader of his letter to Deogratias, written about fifteen years later. In that letter he plays on the themes of apologetic literature by asserting that pagans cannot rationally explain their own practice (*ep.* 102.1.5 [CSEL 34.2.548–549]); however, he does allow that salvation has always been open to good and pious men, regardless of the forms of worship which they use (*ep.* 102.10–12 [CSEL 34.2.552–555]). Augustine runs into a similar difficulty in his debate with Nectarius. Nectarius had asked Augustine to intercede on behalf of his town, appealing to a common *caritas patriae*: each man possesses a *dilectus et gratia civitatis* which grows every day (*ep.* 90 [CSEL 34.2.426]). Although Augustine refuses the request, pointing out that his loyalty lay first with the “country above,” he invites Nectarius to join him on the journey to that country (*ep.* 91.1 [CSEL 34.2.427]): for the present, Augustine wrote, Nectarius must forgive the Christians if, for the sake for their *patria*, they cause anguish in his.¹⁰⁸

Augustine was probably surprised that Nectarius replied, and very likely was irritated that his letter had raised for Nectarius the shades of Plato and Cicero. Nectarius confessed to hearing Augustine's exhortations to the worship of the *exsuperantissimus deus* gladly; and he eagerly read on as Augustine directed his eyes at the *caelestis patria*. That *patria*, Nectarius wrote, is not an earthly one of the sort which philosophers describe, but one which the *magnus deus* inhabits, and which all all laws seek by diverse paths and ways, which we cannot express by speech but which we may happen to find by meditation.¹⁰⁹ Nectarius argues, however, that men reach this place by serving their native cities and securing their safety, by word or deed. Though Nectarius disavowed any reliance upon philo-

107. Compare Maximus' use of Vergil at 16.4 (CSEL 34.1.39) with Augustine's reply at *ep.* 17.3 (CCL 34.1.42–43).

108. *Ep.* 91.2 (CSEL 34.2.428); Augustine not only turns several allusions to Vergil against Nectarius but even tells him to reread his Cicero (*ep.* 91.1–2 (CSEL 34.2.427–428)).

109. *Ep.* 103.2 (CSEL 34.2.579–580). For a similar—no doubt deliberate—attempt to sound Christian by the citizens of Madaura, an attempt which momentarily fooled Augustine, see *ep.* 232.2 (CSEL 57.511–512).

sophical learning, his heavenly city was essentially Ciceronian—as we might have suspected from his allusion to the *de re publica* at the opening of his first letter, and is in any event made obvious by its similarity to the eternal abode of great men described by Macrobius and Favonius.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, it is easy to believe that Nectarius, Macrobius, and Favonius emphasize the nature of their heaven and the path to it in a reaction to contemporary debates about the proper relationship between pious Christianity and service to the state.¹¹¹ Augustine precedes his reply to the above passage with a confession that “he does not know what lies in the plans of God, for he is only a man” (*ep.* 104.3.11 [CSEL 34.2.589]), but also with the aside that Nectarius didn’t know the appropriate *exempla* with which to embellish his plea. But what Augustine quite clearly knows is that there is only one path to God; he even stops to explain the essential identity between references in Scriptures to “ways” and “way” (*ep.* 104.4.12 [CSEL 34.2.591]). There might be different ways to the *caelestis habitatio*, Augustine concedes, but the path which Nectarius has chosen *ex quorundam philosophorum* is clearly perverse and will lead only to the most destructive delusion (*ep.* 104.4.13 [CSEL 34.2.592]).

The most important letter comes from Longinianus. Longinianus is about to enter into a pagan priesthood, to begin, as he describes it, a journey, consecrated by sacred and ancient tradition, toward the one, universal, incomprehensible, ineffable, and untiring Creator (*ep.*, 234.2 [CSEL 57.520]). In light of the possibility that Symmachus alluded to John 14:6, it should be noted that Longinianus repeatedly adopts the same metaphor to describe his own journey of religious discovery (*ep.* 234.2 [CSEL

110. *Ep.* 103.2 (CSEL 34.2.579–580); compare Macrobius, *Comm. in Somnium Scipionis* 1.8.12, ed. J. Willis, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1994), 39, and also Favonius Eulogius, *Disputatio* 1, ed. R. van Weddingen (Brussels, 1957), 12. Compare Augustine’s use of *civiles virtutes* at *ep.* 138.3.17 (CSEL 44.144–145).

111. See above on Origen and Julian at nn. 47 and 51. Compare Augustine’s letters with Marcellinus and Volusianus (*epp.* 136–139 [CSEL 44.93–154]): there he concludes that Christians are true citizens of the heavenly city, but as long as they journey far from it they must get along with those in the earthly city: the men who founded the Roman empire preserved it through a certain *sui generis probitas*: indeed, “God has thus shown in the exceedingly wealthy and famous empire of the Romans how much civic virtues can achieve, even without true religion” (*ep.* 138.3.17 [CSEL 44.144–145]), but cf. *cons. eu.* 1.12.18 [CSEL 43.17]). Augustine’s letters also reveal that some Christians felt awkward about holding office; he must assure them, for example, that God loves soldiers, provided that they wage war in order to secure peace (*ep.* 189 to Boniface [CSEL 57.133]); cf. *ep.* 151.14 (CSEL 44.392), where Caecilian has decided to postpone baptism until he has left office, and *ep.* 158 (CSEL 44.495–496), where another young man evidently made the same decision. Cf. *civ.* 19.6 (CCL 48.670–671).

57.520]). Augustine responds to Longinianus with gentle confusion; there is none of the sarcasm dealt to Maximus. Why? In part the answer must be that Longinianus is a polite correspondent; he explicitly refrains from commenting about Christ because he cannot express what he does not know (*ep.* 234.3 [CSEL 57.52520–521]). Augustine may also have found his description of his God appealing because it was cast in Christian terms: for Augustine reveals on various occasions that he recognized the existence of a specifically Christian, theological jargon—whether he was correct in this, is of less consequence than what it suggests about how he might have read the letter of Longinianus.¹¹²

Consider, for example, the word *ineffabilis*. It appears almost exclusively in Christian writers and becomes prominent in Augustine's generation.¹¹³ Of its three appearances in pagan literature outside of this letter only one occurs in a remotely similar context, but I am inclined to think that this exception arises out of sarcasm, since its author, Apuleius, in fact writes at some length about just what he means by this certain incredible and ineffable *nimietas*.¹¹⁴ When Apuleius reverently describes his Platonic high God, he employs a different vocabulary, as does Calcidius in his translation of and commentary on the *Timaeus*. Calcidius does use *ineffabilis* once (*summum et ineffabilem deum* at 188 [ed. Waszink, 212])—but Calcidius was probably, but not definitely, a Christian; it is therefore worth noting that the word appears in Marius Victorinus only after his conversion.¹¹⁵ A considerable expanse of time separates Apuleius and Augustine, and therefore also Apuleius and Longinianus; we cannot, therefore, discount the possibility that the word entered the vocabulary

112. See, for instance, the amusing note at *retr.* 1.3.8 (CCL 57.12–13), where he admits that Plato may have gotten something right, even if he didn't use proper, Christian vocabulary: *Nec Plato quidem in hoc erravit, quia esse mundum intellegibilem dixit, si non vocabulum quod ecclesiasticae consuetudini in re illa inusitatum est, sed ipsam rem velimus adtendere*. Cf. *civ.* 8.10 (CCL 47.227), paraphrased below at n. 122.

113. *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* s.v. “ineffabilis.” The creation and diffusion of a more rigorous Latin vocabulary for theological speculation was largely the work of Marius Victorinus, and the ever-increasing influence of Platonic language in this period due indirectly to Porphyry: thus implies P. Hadot's *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris, 1968).

114. *De deo Socratis* 3 (ed. Moreschini, 11).

115. Calcidius 188, ed. Waszink, 2nd ed. (Leiden, 1975), 212. Calcidius as Christian: Waszink has tended to carry the day—see the introduction to his edition, pp. ix–xiii—but his arguments are not all convincing. Calcidius' vocabulary on demons and angels, for example, is unproblematic: this is precisely the issue that got Porphyry in trouble with Proclus (n. 48), but on that issue Porphyry had simply been influenced by all his readings in Christian texts.

of theological discourse *via* some pagan writer in the interim; but Apuleius stands out as the only Latin author in Augustine's list of significant Platonists (*civ.* 8.12 [CCL 47.229] : *Platonicus nobilis*). Of course Longinianus needn't necessarily have read Christian writings; the word was in the air, so to speak, but then Longinianus must have inhaled a lot of secondary smoke from Christian theologians.¹¹⁶

We will never know whether Augustine and Longinianus made anything of this shared vocabulary; their correspondence is limited to these letters. But what prevented Augustine from sympathizing with appeals from pagans on the basis of God's unknowability? That God was beyond our understanding, and even more so beyond our capacity for expression, was fundamental to Augustine's belief.¹¹⁷ Nowhere does Augustine suggest this more clearly than when he wishes that he, like Moses, could write at such a level of authority that his words "would sound out with whatever diverse truth in these matters each reader was able to grasp, rather than to give a quite explicit statement of single true view of this question in such a way as to exclude other views—provided there was no false doctrine to offend me."¹¹⁸ Towards the end of his life Augustine would feel forced to write a lengthy defence of his belief that certain things—in this case, the origin of the soul—lay beyond human comprehension; in the last book of that curious and repetitive document Augustine marshalls an array of Scriptural passages to justify his claim of ignorance (*an. et or.* 4.1–5 [PL 44.523–527]; cf. *retr.* 1.11.4 [CCL 57.34–35]). Furthermore, early in his life Augustine had acknowledged that many Platonists converted to Christianity *paucis mutatis verbis atque sententiis* (*ver. rel.* 4.7 [CCL 32.192]). By the time he wrote the *City of God*, although Augustine still concedes that the Platonists are closest of all pagans to a Christian position, he condemns them utterly for their willingness to countenance polytheism.¹¹⁹ He performs a similar rhetorical trick in his remarks on reading several books of the Platonists: having praised the authors for expressing Christian-sounding sentiments about God "not in [the same]

116. The word takes center stage when Augustine, for instance, lectures his congregation on the difficulties of Scripture and its catachrestic language in *serm.* 117.5.7 (PL 38.665).

117. On Augustine's doubts about human knowledge and human speech, see C. Ando, "Augustine on Language," *REAug* 40.1 (1994), 45–78; cf. John Rist's *Augustine* (Cambridge, 1994), Chapter 3, esp. 56–63.

118. Translation H. Chadwick; *conf.* 12.31.42 (CCL 27.240). After his battles with Donatists and Pelagians Augustine is less certain about the value of *sententiae* and *opinionones* (*an. et or.* 2.1.1 [PL44.495]; cf. 3.15.23 [PL 44.522–524]).

119. *Civ.* 8.9–10, 12 (CCL 47.225–227, 229); compare [Justin], *cob. Gr.* 26 (CACSS 3.88–90).

words [as the Gospel], but with entirely the same sense and supported by numerous and varied reasons,” he chastises them for failing to recognize the divinity of Christ and above all for their labelling assorted “idols and images” as divine.¹²⁰ We can see him moving towards this position when, in his unfinished commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, he suggests that he expected pagans to mock the Trinity and especially Christ but to honor the Holy Spirit—a suggestion that may find a vague echo in a homily of Chrysostom.¹²¹

In his increasingly rigid rejections of the possibility of shared truths, Augustine did not take the easy path. He denied any possibility that Plato had learned from Moses: it was, he confessed, a chronological impossibility (*civ.* 8.11 [CCL.47.227–228]), stressing at the same time that the Christian can know all he needs about grace without knowing words like *naturalis*, *physicus*, *rationalis*, or *logicus*.¹²² Instead he began to find in Scripture the evidence which could replace any references to or reliance upon pagan learning; for example, he eschewed references to *Timaeus* 28c in favor of 1 Cor. 3.1–2 (eg. at *conf.* 13.18.23 [CC 27.254–255], and esp. *trin.* 1.1.3 [CCL 50.30]). This process is visible in the *Retractationes* not only where he explicitly rejects Platonism, but also in the positive estimations he makes of early works: the *de magistro* is thus not about signs, but about Christ the teacher; all of his quotations from the *de musica* are from book 6.¹²³ In a related move, evident in the exegesis of Scripture and pagan literature in the *City of God*, Augustine concludes that the failings of human language as a system of signification privilege Scripture and not pagan texts as the recipients of allegorical reading—ie., it is the nature of the signified that determines whether allegorical hermeneutics must be applied to the signifier.¹²⁴ Thus there is more to his method in the *City of God* than the apologist’s trick of turning classical allusions against the pagan.

Augustine grounded this move above all in the transformation of another theme from apologetic, a transformation that ended all possibility for discussion with the pagan. Augustine found faith. Beginning with his earliest written works, Augustine displayed an interest in the epistemo-

120. *Conf.* 7.9.13–15 and 13 (CCL 27..101–103; trans. Chadwick).

121. See *ep. Rm. in ch.* 15.2–3 (CSEL 84.165); compare Chrysostom, *Sur l’incompréhensibilité de Dieu*, ed. Cavallera and Daniélou (Paris, 1951), 268–270. Augustine also knew that some pagans played on this theme by inventing oracles instructing Porphyry to honor Christ, and by arguing that pagan anger was directed towards the misrepresentation of Christ’s teachings by his disciples (*cons. eu.* 1.15.23–16.24 [CSEL 43.22–23]).

122. *Civ.* 8.10 (CCL 47.227); cf. *retract.* 1.3.3, quoted above in n. 112.

123. On *mag.*, see *retr.* 1.12 (CCL 57.36) ; on *mus.* see 1.11 (CCL 57.33–35).

124. Cf. Ando, “Augustine on Language,” 45–47.

logical difference between knowledge and belief, and he will continue to investigate this issue and its vocabulary throughout his life. But we must differentiate this from his growing certainty that an individual had first to believe, to acquire faith, before he could even begin to engage in a dialogue about Christian theology. He had clearly reached this position by 412 in his letter to Volusianus: “All these issues of Christian doctrine are widely discussed . . . but it is faith which opens the approach to them for the intellect, and lack of faith closes it.”¹²⁵ Augustine’s response to Longinianus frustrates us because Augustine seems unwilling to justify his refusal to treat with him; but Augustine clearly feels incapable of discussing important matters with Longinianus until the latter sheds even the appearance of improper belief. Equally important is Augustine’s belief that faith ultimately makes the Christian; he had no expectation that everyone would understand their religion: “This ‘foolishness of preaching’ (1 Cor. 1.21) and the ‘foolishness of God which is wiser than men’ (1 Cor. 1.25) drag many to salvation, in such a way that the salvation which that foolishness of preaching bestows on the faithful is available both to those who are not yet strong enough to perceive with certain understanding the nature of God which they have by faith, and also to those who do not yet distinguish in their own soul incorporeal substance from the common nature of the body, to the extent that they are certain that they live, know, and will. For, if Christ died only for those who are able to discern these truths with sure understanding, our labor in the Church is almost worthless.”¹²⁶

125. *Ep.* 137.15 (CSEL 44.117–118; c. c.e. 411). Compare the similar warning to his congregation at *serm.* 117.5.7 (PL 38.665; c. c.e. 418); the early statement of this theme at *mag.* 11.37 (CCL 29.195); and the lengthy treatise sent to Paulina *de videndo deo* (*ep.* 147 [CSEL 44.274–331]). Augustine argues with particular eloquence that our understanding comes about through faith by the gift of God at *en. Ps.* 118.18.3 (CCL 40.1724–1725). He tends to emphasize the straightforward nature of the truths of proper Christianity against his opponents, doctrinal and otherwise; Augustine’s truths require only faith (expressed with *fides* or, curiously, *credulitas*): *Gn. adv. Man.* 2.10.23 (PL 34.208); *c. Iul.* 1.19 (CSEL 85.1.16–17); and *c. Faust.* 12.46 (CSEL 25.1.374–375). As with the concept of ineffability, so Augustine frequently cites this verse of Isaiah in his sermons, and usually against the opponents of Catholic orthodoxy: *s. Guelf.* 11.4(3) (in *Miscellanea Agostiniana* 1.476.11–15 and 477.5–6; c. c.e. 417); *serm.* 89 (PL 38.556; c. c.e. 397), 91 (PL 38.570–571; post c.e. 400), 118 (PL 38.672; c.e. 418), 126 (PL 38.698–699, 701–702, 704; c. c.e. 417), 139 (PL 38.770–771; c. c.e. 417), 140 (PL 38.775; c. c.e. 427).

126. *Ep.* 169.1.3–4 (CSEL 44.613–614). On the catachrestic use of language in Scripture, on the limits of human understanding, and on knowledge of oneself as a benchmark in epistemological awareness, see Ando, “Augustine on Language,” sections 3 and 6, discussing in particular *conf.* 13.11.12 and *trin.* 15.

His emphasis on faith and therefore on the content of one's belief allowed Augustine to indulge his anxieties about the failings of human speech, and thus to justify his rejection of pagans who tried to sound Christian, however seductive their rhetoric: their words were necessarily improper guides to the beliefs of the inner man. This practice did not extend merely to pagans: in his fights with Pelagius and Julian late in life, Augustine attacked their positions in part by including more and more features of Catholic doctrine in this initial and necessary "faith." In the handbook on heresy he compiled for *Quodvultdeus* in 428, Augustine makes no mention whatsoever of any concern that heretical doctrines could arise from misconstruing human language or from the complexity of the subject at hand: though in the preface to that work Augustine questions the value of such a compilation, he asserts at its close that a heresy, once identified and labelled as such, need not be questioned or understood, but simply avoided.¹²⁷ He acts somewhat hypocritically, therefore, when in his letters Augustine worries endlessly that his friends might inadvertently use words that could be construed as heretical: "Wherefore I ask or, rather, I recognize, in what way you understand Christ to be a man; obviously not as some heretics do, as the Word of God which happens to be flesh . . ." ¹²⁸

The exchange of literature between educated men affected a tiny minority of the population, but Augustine and his opponents alike understood that their behavior reflected poorly on their Church: the infighting among Christians continued to provoke the embarrassment of their apologists and the derision of their enemies. As a bishop Augustine expressed genuine concern that heretical bishops could lead their unwitting flocks into sin. In trying to correct this situation, he encountered considerable resistance: Prosper provides a fine description of popular feeling regarding church heresies in Aquitaine in a letter of 429: "Many of the people here do not think that Christian faith is harmed by the disagreement [between Pelagians and Catholics]; you must write to them and reveal how great the danger is in this opinion."¹²⁹ By this period, of course, Augustine genuinely believed in the good to be won by this "kindly harshness," and was convinced that it was fine to use an earthly power to achieve this

127. Augustine, *haer. praef.* 7 (CCL 46. 289) and *epilogus* 3 (CCL 46.344): *Quid enim contra ista sentiat catholica ecclesia, quod a me dicendum putasti, superfluo quaeritur, cum propter hoc scire sufficiat eam contra ista sentire, nec aliquid horum in fidem quemquam debere recipere.*

128. Eg. at *ep.* 187.2.4 (CSEL 57.83–84; to Dardanus, *de praesentia dei*).

129. *apud* Augustine, *ep.* 225.8 (CSEL 57.394–396).

pretence of unity.¹³⁰ Prosper's letter also hints at a far more troubling phenomenon, the educated bishop's inability to convey the importance of theological subtleties to his less educated flock. Does the answer which Augustine found to this problem bear any relation to his replies to challenges from his more sophisticated correspondents?

IV. *FICTI, FALSI, ET SIMULATORES CATHOLICI*¹³¹

Themistius based his appeal for tolerance on the inscrutability of God; in doing so he adopted a strategy familiar from the Christian apologists who themselves had appropriated this vocabulary from the theological speculations of contemporary Platonism. Themistius cleverly based this appeal on the evidence of disagreements in theory and practice in contemporary Christianity. The appeal, as it turns out, was hardly clever at all, and for two reasons: first, the masters of triumphant Christianity were no longer open to appeals based on the rhetoric of their own apologetic literature. Second, his evidence struck a raw nerve with Christians who had long been taunted about their internal dissension. The doctrinal disputes of Christians had provoked harsh legislation in the past and would do so again.¹³² Indeed, the fights between various priests in North Africa in the 420s provide a convenient frame to the assertion of Lactantius with which this essay began: Augustine warned the violent mobs in Carthage that their efforts were counterproductive: it served no one if Christian violence encouraged the pagans, heretics and Jews to join together.¹³³ It is no co-

130. Augustine, *serm.* 47.15.28 (PL 38.314); cf. *ep. Rm. inch.* 15.11–16 (CSEL 84.166–168); and esp. Chrysostom, *Homil. in Acta Apostolorum* 33.4 (PG 60.245). On the good that comes from coercion, the need for “kindly harshness,” and the use of secular power see *ep.* 185.3.13–14 (CSEL 57.12–13; compare the phrase *per ordinatas a deo potestates cohiberi atque corrigi* at *ep.* 93.1.1 [CSEL 34.2.445–446]).

131. On *fictos catholicos*, see *ep.* 93.5.17 (CSEL 34.2.445–446), and on *falsos et simulatores catholicos*, see *ep.* 185.7.25 (CSEL 57.23–24). Markus, *End of Ancient Christianity*, 8 n. 13 (cf. 33 n. 13), takes issue with modern usage of the term “half-Christian” but seems to regard (*p*)*seudochristiani* as the only ancient equivalent for the modern misnomer.

132. See above at nn. 53 and 54 and the texts listed in n. 130. Subsequent legislation against heretics: *Sirm.* 12 (c.e. 407), against Donatists and Priscillianists, among others; *N. Th.* 3 (c.e. 438), against Eunomians, Montanists, Phrygians, Photinians, Priscillianists, et al.; and the laws collected in C. J. I.5. G. E. M. de Ste. Croix has written a particularly colorful evocation of the motivations which drove Christian to fight with Christian in *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (1981), 447–452.

133. *Ep.* 20*.18.1, 26.2, and esp 20.2–3 (CSEL 88.104, 105, 108); compare *serm.* 62.17–18 (PL 38.422–423). On “apostatizing” to Donatism, see at n. 152. Again, this sort of fighting was typical of the African church, quite aside from conflicts with Donatists: cf. *Acta Conc. Carthag. sub Grato* 10–12 (CCL 149.8–9), 10–12; such a prob-

incidence that the first imperial laws against apostates appear just after the mass-production of Catholic legislation begins in the early 380s, legislation that was addressed to the pagan and heretic alike.

Earlier I mentioned the possibility that the distinction between pagan and Christian might be reassessed on the basis of behaviors. To a certain extent this was a contemporary concern; the histrionic nature of pagan worship had lead Firmicus Maternus to suggest that pagans be forced to conduct their ceremonies on stage. It is matter of some irony, then, that the persecution of pagans forced them to act like Pliny's Christians and worship together in secret meetings, which were themselves banned by a law of 382 which allowed—without any of the humanity displayed by Trajan—the use of *indices denuntiatoresque*.¹³⁴ Augustine's stress on the importance of belief over understanding, of faith over theological sophistication might easily provoke the conclusion that, for Augustine, Christianization involved in the first instance the "reorientation of the soul"; the adornments and rituals of daily life were a secondary concern.¹³⁵ Indeed, Augustine repeatedly emphasized that words were necessary between men because of the Fall, but that God obviously had no need of such symbols in his communication. Thus, reasoned Augustine, Christian forms of worship—both sacrifices and prayers—are merely outward signs of the true sacrifice and the true sign within.¹³⁶ Augustine addressed this theme not merely in his discussion of the forms of prayer, but in his expressions of tolerance when asked about the fate of men who didn't have the opportunity to be Christian: "Thus at that time with other words and other signs, at first secretly and later more openly, at first by few people and later by many, this one, single true religion was expressed and practice" (*ep.* 102.12 [CSEL 34.2.554–555]).

This emphasis on the character of an individual's beliefs begs the question, how could one man truly know what another believed? Augustine had faced a similar question in an early dialogue: "You will say in good conscience that you have not lied, and you will assert this with all the words at your command, but they are only words. For you, being a man,

lem may also lie behind *Acta. Conc. Carthag. a. 390* 4–5 (CCL 149.14) and *Canones in causa Apiarum* 37 (CCL 149.128).

134. Firmicus, *err.* 12.9 (ed. Turcan, 104–105). On pagans meeting in secret, see Augustine, *cons. ev.* 1.27.42 (CSEL 43.42); cf. *C. Th.* 16.5.9, outlawing *secretas turbas pessimorum* and *occultos latentesque conventus*.

135. The phrase is that of A. D. Nock, *Conversion* (Oxford, 1933), 7; cf. Markus, *End of Ancient Christianity*, 32–34.

136. *Civ.* 10.19 (CCL 47.293). A list of cross-references and fuller discussion available in Ando, "Augustine on Language," 64–68.

cannot so reveal the hidden places of your mind that you may be known intimately to another man.”¹³⁷ Even if religion is a matter of belief, its practice in society is, according to that argument, even for Christians a matter of behavior: how else could one argue that different peoples celebrated one and the same religion using “diverse sacraments in diverse languages” (*ep.* 102.10 [CSEL 34.2.552–553])? Such a challenge to Augustine’s position is all the more valid—and this should be stressed—because Christians would have maintained that their acts of worship were meant to express doctrine; no pagan believed that about his own practice. Was it, then, even remotely apparent to a member of Augustine’s flock that the ritual acts which gave rhythm and order to daily life prior to his “conversion” were incompatible with his new status—that these acts constituted “pagan survivals?”¹³⁸ Augustine wrestled with these questions, not least because he understood the costs of religious coercion: in a world in which bishops could act as judges and lecture pagans on their sins before issuing unappealable verdicts,¹³⁹ what was one to make of the vast numbers who flocked to Christian churches following the conversion of Constantine? While other Christians applauded this narrative of the Christianization of the empire, Augustine worried that the speed of this process had simply flooded the Church with people incapable of truly giving up the food and drink and long-familiar pleasures of pagan festivals.¹⁴⁰

We might first raise the problem of interested conversions. If T. D. Barnes is correct in following Eusebius and suggesting that Constantine sought out Christians for office, then how should we read his statistics, or

137. *Util. cred.* 10.23 (CSEL 25.1.29). Compare the wording at *serm.* 62.17 (PL 38.423): *Totum intus esse debet. Si intus est quod videt homo, quare foris est quod videt Deus?*

138. On the use and abuse of this term, see Markus, *End of Ancient Christianity*, 9.

139. On bishops as judges, see *C. Th.* 1.27.1 and *Sirm.* 1, with, for example, Libanius, *or.* 30.19 (LCL). On lecturing plaintiffs and defendants on “how to obtain eternal life,” see Possidius, *vit. Aug.* 19, ed. H. T. Weiskotten (Princeton, 1919), 86–88. See A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (1964), 480–481, and now J. Lamoreaux, “Episcopal Courts in Late Antiquity,” *J ECS* 3.2 (1995), 143–167, though I strongly doubt that Lamoreaux (and others) is correct in imagining that pagans, too, preferred to have their lawsuits heard by Christian bishops: is there any evidence for that?

140. For Christian statements on the spread of Christianity prior to Nicaea, see the testimonia and comments in A. Harnack, *Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, 2nd ed. (tr. J. Moffatt; 1908) 2.1–32, esp. Eusebius, *v. C.* 2.18–19 (GCS 7.48), and cf. Gregory, *or.* 4.74 (SC 309.190–192). See Augustine, *ep.* 29, esp. 8–9 (CSEL 34.1.119–120) and *sermones* 248–251 (PL 38.1158–1171), where Augustine reflects that so many fish are entering the great fish-net that they have as yet been imperfectly sorted; a similar sentiment is expressed at *en. Ps.* 39.10 (CCL 38.433), on the verse *multiplicati sunt super numerum*.

those of Eck and van Haehling.¹⁴¹ There were surely men whose conversions were no more sincere than that of Praetextatus, almost the bishop of Rome,¹⁴² and then there is the real bishop, Pegasius of Ilium, who told Julian that he had become a bishop in order to acquire the power to protect the shrines of the gods.¹⁴³ Indeed, no less an authority than Eusebius laments how many feign conversion to earn the favor of Constantine;¹⁴⁴ similarly, Socrates mocks the multiple conversions of Hecebolius, who was not alone in switching his allegiance when Julian took the throne.¹⁴⁵ And it has been proposed Augustine's lament in the *Retractationes* for Manlius Theodorus may well have been prompted by an increasing realization of the shallowness of the latter's Christianity.¹⁴⁶ People could fake a conversion for reasons both less ambitious and more pressing: Ambrose rails against those who act Christian merely to get dates with Christian girls; and Libanius talks of troops of peasants who, out of fear, parade to church but stand silent, praying to their gods.¹⁴⁷ The anti-pagan riots spurred on by Theophilus of Alexandria in 391 caused even Heracles to fake a conversion—or so maintained Palladas.¹⁴⁸ The pagan Olympius tried to reassure his followers that the destruction of statues should not cause them to desert their religion of their ancestors: the statues were but perishable material (ὄλη φθαρτή), while the powers which inhabited them had gone to heaven.¹⁴⁹ Pagans were subsequently horrified when Theo-

141. Eusebius, *v. C.* 2.44 and 4.54 (GCS 7.59–60, 139–140). Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 210; *idem*, “Christians and Pagans in the Reign of Constantius,” *Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique* (Fondation Hardt) 34 (1987): 311–321; *idem*, “The Religious Affiliation of Consuls and Prefects, 317–361,” in his *From Eusebius to Augustine* (London, 1994); W. Eck, “Das Eindringen des Christentums in den Senatorenstand bis zu Konstantin d. Gr.” *Chiron* 1 (1971): 381–406; R. van Haehling, *Die Religionszugehörigkeit der hohen Amsträger des Römischen Reiches seit Constantins I. Alleinherrschaft bis zum Ende der Theodosianischen Dynastie* (Bonn, 1978).

142. See the famous anecdote related by Jerome, *adv. Io. Hier.* 8 (PL 23.361C).

143. *Ep.* 79 (ed. Bidez, 86).

144. *V. C.* 4.54.2 (GCS 7.139).

145. *PLRE* 1 Felix (3), Helpidius (6), and Julian's uncle, Julian (12). Compare the case of Isocasius (see in n. 21).

146. O'Donnell, “Demise,” 61. J. Rist, “A Man of Monstrous Vanity,” *JTS* 42 (1991): 138–143, questions identifying the “intermediary” of *conf.* 7.9.3, with Theodorus, but Markus, *End of Ancient Christianity*, 29–30 retains the traditional identification.

147. Ambrose, *psal.* 118 20.48–49 (CSEL 62.468–469). Augustine used very similar wording in *serm.* 62.11.17 (PL 38.422.423). Cf. Libanius, *or.* 30.26–29 (LCL 452.122–126).

148. Cameron, “Palladas,” 29.

149. Sozomen, *h.e.* 7.15.6 (GCS 50.320); see also the prophecy of Antoninus reported by Eunapius (*v. soph.* 6.9.17 [ed. Giangrande, 36]), and the similar prophecy

dosius, instead of stopping the destruction of property by Christians, berated the pagans for their obstinacy and gave imperial sanction to the seizure of the Serapeum.¹⁵⁰ What is gained, asks Libanius, when a conversion is achieved in word but not in deed? Ambrose and Libanius may grieve for different reasons, but both acknowledge that such conversions are both false and undetectable.

What should be absolutely clear is the contemporary awareness of the role that social and political power could play in the religious landscape. Eusebius also complained that heretics, afraid of the emperor's threats, "crept" back into the church by disguising their true sentiments (*v. C.* 3.66 [GCS 7.113]). Procopius of Caesarea describes a similar result to religious coercion: when a persecution of heretics began, men thought it stupid to suffer over a senseless doctrinal issue, and so adopted the name of Christians and by this pretence escaped danger.¹⁵¹ Augustine's congregation knew about such conversions: though Augustine wanted to accept the pretence of Donatists-turned-*ficti Catholici*, his congregation refused to play along, with the result that at least one Donatist lapsed.¹⁵² His congregation was equally unwilling to accept as real the conversion of a man whom they knew as a pagan ambitious to hold office; Augustine attempted to assuage his audience by claiming to quote Faustinus himself: *maioratum nolo, christianus esse volo*.¹⁵³ Pagans, too, understood the importance of controlling the instruments of secular power: many had interpreted Julian's ascent to the throne as giving them license to release pent-up bitterness at their Christian antagonists. Furius Maecius Gracchus probably counted on a similar reaction when he had himself baptized along with his lictors in the insignia of his office.¹⁵⁴ This undoubt-

in the *Aesclapius* which, even if not written around 391 (as maintained in a brilliant argument by Cameron, "Palladas," 24 n. 48; cf. Nock and Festugière in their edition, pp. 288–289), nevertheless was read in the fourth century as describing the demise of paganism, as maintained by G. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes* (Cambridge, 1986) 39, though he dismisses such readings as anachronistic. R. Lane Fox reasserts, with cogent and persuasive arguments, a fourth-century date in his review of Fowden (*JRS* 80 (1990), 237–238).

150. Sozomen, *h.e.* 7.15.7–8 (GCS 50.320–321).

151. Procopius, *arc.* 11.24–26 (LCL 290.136–138). He describes in similar terms a contemporaneous persecution of pagans: they, too, responded by pretending to be Christians, but they were usually later caught performing libations, etc (11.31–32 [LCL 290.138–140]). I find no indication that Procopius there discusses the persecution of apostates, as suggested by Van Dam, *Viator* 16 (1985), 4 n. 12 and his source, Rémondon, "L'Égypte," 69.

152. *Serm.* 296.11.12 (PL 38.1358–1359).

153. *Serm. Morin* 1 (in *Miscellanea Agostiniana* 1.592.21).

154. *PLRE* 1 Gracchus 1; sources also listed in A. Chastagnol, *Les Fastes de la Préfecture de Rome au Bas-Empire* (1962), 198–200.

edly explains why Augustine occasionally describes the emperor kneeling in Church: the organs of the state, he suggests, are at the disposal of the Catholics.¹⁵⁵ Both Maximus of Turin and Augustine at the turn of the century longed for the conversion of prominent senators; and Ambrose gloated when one did; note also Jerome's description of the conversion of Furius Gracchus: "Did not your Gracchus, advertising his patrician nobility in his name, when he was holding the urban prefecture, overthrow, break, and destroy the grove of Mithras . . . and, with its statues before him like hostages, seek Christian baptism?"¹⁵⁶ Augustine even confessed that while the conversion of lowly people was appreciated by God, he and his fellows were most excited by the conversion of a *nobilis* (*conf.* 8.4.9 [CCL 27.118–119]). Augustine may here have been thinking only about the propagandistic value of such a conversion, but the imperial government was more realistic and counted on such men to convert their peasants.¹⁵⁷ That physical and social power could play a role in converting the oppressed had, in fact, implicitly been recognized almost three hundred years earlier, in the *Apology* of Aristides.¹⁵⁸

As Origen had expressed concern about the rapid expansion of the church, Augustine, too, worried that the Church in North Africa had not been equipped to educate the vast numbers who converted following the victory of Constantine. Paganism had satisfied certain needs in the lives of its practitioners, and it was not immediately clear whether or how Christianity would satisfy them. Augustine and other Christian bishops were the most troubled by their inability to convey to their flock precisely what parts of their heritage must be shed now that they are Christian. Thus we find Augustine reprimanding his congregation because someone wanted a requiem to encourage the death of his enemy, or worried because a Christian couple had made a sacrifice to heal their already-bap-

155. *Ep.* 232.3 (CSEL 57.512–514), reminding the citizens of Madaura of the power of the Catholic Church to destroy both heretics and pagans; cf. *cons. ev.* 1.27.42 (CSEL 43.42).

156. Jerome, *ep.* 107.2 (CSEL 55.291–292); Maximus, *serm.* 106.2 (CCL 12.417–418); Augustine, *en. Ps.* 54.13 (CCL 39.666); Ambrose, *ep.* 27(58).3 (CSEL 82.1.181). The same mindset obviously informs Prudentius, *Symm.* 1.566–572 (CCL 126.205).

157. Augustine was sad when a recently converted rich man did not order the destruction of pagan idols on his estates (*serm.* 62.11.17–12.18 [PL 38.422–423]). Compare the law addressed to African landowners: they would be fined if they refused to recall their slaves and coloni from that depraved religion with frequent floggings (C. *Tb.* 16.5.52.1, 4).

158. Christians "persuade" their male and female slaves to convert, "out of love for them": *apol.* 15 (ed. Harris, 49); a Greek fragment of this passage has subsequently been discovered and published by H. J. M. Milne, "A New Fragment of the *Apology* of Aristides" (*JTS* 25 [1923/24]: 73–77); see lines 7ff.

tized baby, or had asked that their sick baby be baptized a second time.¹⁵⁹ Augustine was especially angry about the vendors of amulets who wrote KYPIE BOHΘI, “Lord help us,” on their charms: “a coating of honey on a bitter poison” (*eu. Io.* 7.6 [PL 35.1440]). This is reminiscent of the many magical papyri which appeal to Jesus Christ or the saints or the holy spirit, sometimes in conjunction with a host of pagan deities, asking for every conceivable favor,¹⁶⁰ and also of responses Gelasius received when he tried, and failed, to stamp out the Lupercalia.¹⁶¹

Contemporaries recognized that these difficulties in “Christianization” didn’t just spring from the new converts’ unfamiliarity with their new religion. Libanius was at his most eloquent, and most sincere, when describing the sorts of needs which he felt Christianity could not fulfill: “the temples are the soul of the countryside . . . In them the farming community places its hopes for husbands and wives, for children, for their livestock, and for the earth they sow and the harvest they reap” (*or.* 30.9–10 [LCL 452.108]). This was undoubtedly the reasoning adopted by Bishop Marcellus of Apamea who ordered the destruction of temples in the city and countryside—a project he sometimes oversaw himself with a troop of soldiers and gladiators—on the grounds that pagans would not convert so long as the temples stood.¹⁶² Likewise, when Theodosius, Arcadius, and Honorius outlawed the burning of incense or binding of trees with fillets in private households, they took aim at deeply rooted feelings about the presence of the supernatural in every aspect of household affairs: it was, after all, still possible for pagans like Ammianus to use *penates* in metonymy for “household.”¹⁶³ Augustine tells us that some Christians, when confronted about their continuing devotion to amulets, astrology, and the like, responded: “these things are necessary for this present life;

159. *Serm.* 90.9 (PL 38.565); *ep.* 98.1, 5 (CSEL 34.2.520–521, 526–527). An almost infinite variety of such examples could be collected: *en. Ps.* 26.2.19, 43.17, 88.2.14 (CCL 38.165, 38.489, 39.1243–1244); *serm.* 376.4.4 (PL 39.1671). Elsewhere we find baptized Christians becoming *flamines* in local cults (Canons of the Council of Elvira in Hefele-Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles* [Paris, 1907], 1.1.221ff.). Gratian, Valentinian II, and Theodosius informed the prefect of Egypt that it was “indecorous, well, to put it truthfully, illegal” for a “those whose *conscientia* has been imbued by the *vera ratio diviniæ religionis*” to perform certain *sollemnia templorum* (C. *Th.* 12.1.112).

160. Cf. Rees, “Popular Religion,” 87. See now A. Papaconstantinou, “Oracles chrétiens dans l’Égypte byzantine: le témoignage des papyrus,” *ZPE* 104 (1994): 281–286; and Trombley, *Hellenic Religion*, 176, on magic in the epistles of Basil.

161. The relevant texts are collected in Gélase I^{er}. *Lettre contre les Lupercales et dix-huit messes du sacramentaire Léonien* ed. G. Pomarès (1959), and cf. H. Chadwick, *Boethius* (1981), 12–13.

162. Sozomen, *h.e.* 7.15.13–14 (GCS 50.322).

163. C. *Th.* 16.10.12.2; see also Ammianus, 18.5.3 (ed. Seyfarth, 141).

we are Christians for the sake of eternal life” (*en. Ps.* 40.3 [CCL 38.450]).¹⁶⁴ He provides a more explicit list of the concerns of this world in another sermon, echoing for us the lament of Libanius: some faithful Christians thirst for God and yet, when they have worries about bread or water or wine or money or their cattle, they turn to Mercury, or Jupiter, or some other such *daemon* (*en. Ps.* 62.7 [CCL 39.798]). It must, therefore, have frustrated him greatly when his congregation, no doubt thinking itself pious, followed a harangue against the pagan gods with the acclamation, *Dii Romani* (*serm.* 24.6 [PL38.166]).

CONCLUSION

Neither Augustine nor any of his fellow bishops went so far as to call someone who indulged in the occasional amulet a pagan, so long as they professed to be simply a wayward Christian. When Martin of Braga complained about the observance of days for moths and mice, he still referred to the superstitious individual as *homo Christianus*.¹⁶⁵ Martin reminded his “rustics,” whom he addressed as *fideles*, of the words they spoke at their baptism: how can they continue to light candles at crossroads, or to pour wine on logs in their hearths? He desired that they should understand now, if they did not before, the far-reaching ramifications of their “Christianization”—which, we may surmise, had not been a conversion in Nock’s sense: a “reorientation of the soul,” with the understanding that “the old was wrong and the new is right.”¹⁶⁶ Augustine had obviously not been the first to label certain ritual behaviors as pagan and therefore incompatible with Christian belief: Constantine had begun the process of restricting *praeteritae usurpationis officia*, the rituals of a bygone perversion.¹⁶⁷ Augustine nevertheless formulated most clearly an explanation to why such ritual practices had to be eradicated—all such acts were the outward signs of *res ipsas in corde*—even if he tended in his sermons to the public towards rhetorical effect rather than explanation, away from the philosophical justification and towards the citation of Scripture alone.¹⁶⁸

164. See also *en. Ps.* 34.7 (CCL 38.304), “They leave aside God, as if these things did not belong to Him; and by sacrifices, by all kinds of healing devices, and by the expert counsel of their fellows . . . they seek out ways to cope with what concerns this present life” (translated in Brown, “Problem,” 94).

165. *corr.* 11, ed. C. W. Barlow (New Haven, 1950), 190.

166. *corr.* 15–17 (ed. Barlow, 196–201; Nock, *Conversion*, 7).

167. The phrase is from *C. Th.* 9.16.2; see Bradbury, “Constantine.”

168. For the phrase, see *civ.* 10.19 (CCL 47.293); cf. the catalogue of acts which delight the demons in *serm.* 198.3 (PL 38.1025–1026), or his description of a sermon on Gal. 5:19–21 (*ep.* 29.4–6 [CSEL 34.1.115–117]). New Year’s celebration also irked

Herein lies, too, the root of the failure of pagan apologetics, no matter how carefully its practitioners imitated their Christian models. In his denunciation of pagan monotheists, Lactantius no less than Augustine in his remarks on Platonic theology and theological vocabulary, shows himself aware of the seductive power of apologetic: to the unwary the invocation of “themes and language already familiar” could mask the profound differences between sides which, by the end of the fourth century, had grown too much like each other. “They are only words,” Augustine might caution: “We must attend to the reality itself.” On that level pagan apologetics was condemned to be as much of a failure in appealing to Christians as Christian apologetic had been in its day, for the Christian faith was a package, and it came with a manual: God’s “self-revelation of himself to one particular and peculiar people in the Old Testament, and the union of God and man in Christ” and the texts which that event generated, “reduced all other modes of divine presence in the world . . . to religious irrelevance.”¹⁶⁹ A pagan could no more satisfy a Christian by imitating the most familiar catch-phrases of popular theological speculation, than a Christian could properly introduce Christianity by marketing it as a branch of philosophy.

That Augustine and Martin identified as Christian their parishioners who used magic is all the more startling because the use of magical amulets presumes the continuing relevance and power of that “vast living complex of multifarious theophanies in the cosmos” which was essential to the theology of Plotinus, no less than to Praetextatus or Ammianus.¹⁷⁰ Robert Markus has remarked on the issue of such “pagan survivals”—although he eschews the use of that term—that “there was a wide no-man’s land between explicit pagan worship and uncompromising rejection of all its trappings and associations.”¹⁷¹ “Trappings” seems, however, equally unsatisfactory; in Augustinian terms, at some level such pagan behaviors were *signa* no less than the tears and groans which, he once maintained, functioned as well as words when praying to God.¹⁷² Augustine would

John Chrysostom (PG 48, cols. 953–962); see M. Meslin, *La fête des kalendes de janvier dans l’empire romain* (Brussels, 1970), 95–118.

169. Armstrong, “Plotinus,” 127.

170. Armstrong, “Plotinus,” 127, discussing in particular *enn.* 2.9[33].9.33–40; on Praetextatus, see *ILS* 1259 (*a tergo*), ll. 15, 25; the *divum numen* is *multiplex*, and should be worshiped *cunctis mysteriis*.

171. Markus, *End of Ancient Christianity*, 33.

172. *Ep.* 130.10.20–11.21 (CSEL 44.62–64); cf. *ep.* 102.12 (CSEL 34.2.554): . . . *quia una eademque res aliis atque aliis sacris et sacramentis vel prophetatur vel praedicatur, ideo alias et alias res vel alias et alias salutes oportet intellegi.*

have attributed the efficacy of magic to the devil, but the belief of his flock that local, supernatural powers could be helpful “in this present life” suggests that it retained an attachment to a more pagan monotheism than Augustine would have liked. “Pagan survival” may not, on those terms, adequately describe the role such ritual behaviors played in the lives of their practitioners, but, as a concept, it may be the least unsatisfactory way to describe the tolerance of the Christian establishment towards magical practices and its corresponding intolerance towards those intellectuals who merely gave voice to an evidently widespread failure to understand the implications of Christian conversion. Eschewing the term and topic of pagan survivals simply deflects modern surprise at how little Christians authorities of that age demanded in their litmus-tests; in many ways, the process was no more rigorous than, and little different from, the obtaining of a *libellus* during the Decian “persecution.” Fourth-century pagan apologists however, might well have expressed exasperation at the inefficacy of their well-crafted attempts to establish some common ground with a Christian audience that seemed, in their homes, at crossroads and at festivals, so similar to themselves.

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